Supporting the Executive Function Development of Children in Foster Care using Conjoint Consultation

A thesis submitted to The University of Manchester for the Degree of

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Abstract

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The educational achievement and well-being of looked after children are a priority nationally and locally. The majority of looked after children enter the care system due to abuse and neglect and foster care is the most common placement type (DfE, 2012). Early experience of abuse and neglect is associated with changes to development in the frontal brain regions resulting in executive function difficulty. Executive functions are a collection of interrelated but distinct functions with responsibility for purposeful, goal-directed, problem-solving behaviour (Gioia, Isquith, Guy, & Kenworthy, 2000). Evidence of neural plasticity in the prefrontal cortex suggests executive function development can be supported. The two main methods of support are computer based training, such as in working memory training which yields immediate gains but may not be sustained or generalised (Melby-Lervåg & Hulme, 2013) and ecological executive function interventions, which are promising but are mainly used with pre-school samples (Bryck & Fisher, 2012).

Parental involvement in children's education is promoted nationally (DCSF, 2008) and valued by carers (Cooper & Johnson, 2007). Consultations between carers and professionals can indirectly support fostered children (Osborne & Alfano, 2011) but few studies have evaluated the use of consultation to support executive function development in fostered children (Lansdown, Burnell, & Allen, 2007).

A multiple case-study design, with embedded units of analysis, was adopted to qualitatively explore the implementation processes and outcomes of a school-based intervention that adapted conjoint behavioural consultation (CBC) (Sheridan & Kratochwill, 2007) to support executive function development of children in foster care. Both cases consisted of a school-aged fostered child, living in the north west of England, with prior experience of abuse and/or neglect. The participants across cases were two educators and three carers and data gathering consisted of semi-structured interviews and participant-observation.

Data analysis utilised thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and a cross-case analysis (Yin, 2009) identified common themes alongside themes pertinent to each case. The findings indicate that an adapted CBC retains the relational objectives which are received positively by participants but outcome objectives are more variable. The limitations of the study and the implications for educational psychologists, stakeholders, and future research are highlighted.

Declaration

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The Author

I graduated from Queen's University, Belfast in 1999 with degree in Psychology. My dissertation examined body-image satisfaction, sports participation and depression in an adolescent sample. Following a year working and travelling in Australia, I returned to Belfast to complete a master's degree in Applied Psychology. During the course I worked as a home-tutor for a young child with autism. My dissertation (and future career-path) was influenced by this as I explored the sense of identity of parents with children with ASD. After graduating, I worked in a homeless shelter for two years supporting residents and advocating on their behalf. In 2005, I began a Primary PGCE in Manchester and taught for four years before enrolling on the Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology at the University of Manchester in 2010.

Dedication

Firstly, I would like to thank the participants who took part in the study and who gave their time during the intervention and the data gathering phase. I would also like to thank the members of the Social Care team for helping me during the initial stages and for supporting the research.

Secondly, I would like to thank my supervisor Dr Caroline Bond for all her encouragement, time, patience, and coffee over the last three years.

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List of Abbreviations

LAC: Looked after children

LA: Local Authority

SEN: Special educational needs

SENCo: Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator

TA: Teaching Assistant

EF: Executive functions

ES: Executive skills

EP: Educational Psychologist

TEP: Trainee Educational Psychologist

DfE: Department for Education

CBC: Conjoint behavioural consultation

CESC: Conjoint executive skills consultation

Introduction

The legal definition of a looked after child was introduced in the Children Act 1989 (DoH, 1989) and it refers to any child who is cared for by the state for over 24 hours and this includes those who are *accommodated* as well as those under a care order (Cocker & Allain, 2008). LAC are not a homogenous group and the term can be used to refer to children who are in foster care which includes; emergency placements; short-term placements; respite care; long-term placements; in-house foster care provision; independent fostering agency provision; remand foster care, multidimensional treatment foster care. It also includes children in residential care, kinship care with family/friends, home with parents; under shared responsibility with the Local Authority (LA), and boarding schools. While aware of the diversity in placement types, the researcher will use the term LAC to refer to looked after children generally and will refer specifically to a particular placement type when it aids the reader's understanding or has been specified in the literature.

The number of LAC in 2011 was 65,520 which represented a 2% increase since 2010. LAC are prioritized nationally and reports and legislation over the years have attempted to improve the education and health outcomes of LAC (DfES/DoH, 2000; DoH, 1991; DoH, 1998; Utting, 1991; 1997). This national focus continued in policy and practice reports aimed at improving outcomes for LAC (DCSF, 2008; DCSF, 2009a; DCSF, 2009b; DCSF, 2010; DfES, 2005).

LAC are also prioritized in the LA where the author is based as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP). It is a LA in the North West of England with significantly worse levels of social deprivation than the average for England (DoH, 2011). In 2011 the LA had just over double the national rates of LAC aged under 18 (DfE, 2011). Educational Psychologists (EP) apply psychology for the benefit of children and young people in the contexts and settings where they live, work and play (AEP, 2008). Fostered and adopted children are a vulnerable group who present with a diverse range of educational, social and mental health needs (Osborne, Norgate, & Traill, 2009) and would be likely to benefit from multidisciplinary involvement from professionals including EPs (AEP, 2008). The EPS is directly commissioned through the LA's LAC service to work with children in the care system. In 2011 the statistics for LAC showed that they were almost 10 times more likely than non-LAC to have a statement of educational needs (DfE, 2011) which suggests that they make up a significant proportion of a EPs statutory workload (Jackson & Mc Parlin, 2006). The author first became interested in researching within the area of fostered children due to a piece of casework involving a fostered pupil with poor working memory. Meeting with these carers, who had been looking after children for over 30 years, influenced the author's decision to focus his research activities on trying to support foster children and foster carers.

Abuse and neglect, also referred to as *maltreatment* in the literature, play a major role in children being taken into care at a national level and to an even larger degree in the LA within which the author is currently placed (DfE, 2012). Abuse and neglect in early life affect the way the brain develops and one region that is affected is the prefrontal cortex (Glaser, 2000). The prefrontal cortex is the neural substrate for *executive function*, also referred to as *executive functions*, *executive skills*, and *executive functioning*. Executive function is used as an umbrella term to

encompass interrelated functions that are thought to be the control mechanisms of goal-directed behaviour (Best, Miller, & Jones, 2009). The author was aware of attempts to support teachers' knowledge and understanding of executive skills in order to help support pupils through published materials (Dawson & Guare, 2010) and through dissertation research (Hedges, 2010). Preliminary reading in this area indicated that executive skills information was used to help teachers and carers support fostered and adopted children (Lansdown, Burnell, & Allen, 2007) but with little explanation of the process or outcome of the dissemination of the executive function information.

Consultation is the method in which most EPs apply and adapt psychological knowledge to problem situations faced by children and young people (CYP), adults in their life, and those agencies supporting the CYP (Kennedy, Cameron, & Monsen, 2009). The author had been trained in consultation theory and application during the doctoral programme but it was through research supervision that the potential applicability of conjoint behavioural consultation (CBC) to the present study was first proposed. CBC is an eco-behavioural model of consultation in which the consultant, often an EP, meets simultaneously with the parent(s)/carer(s) and teacher and as a team they work collaboratively to address the needs of the target child (Sheridan & Kratochwill, 2007). The overarching goals of CBC was in keeping with the axiological position of the researcher in that it aimed to promote outcomes for children through cross-system planning, promote parental engagement and strengthen home-school partnership.

CBC was adapted by the author to focus on supporting the development of executive skills that were underlying behavioural difficulties rather than on targeting behaviour, although often specific behaviours are targeted when addressing underlying executive skills needs (Dawson & Guare, 2010). In order to give the reader an early sense of what the conjoint executive skills intervention (CESC) looked like in practice it will now be described in brief.

Table 1: Stages and Objectives of the Conjoint Executive Skills Consultation (CESC) Meetings

	Conjoint Executive Skills Consultation	
Meeting Number	Stage of Process	Objectives of the meeting
1	Preliminary Meeting (participants attended separately)	• Introductions and rapport building • To describe executive skills and the impact of early abuse and neglect on the development these skills • To discuss the process of conjoint consultation
2	ES profile exploration and needs identification	• To identify executive skills strengths and areas of need within and across settings. • To determine home and school priorities in executive skills • To establish a shared goal
3	Strategy Development and Plan Implementation	• To discuss executive skills deficits underlying behavioural concerns • To develop executive skills support strategies collaboratively looking at 1) Modifying aspects of the environment 2)Teaching specific skills 3) Motivating the child
4	Plan Evaluation	• Determine if the shared goals of the consultation have been met. • Evaluate the effectiveness of the plan across settings • Discuss ways to continue communication and collaborative working

This researcher chose to conduct this study on the use of collaborative consultation to support the executive skills development of fostered children as it addressed a gap in the literature.

An overview of each chapter will now be presented

Chapter 1: Literature Review

The literature review explores the concept of executive function and the research on the impact of early maltreatment on the development of brain function. The current national and local statistics on LAC are highlighted as is the concern regarding their lower educational achievement. The role of consultation in delivering services to schools is outlined including a critical discussion of conjoint behavioural consultation followed by an examination of the literature on parental engagement. The literature on executive function interventions in education is summarized and the author's systematic literature review on the use of consultation to support executive function development is presented. The literature review concludes with the stated aims of the study and the research questions that aimed to address the gap in the literature.

Chapter 2: Methodology

The philosophical stance of the researcher in this qualitative study is stated at the beginning of this chapter accompanied by a critical discussion of the case study design employed in this research. The sampling and data collection procedures are critically described as is the use of thematic analysis for the data analysis. The steps taken by the researcher to counter threats to research quality is reviewed and the ethical considerations are discussed.

Chapter 3: Results

The results chapter provides an in depth exploration of the experiences and views of CESC from the perspective of the participants in each case. A thematic map precedes the findings for each case and a cross-case synthesis is presented in Table 14 at the end of the chapter.

Chapter 4: Discussion

The discussion concludes this thesis by presenting the pattern of findings across both cases. The relationship of the findings to prior literature is examined. The limitations of the study and the author's perception of the implications of the findings on stakeholders, the LA, educational psychologists are outlined. The author's reflection as participant-observer is discussed along with the personal resonance of participation in this study. The discussion concludes by proposing the potential future research arising from this study and the contribution of knowledge produced.

1. Literature Review

1.1   Aims of the Literature Review

As the research is focusing on a collaborative consultation intervention to support the development of executive function in fostered children, this review will give an overview of the literature on executive function and outline the research on the impact of abuse and neglect on the development of executive skills. The national and local statistics on LAC are analysed with a focus on their lower educational achievements. The association between executive function and learning and academic achievement is discussed. Neural plasticity is outlined as are the executive function interventions that aim to enhance executive skills and improve children's outcomes in learning. The review concludes by looking at the role of consultation in educational psychology practice, focusing on CBC and how meaningful engagement of parents/carers in their child's education can be used to promote home-school partnership. The gap in the literature is identified as the basis for the questions used in this study and the utility of the research is considered.

1.2   Literature Search Strategy

The literature search was conducted in two stages. Initially the literature was searched to provide a broad overview of the context for the research, followed at a later stage by a more systematic and specific review of literature in key areas that were pertinent to this study. Searches of the literature were conducted during the period January 2012 – April 2013.

1.3   Initial Literature Review

The literature was searched at different times during this research and it was initially explored in order to guide the design of the project and to help develop research questions that addressed perceived gaps in the literature (Robson, 2011). The following databases were searched for peer and non-peer review journals: Psycinfo, Web of Knowledge, ERIC, Google Scholar and Medline. The initial search terms used in these databases included adopt*, fost* and executive function*/skill*/difficult*/dysfunction*. Further searches entered abuse*/neglect* /maltreat* and adopt*/fost*/ 'in care' and looked after children. Additional searches looked for journal articles related to the research base on conjoint behavioral consultation (CBC) and home-school partner* and parent* involve*/engage*. Relevant literature was also obtained through reference *harvesting* which involved searching though the reference lists of relevant research studies. A systematic review of the literature that focused on the primary interest of the thesis was conducted and can be viewed in section 1.4.

1.3.1   Defining Executive Functions

There is no clear consensus in the literature about how best to define or conceptualize executive functions but they can be viewed as cognitive control processes that regulate thought and action (Friedman et al., 2008). The term executive skills is also used in the literature particularly when attempting to explain executive functions to parents/carers and/or school staff (Dawson & Guare,

2009; 2010). For the purpose of accessibility the term executive skills was used by the researcher when working with parents and school staff and when referring to the literature both terms are referred to interchangeably. Miyake et al. (2000) view executive functions as "general purpose control mechanisms that modulate the operation of various cognitive sub-processes and thereby regulate the dynamics of human cognition" (p. 50) but they acknowledge that very little is known about how cognitive processes are governed and coordinated by executive functions during the performance of complex tasks. Research into executive functions has been historically linked to patients with damage to their frontal lobes and the findings indicate that, as a group, they show impaired performance on tasks that are designed as frontal lobe or executive tasks (Miyake et al., 2000).

Executive function is described by the developers of the Behavior Rating Inventory of Executive Function (BRIEF) as an umbrella term that covers a collection of interrelated functions that have a responsibility for purposeful, goal-directed, problem-solving behaviour (Gioia, Isquith, Guy, & Kenworthy, 2000). The number of components covered by the term executive function varies between researchers. Anderson (2002) described the principle elements of executive function as consisting of anticipation, goal selection, planning, initiation of activity, self-regulation, mental flexibility, deployment of attention, and utilization of feedback. The BRIEF (Gioia et al, 2000) is a questionnaire for parents/carers and teachers of children aged 5-18 (mean = 11) that contains eight scales measuring different aspects of executive functioning. The eight scales are Inhibit, Shift, Emotional Control, Initiate, Working Memory, Plan/Organise, Organisation of Materials and Monitor (Gioia, et al., 2000). There is a lack of clarity in the research literature on the definition of executive function, the terminology, and the number of components. Miyake et al. (2000) argued that three of the most frequently postulated executive functions in the literature were cognitive shifting, monitoring and updating of working memory, and response inhibition. This view was shared by many subsequent researchers (Best & Miller, 2010; Davidson, Amso, Cruess Anderson, & Diamond, 2006; Friedman et al., 2008).

The researcher sought to use a parent and teacher friendly way to describe what was meant by executive skills but one that also was closely related to the literature on executive functioning. The researcher referred to two books written by Peg Dawson and Richard Guare, for a parent and educator audience, called *Smart but Scattered* (2009) and *Executive Skills in Children and Adolescents: A Practical Guide to Assessment and Intervention* (2010). Dawson and Guare (2010) use the term executive skills and state that they enable us to regulate our behaviour by employing *thinking skills* and *doing skills.* The researcher explained executive skills to the participants using the concept of thinking and doing skills. The definitions for each of the thinking and doing skills involved in Dawson and Guare's (2010) model of executive function are provided in Table 2.

Dawson and Guare's (2010) executive skills model was used both for pragmatic and for research-centered reasons. Their description of executive function in terms of 11 skills that are divided into thinking and doing skills was deemed by the researcher as easier to understand than the BRIEF which has a *Metacognition* and a *Behavioral Regulation* scale which are combined to create the

Global Executive Composite (Gioia et al., 2000). The Dawson and Guare (2010) explanation includes the three most commonly explored components in executive function research, in cognitive flexibility (shifting), working memory and response inhibition (Miyake, et al., 2000). It also includes all of the components of the BRIEF. There are additional executive skills in the Dawson and Guare (2010) model that are not discussed in the executive function literature such as time management and goal-directed persistence. These skills are difficult to assess formally and are not captured by current behaviour rating scales (Dawson & Guare, 2010) such as the BRIEF but it may be that they have ecological validity as they seem to be skills that are likely to be meaningful to parents and educators. The researcher's reflection on using the Dawson and Guare (2010) model of executive skills and the use of the BRIEF (Gioia et al., 2000) can be viewed in section 4.12.

Table 2: Dawson and Guare's Executive Skills Definitions

Thinking skills	
Executive Skill	**Definition**
Planning	The ability to make plans to reach a goal or complete a task. This includes deciding what is important to focus on and what is unimportant.
Organisation	The ability to create order from incoming information and to devise and maintain systems for managing information and materials.
Time management	This involves a sense of the importance of time and the capacity to stay within time limits by managing time effectively.
Working memory	The ability to keep information in mind while performing and to aid completion of complex task.
Metacognition	The ability to step back and look at one's own thoughts and performance and assess effectiveness.
Doing skills	
Executive Skill	**Definition**
Response inhibition	The ability to resist urges and think before acting.
Regulation of affect	The ability to control emotions in order to achieve a goal or complete a task
Task initiation	Avoiding undue procrastination.
Cognitive flexibility (including shifting)	The ability to adapt plans to account for new bits of information, setbacks or obstacles. Shifting refers to the ability to change focus of one's attention from one idea to a new one.
Goal-directed persistence	The capacity to complete a task despite other competing demands.
Sustained attention	The ability to maintain attention on a task despite fatigue, boredom, or distraction

1.3.2   Executive Functions – Unity and Diversity

The frontal brain region, including the frontal/prefrontal cortex and connections to adjacent areas, has been established as the principal neural substrate of executive skills (Blakemore & Frith, 2005; Dawson & Guare, 2010; Fuster, 2008) but the literature is less clear on whether executive function is a unitary construct or made up of independent components (Best & Miller, 2010). Initially executive function was viewed as representing a single underlying ability or mechanism which could be assessed using a single complex frontal lobe task such as the Tower of Hanoi task (TOH) or the Wisconsin Card Sorting Test (WCST) (Heaton, Chelune, Talley, Kay, & Curtis, 1993). More recently the evidence has pointed towards a theory of *unity and diversity* which proposes that the skills represented by the term executive functions are separable but related (Miyake et al., 2000). Miyake et al. (2000) outlined that the argument for a non-unitary explanation of executive function, that all executive skills operated independently, was supported by previous studies that used a wide range of executive tasks like the TOH and the WCST and found low intercorrelations between performances on different executive tasks. Miyake et al. (2000) suggested that the reason for this could be because the non-executive processing needed to complete the task, for example language and visual-spatial processing, obscured the existence of underlying commonalities. This reflects task impurity which refers to the fact that it is difficult to design an executive task that does not involve other cognitive processes as, by virtue of its principal role, executive functions operates on and coordinates other cognitive processes (Miyake et al., 2000). Task impurity makes it difficult to conclude that a low correlation between different executive tasks is as a result of the distinctiveness and unassociated nature of components of executive functions (Miyake et al., 2000). Miyake et al. (2000) used latent variables as dependent measures to uncover what was shared amongst the executive tasks for each of three executive functions – shift, working memory and inhibition. Using confirmatory factor analysis, Miyake et al. (2000) were able to demonstrate that these three executive functions were moderately correlated but were separable at the level of latent variables. This supported the unity and diversity view and indicates that although these executive functions are bound by some underlying processes they are distinguishable and can be deployed separately and in different amounts depending on the task at hand. Executive function can be considered as a multi-dimensional construct and when working with an individual it is important to consider that their profile of executive skills is likely to contain areas of strengths as well as areas of need.

1.3.3   Brain Development in Sub-optimal Environments

The next section will outline aspects of brain development and how the interplay between genetic processes and environmental influences affects the *brain's architecture* with particular focus on the impact of the experience of abuse and neglect on the prefrontal cortex. It is important to preface this discussion by mentioning the role of *multifinality* and *equifinality* in making it difficult to accurately predict outcomes for children who have experienced early maltreatment (Glaser, 2000). Multifinality refers to the different outcomes that can occur for two individuals who go through

similar or seemingly identical experiences. Equifinality recognises that two individuals with different developmental histories can reach a common outcome.

1.3.3.1 Basics of Brain Development

In its first year of life, the developing brain grows from an average weight of 400gm at birth to 1000gm at 12 months (Gilles, 1993). There is increasing evidence that genetic and environmental factors interact dynamically with genetic forces determining initial brain architecture and environmental factors playing an important role in coordinating the timing and pattern of gene expression (Fox, Levitt, & Nelson III, 2010). The steps of neurodevelopment progress from lower to higher brain centers and, being genetically predetermined, the sequence of these steps is not affected by the environment (Glaser, 2000). During the first two years of life, these genetically sequential steps lead to the growth, proliferation, and overproduction of axons, dendrites, and synapses in different areas of the brain (Fox et al., 2010). During this time not all the synaptic connections survive as some are *pruned* due to lack of activity. In this period of neural plasticity, the survival of synaptic connections is environmentally regulated because synaptic pruning depends on the information that the brain receives through everyday experiences (Fox et al., 2010). Experience leads to associated brain activity and this determines which synapses remain with inactive synapse being pruned (Cartwright, 2012).

1.3.3.2 Maltreatment and Brain Development

Glaser's (2000) review of the impact of childhood abuse and neglect on the brain highlights two ways in which brain development, including executive functioning, can be affected by this type of early maltreatment. The first is through the influence of environmental factors on brain growth and development and the second is by the brain's response to stressors.

1.3.3.2.1 Brain Development and Environmental Influences

Even though the brain is substantially shaped by genetic processes (Rakic, 1988), it remains the case that brain development occurs in interaction with the environment (Black, Jones, Nelson, & Greenough, 1998; Fox et al., 2010; Glaser, 2000; Greenough & Black, 1992). Glaser (2000) stated that "the process of early brain development is constantly modified by environmental influences" (p. 99). Glaser (2000) proposed that there are sensitive periods in early brain development during which particular experiences affect the brain's maturation. Greenough and Black (1992) described how the brain's maturation depends on two environmental processes. *Experience–expectant* development requires the occurrence of particular experiences during a sensitive period and if those experiences do not take place, it may lead to permanent deficits in cognitive abilities. These early experiences have been selected through evolutionary processes and are expected to occur with reliability and within certain periods in development (Greenough & Black, 1992). It is argued that children who are neglected or who lack environmental stimulation during sensitive periods

may therefore miss out on experience-expectant brain development. The experience-expectant theory was illustrated by the iconic work carried out by the Nobel Prize winners, Wiesel and Hubel, on the visual cortex of cats. When kittens were reared with one eye closed for a period of time after birth, that eye was permanently blind when visual input was reinstated (Wiesel & Hubel, 1965). Wastell and White (2012) challenged the notion of permanent and irreversible damage due to early experiences. They pointed out that the work by Wiesel and Hubel also showed that the functioning eye annexed the additional capacity of the deprived eye which supports the view of the brain as highly plastic and adaptable (Wastell & White, 2012). Wastell and White (2012) also stated that in experiments where both eyes were closed at birth no permanent damage to vision was found.

The second part of brain maturation is *experience-dependent* which is less predetermined, varies more between individuals, and is not as sequentially bound (Greenough & Black, 1992). It too requires environmental experiences but it leads to synapse creation rather than synapses waiting for the experience to occur as with experience-expectant development (Greenough & Black, 1992). This experience-dependent synapse formation means that each person's brain, at least in part, is a reflection their unique experiential history (Belsky & de Haan, 2011). Based on a model put forward by Davidson (1994), Glaser (2000) suggested that abusive experiences during experience-dependent periods could lead to enduring changes in the brain. Rutter et al. (2010), in their most recent follow-up on the study of English-Romanian adoptees, reported that despite severe initial impairment as a consequence of extreme deprivation in Romanian orphanages, these children showed a pattern of substantial cognitive recovery. This on-going recovery was still evident when the children were in their mid-teens and those with the most prominent deficits showed the greatest recovery (Rutter et al., 2010). This evidence of strong plasticity and resilience, particularly in the brain, is a counter argument to the idea that early experiences lead to enduring damage to the brain and permanent formation of neural circuits. Wastell and White (2012) therefore caution against a notion of 'now-or-never' which is often used to advocate for early intervention approaches.

Belsky and de Haan (2011) pointed out that the study of the relationship between parenting and brain development "is not even yet in its infancy; it would be more appropriate to conclude that it is still in the embryonic stage, if not that which precedes conception" (p.410). Wastell and White (2012) proposed that although deprivation and neglect should be remedied and the prenatal and early experiences of a child are important, the evidence does not support the theory that a chaotic family life, inattentive parenting, or unconventional lifestyles directly leads to permanent alteration to brain development. Wastell and White (2012) argued that the use of neuroscience to lead government policy should be avoided when the research knowledge, which is vast and often contradictory, is still in development.

1.3.3.2.2 Brain Development and the Stress Response

The second way in which experiences of neglect and abuse in early childhood could affect brain development is through the brain's response to stress. Glaser (2000) defined stress as a "stimulus or experience which produces a negative emotional reaction or affect, including fear and a sense of loss of control" (p. 103). During acute stress, the body's stress response will be activated through the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis and when this occurs, amongst other responses, there is an elevation of cortisol (Glaser, 2000). Sustained and excessive cortisol is associated with damage to the structure and function of the hippocampus, which is concerned with memory, due to the high level of glucocorticoid receptors located in that region (Nelson & Carver, 1998). Glucocorticoid receptors are also prominent in the prefrontal cortex (Gould et al., 2012), considered the neural substrate of executive functions (Fuster, 2008), and it is postulated that they also might be adversely affected by sustained and elevated cortisol levels in early life (Glaser, 2000).

1.3.3.3 The Impact of Neglect and Abuse on Executive Functions

Executive function difficulties are one of the main manifested effects of early life adversity (Bryck & Fisher, 2012). Children with a history of neglect and abuse show decreased performance in neuropsychological tests of executive function (Nolin & Ethier, 2007). Exposure to familial violence is also associated with lower executive function performance in children (DePrince, Weinzeirl, & Coombes, 2009).The unity and diversity theory of executive function points towards separable but related subskills (Miyake et al., 2000). Research has found associations between physical abuse and neglect and executive function. Adolescent boys with prior experience of abuse were less able to avoid maladaptive responses on a passive avoidance learning task indicating impaired inhibition (Mezzacappa, Kindlon, & Earls, 2000). Greater deficits in inhibition and working memory skills were found in a sample of institution reared children adopted from Romania before the age of 43 months compared with controls (Stevens et al., 2008). A lower level of cognitive flexibility, when problem solving, was found in an adolescent male sample with previous experience of physical abuse and physical neglect (Spann et al., 2012). This association continues into adulthood with adults who experienced childhood abuse and neglect having more extensive impairments in working memory and other executive functions such as planning and processing speed compared with controls (Gould et al., 2012).

Fox et al. (2010) think of the genetic codes which influence our early development as an "architectural plan" and neural plasticity as adjustments to the plan that are modified by environmental experiences. This period of neural plasticity is longer in humans than in other mammals which allows for maximal learning capacity but also increases the length of time in which the developing brain is vulnerable to negative environmental experiences (Glaser, 2000). The frontal lobe matures more slowly than other areas so it is especially vulnerable to environmental stressors or lack of stimulation. The first executive function to develop is self-regulation of affect and it is experience-dependent on appropriately sensitive interaction between the infant and the

primary caregiver (Glaser, 2000). The infant is initially unable to regulate their own level of arousal and impulses so the caregiver is charged with calming the infant and restoring a tolerable emotional state (Glaser, 2000). In cases where the primary caregiver is unable to externally rebalance the infant's affect over prolonged periods, for example this may occur in cases of neglect or maternal depression, then the infant may have difficulties in the future in learning emotional self-regulation (Glaser, 2000).

In typical family conditions, responsive parental caregiving practices as part of the caregiver-child relationship are theorized to promote the development of executive functioning in children (Merz & McCall, 2011). In a study of children adopted from psychosocially depriving institutions, Merz and McCall (2011) found a step-like relationship between age at adoption and executive functioning deficits that led them to suggest that children exposed to prolonged early sub-optimal care may have increased risk of executive functioning deficits. It should be noted that a limitation of the Merz and McCall (2011) study was that all of the children were from Russia, or countries from the former Soviet Union, and these children have higher rates of behavioural problems compared with adoptees from other countries (Gunnar, van Dulmen, & The IAP Team, 2007). Merz and McCall (2011) noted this limitation and posited that the increased behavioural problems might be as a result of a higher likelihood of prenatal alcohol exposure which is linked to executive function deficits in children who have never been in an institution.

Children who do not experience a consistent caring relationship after being placed into foster care are at a greater risk for failing to develop adequate inhibitory control skills (Lewis, Dozier, Ackerman, & Sepulveda-Kowakowski, 2007). In the study by Lewis et al. (2007), 102 children aged between 5 and 6 were divided into three groups, 33 adopted children who had experienced multiple foster placements prior to adoption, 42 children who were adopted after one foster placement, and 27 comparison children who had never been fostered or adopted. Children in the multiple foster placement group, who had experienced placement instability, were also more likely to show oppositional behaviour compared with controls (Lewis et al., 2007). These results were significant after controlling for child age, child verbal intelligence, and child performance on a working memory control task. Response inhibition, self-control, and self-regulation of affect are components of executive functioning (Dawson & Guare, 2010) and it is theorized that these poorly developed executive skills may have been underlying the oppositional behaviour (Lewis et al., 2007). The direction of causality in this study was not established so the researchers were not able to rule out the possibility that the child's inhibitory control predicted placement stability.

1.3.4 Looked After Children (LAC) – Definitions and National Statistics

A looked after child is a child who is "accommodated by the local authority, away from their family, in a residential or foster placement, and all children subject to a care order, even if they are living with their parents" (Brammer, 2007, p. 303). The threshold for state involvement in private family matters is when there is *significant harm* to the child/children (Cocker & Allain, 2008). Significant harm is referred to in the Children Act, 1989 but is not specifically defined. The term *harm* is

defined in Section 31 of the Children Act, 1989 as ill treatment or impairment of health or development; *development* can refer to physical, intellectual, emotional, social and behavioural development; *health* can be physical or mental health; *ill treatment* includes forms of ill treatment that are non-physical (DoH, 1989).

LAC represent one of the most vulnerable groups in society and many will have experienced early disadvantage, abuse and neglect, family dysfunction, and suboptimal living environments (AEP, 2008). Nationally, the number of LAC as of 31st March 2012 was 67,050 which is a 2% increase on 2011 and a 13% increase since 2008 (DfE, 2012). The number of children who started to be looked after during the year ending 31st March 2012 was 28,220 which represents an increase of 3% from 2011 and an increase of 21% from 2008. For the year ending 31st March 2012 75% of LAC were in foster care and 4% were placed for adoption. At 31st March 2012, 56% of LAC were placed in care due to abuse or neglect and 18% due to family dysfunction (DfE, 2012). Not all children experience placement stability when taken into care. Of the 65,520 children in care at31st March 2011, 22.4% had experienced two placements and 10.7% had experienced three or more placements (DfE, 2011).

1.3.5 Looked After Children (LAC) – Local Statistics
The LA in which the author is currently based is an area with high levels of social deprivation and at 31st March 2012 it had an approximately 80% higher rate of LAC aged under 18 compared with national figures, 109 per 10,000 children in the LA compared with 59 per 10,000 children nationally (DfE, 2012). Maltreatment plays a major role in children being taken into care at a national level and also in the LA. For those children who started to be looked after in the researcher's LA for the year ended 31st March 2012 the main reason why they were provided with a service was because of abuse or neglect, 61%, with the second most common reason being family dysfunction at 28% (DfE, 2012).

1.3.6 The Educational Needs of LAC– Local and National Statistics
Since 2000, information has been gathered on the educational achievements of LAC in England and Wales using GCSE and end of key stage results. The lower educational achievement of looked after children compared with the national average had been a growing concern (Goddard, 2000) and data since 2000 indicates that the concerns have not abated. All achievement data for LAC needs to be placed into context. The percentages refer to children who have been looked after continuously for at least 12 months, excluding those children in respite care. There is a great deal of movement in and out of the care system over a year and those children who spend more than 12 months in care represent a small minority of the overall amount of LAC at any one time (Cocker & Allain, 2008).

Table 3: Educational Achievement Data for LAC and All Children for the Academic Year 2005/2006 (DfES, 2006a)

	Looked After Children	All Children
Key Stage 1 Achieving Level 2	58%	85%
Key Stage 2 Achieving Level 4	47%	81%
Key Stage 3 Achieved Level 5	30%	74%
GCSE – at least 1	63%	95%
GCSE – percentage or more at grade A* -C	12%	59%

The achievement data for 2005/2006, in Table 3, highlights the lower achievements of LAC compared with the national averages in 2005/2006.

Table 4: 2012 National and Local Key Stage 1 Achievement Data

Percentage of Pupils Attaining Level 2 or above				
	England		**LA**	
Assessment Area	**All Children**	**LAC**	**All Children**	**LAC**
Reading	87	67	86	71
Writing	83	57	82	47
Maths	91	71	90	76

Table 4 highlights the end of Key Stage 1 achievement gap that existed between LAC and all children nationally and locally in 2012 (DfE, 2012).

Table 5: 2012 National and Local Key Stage 2 Achievement Data

Percentage of Pupils Achieving Level 4 or above				
	England		LA	
Assessment Area	All Children	LAC	All Children	LAC
English	85	60	83	73
Mathematics	84	56	83	73
English and Mathematics	80	50	77	73

As indicated in Table 5, there was a growing achievement gap in 2012, particularly in English and Mathematics combined, between LAC and the national average at the end of Key Stage 2. The data for the researcher's LA indicates that LAC had higher attainments at Key Stage 2 than LAC nationally and consequently were closer than 'all children' to English national averages (DfE, 2012)

Table 6: 2012 National and Local Key Stage 4 Achievement Data

Percentage of Pupils Achieving 5+ GCSEs at A*-C			
England		LA	
All Children	LAC	All Children	LAC
81.9	36.8	89	37.5

Table 6 displays the large gap in achievement that existed at the end of Key Stage 4 in 2012 with LAC over 46% behind the national average. In 2012, the gap between LAC and *all children* within the LA was 51.5%.

In addition to the attainment gaps in academic achievement, LAC are more likely to be permanently excluded from school than non-LAC, 0.18% of primary LAC compared with 0.02% of primary age non-LAC , and 0.4% of secondary age LAC compared with 0.15% of the general secondary pupil population (DfE, 2011). Over the period 2007 to 2011, the difference between LAC and all children having a SEN has increased from 46.4 percentage points in 2007 to 52.2 percentage points in 2011 (DfE,2011). In 2011, 29.4% of LAC had a statement of SEN compared with 2.8% of pupils in the general school population (DfE, 2011). Of the 29.4% of LAC with a statement of educational needs, 44.4% of statements were for Behavioural, Emotional and Social

Difficulties (BESD) and 18.9% had a Moderate Learning Difficulty (MLD) which compares with 14.2%and 17.3% of all children with a statement respectively.

1.3.6.1 Factors Impacting on LAC Achievement

It is clear from the statistics that LAC need to be a prioritised population within the school system to address their poorer educational outcomes and to meet their social, emotional and behavioural needs. To balance the view that the education system is failing LAC, some argue that many LAC only spend a short period of time in the direct care of the state and the impact of their experience in care is difficult to disentangle from their experiences prior to being looked after (Goddard, 2000).

The Social Exclusion Unit highlighted five main issues impacting on the achievement of LAC (SEU, 2003, pp. 4-6). These were:

- Instability – too many placement changes resulting in too many school changes;

- Time out of school – poor attendance, no school place, placement in a pupil referral unit on reduced hours or excluded from school;

- Help with their education – LAC need extra support with their education because of gaps in learning and potential special educational needs;

- Support and encouragement – positive views on education and support and encouragement from the home environment and from social care staff;

- Emotional, mental or physical health – support is needed for LAC who are more likely to have an identifiable mental health disorder (Meltzer, Gatward, Corbin, Goodman, & Ford, 2003). Physical health is also a concern for LAC with 66% of LAC were reported to have at least one physical complaint, the most frequent being eyesight, speech and language difficulties, co-ordination difficulties, and asthma (Meltzer, et al., 2003).

The educational achievement of adopted children, many of whom were adopted from care, is not captured in national statistics but research suggests that it is also a concern (Cooper & Johnson, 2007). In a postal survey sent to 300 adoptive parents living in Sheffield, a city in northern England, 59% of the 100 respondents stated that their child was having difficulties in school or had done so in the past and that 28% of adopted children previously had involvement with an Educational Psychologist (Cooper & Johnson, 2007). Of the parents who, 39% said their child had special educational needs (SEN) and 23% of the children of the respondents had a statement for SEN. This compared with a national figure of about 20% of children who would have SEN at some point in their education and 2% who would have a statement of SEN (Cooper & Johnson, 2007). This suggests that the difficulties in educational attainment that LAC experience continue to be a concern after the children have been adopted. The majority of parents were happy with their child's progress in school but a significant minority expressed concerns about their child's learning,

behaviour, and friendships. Cooper and Johnson's (2007) study is of particular interest because tracking the educational achievements of adopted children is a challenge as they are not an identifiable group in national data sets (Cocker & Allain, 2008). The study gathered the views of adoptive parents in only one English city so it is difficult to make wider generalisations of the findings as the parents' views are likely to relate primarily to their experience of their children's education in Sheffield. A further limitation is that those who chose to respond to the survey may have been those who were having the most difficulty with their child's education which may have biased the results in a negative direction.

Goddard (2000) noted that the evidence was mixed on whether foster care or residential care provided better prospects for academic achievement but the study by Aldgate, Colton, Ghate, and Heath (1992) found that when the background of the child studied was accounted for, foster care support made little impact on educational outcomes. The lower educational achievements of LAC are common to children throughout the care system and for those children who have been adopted.

1.3.7   Executive Function and Academic Achievement

Executive function enables the individual to purposely guide cognitive, emotional and behavioural processes and actions when confronted with a novel problem to solve and in the context of modern schooling it is perhaps unsurprising that the skills required to achieve well academically are highly associated with these executive skills (Blair, 2002). Much of the work on executive function within an educational context looks at a pre-school cohort and Blair (2002) suggested that the extent to which social-emotional skills, based in the prefrontal cortex, have developed helps mediate children's successful transition to primary school.

1.3.7.1 Executive Function and Preschool Achievement

The link between executive function and academic achievement is supported by research indicating that executive skills in pre-school children can predict later achievement in reading and mathematics in 7 year olds (Bull, Espy, & Weibe, 2008; Clark et al., 2010). Cartwright (2012) supported the view that executive skills are implicated in early reading development and argued that executive functions help to manage the complex mental processes involved in coordinating many different elements such as phonics, semantics, word parts (suffixes and prefixes), along with reading comprehension strategies.

1.3.7.2 Executive Function and School Age Achievement

Executive function is also implicated in the academic achievements of older children. Working memory and inhibition were associated with achievement in Mathematics and English (St Clair-Thompson & Gathercole, 2006) in a sample of 11 -12 year old English children. Latzman, Ekovitch, Young, & Clark (2010) investigated the link between executive function and academic achievement using a sample of 174 male adolescents aged 11-16 and found that distinct executive skills were

associated with particular academic domains. Cognitive flexibility predicted reading and science; monitoring, an example of metacognition, predicted reading and social studies; and inhibition predicted mathematics and science (Latzman et al., 2010).

Best, Miller, and Naglieri (2011) explored the relationship between executive function and academic achievement in a large national sample of US children aged between 5-17 years. They found that the correlation between executive function and achievement varied across age ranges but the pattern of correlation strength was similar for reading and mathematics which led the authors to propose that executive function was not domain specific but domain general. This built on previous research by Best, Miller, and Jones (2009) who took a developmental perspective on executive function across childhood and adolescence and found that inhibition showed striking development during preschool years but less change later on, working memory and shift showed more gradual improvements throughout development, while planning ability seemed to show the greatest gains in late childhood and adolescence.

1.3.7.3 Executive Function and Achievement – A Note of Caution

Recent research, which replicated previous studies but then used fixed effects analyses to control for all stable influences on academic achievement, found that the causal association between executive function and academic achievement was no longer supported (Willoughby, Kupersmidt, & Voegler-Lee, 2012). Willoughby et al. (2012) stated that child, familial, and/or environmental (confounding) variables have not been fully attended to in prior studies when associations between executive function and academic achievement have been found. This raises the possibility that executive function is not causally related to academic achievement and therefore Willoughby et al. (2012) advised caution in using the findings of previous research that supported the association between executive function and academic achievement, to promote curriculum recommendations or public policy decisions. A limitation of this study was the use of a narrow measurement of executive function. The researchers only used a motor inhibition and an inhibitory control task. It could be argued that a wider use of tasks measuring a broader range of executive skills, for example working memory, shifting, and sustained attention, could have led to different results.

When interpreting the results of studies of the association between executive function and achievement it is important to closely consider the test of executive function used in the research. Some studies use simple tasks which target a particular executive skill whereas some are more complex, involving a combination of executive skills. Assessments can include other skills such as language, memory, and motor functioning which may confound the results (Dawson & Guare, 2010). Many tests of executive function were originally designed for adult populations, often for clinical populations (head injuries), so may not appeal to children or have sufficient normative information (Anderson, 1998).

1.3.7.4 Executive Function and Achievement –A Summary

The weight of research evidence points towards an association between executive function, academic achievement and learning behaviour in school. Willoughby et al. (2012) pointed out that confounding variables need to be carefully considered before a causal relationship is fully established. Additionally, the data collection procedures should be closely examined as they can vary considerably between studies. Despite these concerns, the research evidence does show an association between executive function and achievement in school which may provide some insight into how the impact of abuse and neglect on the development of executive function could be an underlying factor that contributes to the poor academic and behavioural outcomes of LAC.

1.3.8   Executive Function and Behaviour

The school based literature on executive skills focuses more on academic achievement than on behaviour but executive skills are made up of thinking and doing skills (Dawson & Guare, 2010) and it is unlikely that good academic outcomes can be achieved without correspondingly good learning behaviours. The higher rates of exclusion for LAC compared with non-LAC (DfE, 2011) and the high proportion of LAC with statements of SEN for Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESD) (DfE, 2011) indicates that many of the difficulties that LAC face in school are in addition to academic concerns. Self-regulation of emotion, behaviour, and cognition are seen as the building blocks of the social and academic demands required for the successful transition to formal schooling (Blair, 2002). Parental responsiveness early in life, which many LAC did not receive, can help to facilitate the development of children's behavioural self-regulation (Stams, Juffer, & van IJzendoorn, 2002) so it is within this context that the BESD needs of LAC can be viewed.

Many of the studies linking academic achievement with executive functioning mention executive skills that are involved in specific academic areas such as; self-regulation in reading and writing (Altemeier, Jones, Abbott, & Berninger, 2006; Deater-Deckard, Mullineax, Petrill, & Thompson, 2009); inhibition in reading comprehension (De Beni & Palladino, 2000) and inhibitory control in pre-reading skills (Blair & Razza, 2007). These executive skills are also associated with regulation of behaviour (Dawson & Guare, 2010) and studies with pre-school pupils indicate that they are equally important for developing learning related behaviour.

Brock, Rimm-Kaufmann, Nathanson, and Grimm (2009) studied executive function in a sample of 173 Kindergarten pupils in rural school districts in the South East of the US. Brock et al. (2009) distinguished between *hot* executive skills and *cool* executive skills when children problem solve with hot skills coordinating emotional processing and cool skills coordinating cognitive processing. Stronger scores in cool skills predicted math achievement but not reading, learning related classroom behaviours, and observed engagement in learning. Hot skills did not predict any achievement or classroom behaviour.

Willoughby, Kupersmidt, Voegler-Lee, and Bryant (2011) also used the concept of hot and cool skills to measure self-regulation in a sample of 926 US pre-school children. The cool self-regulation tasks involved inhibition tasks that were unrelated to the receipt of a reward while the hot self-regulation task involved tasks that had a desirable and edible reward. Willoughby et al. (2011) found that hot and cool regulation was significantly correlated with disruptive behaviour and academic achievement when each was considered alone. When considered together, cool regulation was uniquely associated with academic achievement, while hot regulation was uniquely associated with inattentive-overactive behaviours (Willoughby et al., 2011).

In both studies cool executive function/self-regulation was associated with academic achievement. Performance on hot executive function tasks was not associated with academic achievement but it is unclear whether poor performance on these tasks represented self-regulation inability, indicating cognitive dysfunction, or unwillingness, indicating motivational factors, which may confound an association between hot regulation and behavioural and achievement-related outcomes. Teachers may also structure the learning environment more explicitly for children with emergent hot executive skills so that they still engage in learning opportunities and achieve. This differentiation for behaviour based on an awareness of child development may be less likely to occur in more formal schooling at later ages. As these are US studies, it is difficult to generalise the findings to the UK where the equivalent class to Kindergarten is Nursery which uses a Foundation Stage Curriculum that may be structured differently.

1.3.9 Neural Plasticity –A Reason for Optimism

The research indicates that abuse and/or neglect in early childhood can negatively impact upon development in the hippocampus region (Nelson & Carver, 1998), which is involved with episodic memory, and in the prefrontal cortex which is involved in executive functioning (Glaser, 2000). By early childhood, the human brain has reached 90% of its adult weight and does not change very much in size after the age of 5 (Durston et al., 2001). This does not mean that brain development is complete by early childhood with changes to brain architecture continuing throughout development (Bryck & Fisher, 2012). Neural plasticity is the process by which the brain's structure and function is modulated by environmental input, learning, and new memories and it is thought to continue throughout childhood and into early adulthood (Glaser, 2000).

Chugani (1998) reviewed research that used positron emission tomography (PET) to look at the brain's utilization of glucose, which Chugani argued correlates with synaptogenesis, the creation of synapses, and found that between the ages of 4 and 9-10 years glucose utilization is over twice that found in adults. The prefrontal cortex is a slowly maturing brain region, developing throughout childhood and into early adulthood. Although this makes it susceptible to early negative environmental effects (Lewis et al., 2007), it also allows for a longer period of plasticity in order to maximise learning capacity. A second major increase in synaptogenesis occurs in children aged 10-11 years when further synapses are created in the already pruned prefrontal cortex which strengthens executive function and supports the advance in executive skills that occurs at that time

(Dawson & Guare, 2010). While it is important to recognise that children who have suffered maltreatment in their early lives are more likely to have associated executive function deficits, interventions may be supported by the slower rate of development of the prefrontal cortex and the ability of the brain to modulate its structure through neural plasticity (Bryck & Fisher, 2012).

Neural plasticity has been demonstrated in rodents who had been exposed to early stress but subsequently reared in an enriched environment (Nithianantharajah & Hannan, 2006). The changes to the brain architecture included increased brain weight and size, increased length and branching of dendrites, changes in the size and number of synapses, and behavioural improvements in tasks involving long-term spatial memory (Nithianantharajah & Hannan, 2006). Although this indicates that the rodent brain is malleable to environmental intervention following early stress it is not possible to directly apply this finding to humans due to differences between species in the speed of development and the vastly more complex human brain (Bryck & Fisher, 2012).

Lewis et al. (2007) found that a stable relationship with a caregiver at some stage in early development can mediate against the negative impact on self-regulation and inhibitory control from prior exposure to inadequate care-giving and maltreatment. The direction of causality was not established in this study, as the children's inhibitory control was not measured before and after their stable adoptive setting, but the results suggested that caregiving stability was an important protective factor for those children who had experienced neglect and abuse in their early development. Adoption in itself may be viewed as an intervention with meta-analytic evidence showing that domestic as well as international adoptions are effective interventions in the developmental domains of physical growth, attachment security, cognitive development and school achievement, self-esteem, and behaviour problems (Van IJzendoorn & Juffer, 2006).

Further evidence for optimism comes from the finding of Fisher, Gunner, Dozier, Bruce, and Pears (2006) whose work indicated that caregiver-based interventions could help normalize hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis function and that these changes were associated with improved behavioural functioning.

1.3.10 The Role of Consultation in EP Practice

Reviews have valued the ability of the educational psychology profession to contribute to the well-being of children and young people (CYP) and their families (DfEE 2000; Farrell et al. 2006). Consultation is the method in which most EPs apply and adapt psychological knowledge to problem situations faced by CYP, adults in their life, and those supporting agencies (Kennedy, Cameron, & Monsen, 2009). Consultation in the UK is synonymous with the work of Patsy Wagner who has been a keen promoter of the use of consultation within services in England and Wales and has carried out training with over 20 EPSs in supporting the implementation of consultation based practice (Wagner, 2000). Consultation is described by Wagner (2000) as "a voluntary, collaborative, non-supervisory approach, established to aid the functioning of a system and its inter-related systems" (p. 11). Proponents of eco-behavioural consultation give a more specific, practice-

orientated definition of consultation. Conjoint behavioural consultation (CBC) is an example of eco-behavioural consultation and Sladeczek, Madden, Illsley, Finn, and August (2006) describe the CBC process as 'working collaboratively and simultaneously with both teachers and parents to address the academic, behavioural or social difficulties of a child across home and school settings ..."
(p.59).

The researcher is placed in an EPS that uses a consultative framework to deliver services to school, parents/carers, and CYP. The term consultation has a multiplicity of meanings (Leadbetter, 2006) and the way in which consultation is taught is not well documented (Kennedy et al., 2009). Kennedy et al. (2009) stated that there are three key areas to consultation: "*knowledge* aspects of consultation content (i.e. cognitive components), *skill* aspects (behavioural components) and *attitudes/values* (affective components)" (p. 610). Kennedy et al. (2009) proposed that one of the key competencies of the consultant is interpersonal skill and influence with adults. Conoley and Gutkin (1995) stated that psychology is a science "… pre-occupied with the problems of individuals rather than understanding the ecologies in which people function … interpersonal influence with adults, rather than enhanced psychological services to children, is the key to resolving our role and function dilemmas…" (1995, pp. 210–211). Conoley and Conoley (1990) were of the view that consultation should not primarily be about giving the consultee advice and they state that:

> although advice may certainly be given by a consultant, the purpose of consultation is to enhance the problem-solving capacity of a consultee. This is not likely to be accomplished by merely providing new answers. In fact, over-reliance on advice may make a consultee quite dependent, this interfering with the empowerment goal of consultation (p. 85).

1.3.10.1 The Practice of Consultation

The Lippitt and Lippitt (1978) model of consultation explores the manner in which a consultant can achieve influence during a consultation using a continuum with one end viewed as *non-directive and client-centred* and the other end described as *directive and consultant-centred*. The way in which the consultation utilises the client's experience and knowledge in combination with the use of the consultant's specialised experience and knowledge determines where on the continuum the consultation is operating (Lippitt & Lippitt, 1978). When intervening in schools an EP/TEP can be in a position to provide teaching staff with psychological knowledge and evidence-based practice that could support the teacher's work with CYP (Matthews, 2010). The consultant aims to provide new knowledge, new skills, a greater sense of self-efficacy, and a more developed level of objectivity in consultees and it is argued that advice-giving does not achieve these latter three goals (Conoley & Conoley, 1990). Wagner (2008) agreed and stated that one of the goals of consultation is to facilitate the skill development of consultees rather than to provide an expert opinion. Realist consultation (Matthews, 2010) holds that consultation can be benefited by the consultant donating knowledge when it may be viewed as helpful for the child and in situations where the donated

knowledge is likely to be acceptable to the consultee. The role of the EP within realist consultation allows for the use of a distinctive knowledge of psychological theory and recent research to help reformulate or expand upon the consultee's explanation for the causes of the problem behaviour so that other theories can be considered (Matthews, 2010). West and Idol (1987) discussed how the EP in consultation with parents and school staff, use both *process knowledge*; skills for developing an effective consultative relationship and creating the space for positive change to occur, and *content knowledge*; psychological theory that aids a participant's understanding of a problem situation and/or interventions that will directly involve the child. EPs often use a consultative approach to reduce the barriers to the implementation of psychological advice and interventions (Frederickson & Miller, 2008) which means that they must simultaneously balance both process knowledge and content knowledge within a consultation session (West & Idol, 1987). Gutkin and Curtis (1982) noted that "at its most basic level, consultation is a personal exchange. As such, the consultant's success is going to hinge largely on his or her communication and relationship skills" (p. 822). A central part of the use of consultation by EPs to promote positive outcomes for CYP is through gaining influence with significant adults in their lives (Conoley & Conoley, 1990) and the importance of developing strong communication and interpersonal skills to aid this process should be noted (Gutkin & Curtis, 1982).

1.3.10.2 Conjoint Behavioural Consultation (CBC)

CBC is an evidenced based eco-behavioural model of consultation at the mesosystemic level (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). CBC uses primarily behavioural methods such as task analysis, precise definition of behaviours, basing strategy decisions on data collection, and the use of rewards and motivators. CBC promotes academic, socioemotional, and behavioural outcomes for children which are reflected in its definition:

> (CBC is) a strength based, cross-system problem-solving and decision-making model
>
> wherein parents, teachers, and other caregivers or service providers work as partners and
>
> share responsibility for promoting positive and consistent outcomes related to a child's
>
> academic, behavioural, and social-emotional development (Sheridan & Kratochwill, 2007,
>
> p. 25).

The CBC model consists of four problem-solving stages whereby a consultant, parent(s)/carer(s), and class teacher engage in problem-solving consultations to identify the needs, analyse the needs, implement a plan, and finally evaluate the plan. The family-school partnership of CBC is influenced by the principles of family-centred services (Dunst & Deal, 1994) in that it emphasises family empowerment, acquiring new skills and competencies, prioritising family-identified needs, the use of family strengths to guide the process, and the importance of strengthening social supports (Sheridan & Kratochwill, 2007). In keeping with family-centred practices, an important goal of CBC is to promote parents' acquisition of skills and knowledge through supporting and

guiding their engagement in identifying needs and developing solutions (Sheridan & Kratochwill, 2007). EPs view discussions with parents as an important part of defining problems and understanding a child's strengths and needs (Farrell, et al., 2006). Sometimes the views of parents are obtained in addition to, and separately from, the views of school staff. As it is a partnership-centred model rather than a family-centred model, CBC is concerned with the priorities of family and school in partnership rather than those of the family or school separately (Sheridan & Kratochwill, 2007). The goals of the family-school partnership which underpin the CBC approach are to create meaningful roles for family members to support their child's education, promote continuity across home and school settings, and to enhance the competencies of all participants (Sheridan & Kratochwill, 2007).

Sheridan and Kratochwill (2007) highlighted four characteristics of CBC as a partnership-centred model. Firstly, CBC is concerned with both outcomes and processes. Parents/carers and teachers are encouraged to identify need, propose strategies and resources, and accomplish goals developed for children. The consultant emphasises and uses the strengths within and across systems by promoting consultees' capacities, structuring communication and collaboration, and by trying to engender consistency and continuity across settings (Sheridan & Kratochwill, 2007). Secondly, consultee-determined needs are explored and addressed leading to interventions that are co-created using consultees' and consultant conceptions of the child's needs. Thirdly, CBC aims to increase consultees' self-efficacy by increasing skills and knowledge so that they can address future problems. Finally, the overarching aim of CBC is to promote partnership and collaboration between family and school systems (Sheridan & Kratochwill, 2007). Although the model follows a four-stage progression, Sheridan and Kratochwill (2007) stated that it is generally fluid and cyclical in practice.

1.3.10.2.1 The Effectiveness of CBC

Behavioural consultation is a widely used form of consultation in the US and it has a strong evidence base (Reddy, Barboza-Whitehead, Files, & Reddy, 2000; Sheridan, Welch, & Orme, 1996). Reddy et al. (2000) reviewed studies of outcomes for children and adolescents following consultation during the period 1986-1997 and reported that behavioural consultation produced large positive effects for children, parents, and teachers. This supported the Sheridan et al. (1996) review of the literature on consultation outcomes which found that 95% of behavioural consultations produced at least one positive outcome. CBC is an expansion of traditional behavioural consultation in that it involves the consultant, often the EP, working simultaneously with the parents and teacher rather than with the teacher or parent in isolation (Sladeczek, et al., 2006).

An evaluation of the CBC model using outcome data over a four year period found that participants' perceptions of effectiveness, acceptability of CBC, and satisfaction with consultants were favourable (Sheridan, Eagle, Cowan & Mickleson, 2001). The child sample in this study consisted of 52 children from Kindergarten to the ninth grade (mean age 9.4) of whom 74% were

diagnosed with academic difficulties or with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. The children were identified by school staff as either struggling to meet basic academic requirements, with inappropriate behaviours, or with social-emotional difficulties that were impacting on their school performance (Sheridan, et al., 2001). Direct observations of children's target behaviours in naturalistic settings were the primary source of outcome measures used in the study but consultees' subjective perceptions of case outcomes were also sought using the Behaviour Intervention Rating Scale (BIRS; Von Brock & Elliott, 1987).The magnitude of average effect sizes in this four year study ranged from 1.08 to 1.11 *(M* = 1.10,) and there was a large standard deviation *(SD*=1.07). Although the objective measure of client's behavioural outcomes was variable, parents and teachers seemed to find the CBC process generally acceptable and effective (Sheridan et al., 2001). Limitations of this study need to be considered. Information about children with a combination of behavioural difficulties and academic difficulties was not provided. The intervention process, including treatment integrity, was not fully investigated. Further support for CBC as an evidence based intervention in improving school-related outcomes is strengthened by a review of parent consultations in which all seven studies that used CBC had 'promising' to 'strong' evidence of significant change in key outcomes, although the author did point out that there was a lack of between-group designs (Giuli, 2005).

Sladeczek, et al. (2006) sought to gain the views of Canadian EPs and Canadian parents in order to explore the acceptability of CBC outside of the US educational context where acceptability had already been established (Sheridan & Steck, 1995). Slaseczek et al. (2006) found that Canadian EPs agreed, with their US counterparts, that CBC was the preferred way of intervening in academic, behavioural, and social-emotional difficulties compared with parent-only consultation, teacher-only consultation, and direct involvement with the pupil. Parents also found CBC procedures to be acceptable (Slaseczek et al., 2006) although this was based on only 12 parents who had participated in CBC. It is important to note that the responses from the EPs in the Sheridan and Steck (1995) and Slaseczek et al. (2006) studies were not based on direct experience of using CBC but on what they perceived to be acceptable and preferable so it is difficult to evaluate how the results of this study relate to everyday practice.

A small scale study in the US aimed at supporting two children with emotional and behavioural difficulties in a mainstream class reported that there were improvements in the teacher's rating of behavioural control, and that these were still evident in a four week follow up (Wilkinson, 2005a). This was a small sample so generalisations cannot be widely made and it is difficult to determine whether the positive findings could be accounted for by CBC as a model of delivery or by the practice of pupil self-monitoring which was used in the intervention. There was also no discussion of improvements, or otherwise, in children's behaviour at home.

Empirical support has been amassed for the efficacy of CBC in enhancing students' academic, behavioural and social-emotional concerns (Guli, 2005; Sheridan et. al 2001; Wilkinson, 2005a). Studies have also demonstrated that CBC has been used in a wider range of contexts including

supporting the inclusion of a child with Asperger syndrome (Wilkinson, 2005b) and in the treatment of a pupil with selective mutism (Mitchell & Kratochwill, 2013).

Sheridan and Kratochwill (2007) emphasized that behavioural outcomes are not the only outcome of CBC. They stress that it is not only

> *what* is done in the context of problem solving, but also *how* parents and teachers are
>
> brought together and relate to one another and the manner in which they are supported
>
> that determines the broader benefits of CBC (Sheridan & Kratochwill, 2007 p. 57).

1.3.11 Home-School Partnerships – Why Engage with Parents?

The term *partnership* is increasingly being used internationally to describe meaningful cooperative relations between schools, parents/carers, and the local community but other terms are used in the literature including *parental involvement* (PI), *parental participation*, *school–family relations* , *home-school partnership,* and *educational partnership* (Driessen, Smit, & Sleegers, 2005).

The rationale behind the emphasis on home-school partnership can be encapsulated by Peterson and Cooper (1989):

> parents take their child home after professionals complete their services and parents
>
> continue providing the care for the larger portion of the child's waking hours… No matter
>
> how skilled professionals are, or how loving parents are, each cannot achieve alone what
>
> the two parties, working hand-in-hand, can accomplish together (p. 229).

PI is not a recent phenomenon with the benefits being promoted for over 40 years (DES, 1967). In the US, the National Association for School Psychologists (NASP), as part of their position statement, support home-school partnerships to accomplish shared goals for student competence. They state that the focus of home-school partnerships is on "coordination, consistency, and continuity across families and educators through effective communication, joint problem-solving, active involvement, and shared decision making" (NASP, 2012, p.1). The Department for Children, Schools and Families, in the previous English government, produced a report called *The Impact of Parental Involvement in Children's Education* which highlighted the evidence supporting the government's drive to increase parental involvement in all children's education (DCSF, 2008). Involvement by parents in their children's education is being promoted because evidence indicates that, from an early age, their involvement has a significant effect on educational achievement which carries on into adolescence and adulthood (Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford, & Taggert, 2004). The impact of differing levels of PI, in the primary age range, is a stronger predictor of children's achievement and adjustment than the differences associated with measures of the "quality" of the school (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003). The drive for PI, particularly in relation to SEN, has been reflected in educational legislation with one of the principles underlying

the SEN Code of Practice being the vital role that parents play in supporting their child's education (Simmons et al. 2006). The Lamb inquiry found that parents did not have confidence in the statutory process and recommended greater involvement of parents (Lamb, 2009). As the Lamb report indicated, the value of PI may be well established as a concept in educational domains but the reality of meaningful PI in schools may lag someway behind the rhetoric (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001). This is illustrated by a report in the UK indicating that 72% of mothers wanted more involvement in their children's education (Williams, Williams, & Ullman, 2002).

1.3.11.1 Characteristics of Home-School Partnership

Collaborative relationships are at the forefront of home-school partnerships. West (1990) described collaboration as:

> an interactive planning or problem-solving process involving two or more team
>
> members…characterized by mutual respect, trust, and open communication; consideration
>
> of each issue or problem from an ecological perspective; consensual decision making;
>
> pooling of resources and expertise; and joint ownership of the issue or problem being
>
> addressed (p. 29)

Sheridan (2004) proposed that effective home-school partnership is characterized by mutual interests and commitments to working together on behalf of the child's performance/achievement; frequent, positive, bidirectional communication; cultural sensitivity, perspective taking; clear and mutual roles, shared goals; and co-constructed plans. A meta-analysis conducted as part of a review into best practice in developing parental engagement aimed to identify effective interventions in supporting PI, with particular emphasis on "those parents who are either not significantly involved in their children's education or who are not involved at all" (DfE, 2010, p. 3). A summary of the evidence provided the following recommendations to help foster good home-school partnerships:

- Any additional parental engagement strategies should be integrated into a whole school approach to parental engagement.

- School staff should receive parental engagement training through initial teacher training or continuing professional development.

- Parental engagement strategies should fit with the interpretations and values of the parents for whom they are aimed.

- An outward facing parental engagement strategy that involves not only the views of parents, but also incorporates the evidence and expertise of other schools and services in the community.

- ICT should be used to facilitate the process of parental engagement by providing a convenient means for parents to access up-to-date information about their child's learning.

- A parental engagement strategy should recognise and address challenges that teachers and parents face in improving parental engagement such as confidence and training for teachers and logistical barriers for parents/carers (DfE, 2010, pp. 5-7).

Parents can be deemed "hard to reach" by school staff when they are perceived as not engaging with school but Crozier (2012) noted that research suggests that the schools themselves can be hard to reach (Bhatti 1999; Cork 2005; Crozier & Davies, 2007). Tucker and Schwartz (2013) examined the views of parents of children with ASD (*N*=135) and asked parents for the top three things that helped them to feel included by the school team in the Individual Educational Plan (IEP)/educational process. The highest response was "the teacher asking for input into the IEP" (60%) followed by "providing regular communication about my child's progress" (46%) and "planning and writing goals and objectives with me" (30%). The researchers gave instances where parental involvement was tokenistic and lacking meaningfulness, an example of which was where parents, at an IEP meeting, were asked to look over an already written draft of an IEP which was stated as a common occurrence and one that denigrated parents' abilities to be a fully informed member of the IEP team (Tucker & Schwartz, 2013). Parents were asked to identify the most important methods of collaboration by the IEP team and the responses included "maintain regular contact with me" (34%), "include my suggestions for goals and objectives for the IEP" (31%), and "include my suggestions for curriculum or instructional approaches" (13 %) (Tucker & Schwartz, 2013). Parents stated that the three most common reasons for breakdowns in collaboration with school staff were "my ideas and suggestions were not included", "no regular communication", and "IEP created without my input" (Tucker & Schwartz, 2013). It is clear that the parents in this study wanted meaningful and active collaboration with school staff where their views were included in their child's education rather than PI as a bolt-on or after thought. These findings are pertinent to the carers of LAC as national statistics show that they are over 10 times more likely to have a statement of educational needs (29.4%) compared with children who are not in care (2.8%) (DfE, 2012). Foster carers have to attend annual LAC review meetings that are usually based in school as well as annual reviews of SEN if their child has a statement so the views represented in the Tucker and Schwartz (2013) study may resonate with many foster carers.

The current national statistics indicate that LAC in primary school are nine times more likely than children who are not in care to be excluded (DfE, 2012) so it is likely that many of the experiences of home-school communication between their carers and their schools will be related to school problems. This poses challenges for effective home-school communication as it is important for schools to ensure that communication with parents/carers is not only about school problems. PI relating to negative issues can be a factor in reducing pupil motivation as measured by engagement, self-efficacy towards Maths and English, and intrinsic motivation in Maths and English (Fan & Williams, 2009). Cooper and Johnson (2007) reported that a third of the adoptive parents in their study raised communication between school and parents as an issue with "feeling

uninformed about the child's support in school" or "a belief that the support was not effective" being the main points of contention. The parents in the Cooper and Johnson (2007) study also suggested that a home-school joint forum would be an effective means of feeling meaningfully involved.

1.3.12 Executive Function Interventions in Education

The aim of researchers and practitioners is to provide safe and effective intervention for clients and it is a requirement for health and social care practitioners to understand and adhere to principles of *evidence-based practice* (Health Professions Council, 2009). Although there is limited literature on the impact of executive function interventions with school-age children (Bryck & Fisher, 2013), proponents of *practice-based evidence* support the safe trialing of innovative techniques by practitioners, with the aim of building an inclusive, practitioner-led research evidence base (Barkham, Hardy, & Mellor-Clark, 2010). In support of this position, the APA (2006) stressed the importance of not assuming that interventions on which there are no published controlled trials are ineffective.

Executive function interventions in educational settings have been proposed in recently published books (Dawson & Guare, 2004; 2010; Meltzer, Pollica, & Barzillai, 2007) and use case studies vignettes to highlight the impact of interventions. Dawson and Guare (2004; 2010) aimed to teach children *how* to learn by informing teachers of ways to support their pupil with the executive skills in which they have most difficulty. The approach of Dawson and Guare (2010) is for adults to support children's underdeveloped executive skills by intervening at the level of the environment and/or to teach the child specific skills. This is based on Vygotsky's (1978) theory of a *zone of proximal development* (ZPD) where the child's level of executive function is recognized and their potential for developing stronger executive skills is facilitated by the adult. Vygotsky highlighted that whether a child can successfully solve a problem or complete a task is dependent on many environmental factors. *Scaffolding* is a term used to describe how a child's ZPD and learning can be extended through the use of support during the teaching of a new skill. Support is then gradually faded as the child develops competence and moves towards mastery (Defeyter, 2011). According to Vygotsky's sociocultural perspective the child *internalizes* the language and behaviours used by adults during social and learning interactions and it becomes part of their private speech which then supports their future problem solving and planning (Defeyter, 2011). Landry, Miller-Loncar, Smith, & Swank (2002) examined the impact of maternal verbal scaffolding when age 3 and age 4 on children's later executive processing skills at age 6. The children of parents who at age 3 provided richer forms of verbal guidance were more likely to have more advanced language skills at age 4. This in turn predicted better performance, at age 6, in tasks requiring executive functioning which placed demands on children's ability to form a mental representation, show flexibility in problem solving, and develop an efficient strategy for retrieving hidden objects.

Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) is a universal school-based preventative curriculum for social and emotional learning that aims to promote emotional awareness and

effective cognitive control based on neuroscientific principles (Greenberg, 2006). Inhibitory control and verbal fluency were assessed before and after the intervention, and at 1 year follow-up, with significant differences at posttest showing improvements in both areas for children in the intervention group (Greenberg, 2006).

Debonis (1998) evaluated an executive function intervention with five dyads of adolescents with attention deficit disorder and their parents. The intervention ran for five weeks and it focused on the children developing *goal-plan-do* routines with support from their parents. After intervention there was qualitative evidence that participants made improvements in getting their homework done and there was an improvement in behaviour as seen by outside sources. Quantitative data showed no improvement in executive functioning despite the positive qualitative results. The authors considered that that the ability of parents to support their children and positively influence their behaviour had been strengthened by the intervention.

Hedges (2010) evaluated the impact of a whole school executive function intervention on a single primary school in the North West of England. The school raised concerns with the researcher about a number of pupils with attention difficulties. The study involved 31 participants, 14 males and 17 females, ranging in age from 6:01 to 10:08. Pupils were rated by their teacher for attention skills and were selected if they were ranked 1-4 for having the best attention skills in the class or ranked 1-4 for the lowest attention skills in the class. Children were excluded if they had a diagnosis of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). The intervention consisted of staff training on executive function and materials provided by the researcher to help staff support pupils with executive functioning difficulties. Subsequent interviews with staff indicated that they had used the training to intervene at whole school and whole class level. Post-intervention reassessment using the NEPSY-II (Korkman, Kirk, & Kemp, 2007) found improved scores following the whole school intervention.

1.3.13 Executive Function Training

Currently the two methods generally involved in executive function training are laboratory-based training and neurobiologically informed ecological interventions (Bryck & Fisher, 2012). Bryck and Fisher (2012) outlined the research on both of these methods of training. They noted that laboratory-based training tends to target a specific component of executive function such as working memory using a direct intervention rather than seeking an improvement in overall psychosocial well-being in a domain general approach. Although Bryck and Fisher (2012) portray a promising picture of the effectiveness of laboratory-based executive function training, the evidence for working memory training appears to require further substantiation. A recent meta-analysis on the effectiveness of such training suggested a need to directly demonstrate that working memory capacity increases in response to training (Shipstead, Redick, & Engle, 2012). The authors argued that the transfer of training to working memory must be demonstrated using a wider variety of tasks as this would eliminate the possibility that results could be explained by task specific learning (Shipstead, et al. 2012). A more recent meta-analysis concluded that working memory training

programmes produce reliable, short-term improvements on both verbal and nonverbal working memory tasks but when they were reassessed after a delay averaging roughly nine months the gains were not sustained (Melby-Lervåg & Hulme, 2013). There was no evidence that working memory training yielded generalised gains to the other skills that had been studied including verbal ability, word decoding, or arithmetic, even when assessments were conducted immediately after training (Melby-Lervåg & Hulme, 2013). Bryck and Fisher (2012) outlined a number of promising ecological interventions that aim to improve executive functions, although it is unclear in the interventions which brain systems are actually targeted. These are all interventions with pre-school aged children so are not pertinent to the present research.

1.4   Systematic Literature Review

The literature had initially been searched iteratively during the research process due to the complexity of the research literature on executive function and the diversity of the LAC population. A systematic literature review was conducted to focus on the primary interest of the thesis. This was on the use of consultation to meet the needs of fostered children and specifically in relation to executive skills or executive function.

Table 7: Systematic Literature Review – Search Terms and Databases

Databases	Search terms
Psychinfo	Consultation and "foster care"
Eric	"consult* and "foster care" and executive
Web of Knowledge	"executive skills/function" and intervene* and "foster care*"
Applied Social Science Index and Abstracts (ASSIA)	"executive skills/function" and intervene* and "foster child*"
Google Scholar	

The systematic literature review did not locate relevant articles on the area of consultation based interventions for fostered children with executive functioning difficulty but the search for 'Consultation and Foster Care' did yield some relevant articles that are discussed below.

1.4.1   Consultation for Foster Carers

A number of studies have explored the impact of group support sessions for carers. These group sessions often focus on particular conceptual areas such as attachment (Golding, 2003) or on targeting skill-based concerns such as managing challenging behaviour (Hill-Tout, Pithouse, & Lowe, 2003). Osborne and Alfano (2011) noted that the findings for these studies are mixed with high levels of carer satisfaction coinciding with limited evidence of impact based on the measures applied (Hill-Tout et al., 2003). Individual work with carers may be viewed as having greater

potential as there may be a greater opportunity to tailor the sessions to the concerns of the individual case and this is especially important since the range of needs of LAC varies from one child to another (Hare & Bullock, 2000).

Sargent and O'Brien (2004) reported mixed findings in a small-scale study of a Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) support service offering one-to-one sessions to the foster carers of children diagnosed with specific mental health issues. As Osborne and Alfano (2011) noted, CAMHS often have very strict criteria for accessing their support which may not include many carers of children with other types of need. Golding (2004) described the work of a multi-disciplinary Primary Care and Support Team which aimed to provide a consultation service to support foster carers. Golding (2004) stated that a consultee-centered and collaborative method of consultation was employed however the article noted that the consultant was responsible for developing a case formulation to explain the current functioning of the child. This was based on discussion with the carer and the consultant's psychological knowledge and expertise. The consultant's formulation provided the context that guided the discussion and problem solving (Golding, 2004). Descriptive case studies of individuals receiving support formed the basis for the evaluation of this consultation service and the findings suggested that the service led to high levels of satisfaction among service users. Golding (2004) noted that a collaborative approach that highlighted everyone's expertise was not always possible to achieve mainly through a lack of time. An alternative hypothesis for a collaborative approach not being fully realised might have been because the consultation process did not support the equal status of the participants. It is difficult to see how the additional benefits of a collaborative consultative approach, such as increasing consultee's self-efficacy and improving future problem-solving skills, could be promoted when the consultant was solely responsible for formulating the explanation for the child's functioning which then determined the problems that were to be discussed. Golding (2004) also noted that there was a danger of the psychologist being viewed as the expert with 'the answers' which had a limiting effect on the amount of collaborative discussion that took place. This observation appears to support the hypothesis that meaningful collaboration was not achieved.

EPs have a knowledge of factors which promote children's learning, behaviour, and emotional well-being and it has been suggested that they are well placed to "influence the practice of significant people in the lives of LAC in the provision of appropriate and effective support" (DECP, 2006, p.9). Osborne and Alfano (2011) aimed to conduct an in-depth examination of the role of EP-led consultation sessions in supporting foster carers and adoptive parents. Each session lasted for one hour and was run by an EP with specific interest in supporting LAC and adopted children and a member of a team that specialized in supporting the education of children in care. The thoughts of the EP and the carer about the session were provided through the completion of a feedback questionnaire which included open-ended questions on the EP's questionnaire. The analysis of the feedback from 101 EPs and 78 carers who completed the feedback forms revealed that there were over 10 separate areas of presenting concern. Although some consultations were about more than one topic, the three main issues of concern were behaviour management, educational issues, and

emotional wellbeing of the child (Osborne & Alfano, 2011). The EPs reported that they provided practical strategies to support the child and general advice on issues of concern including education, behaviour management, attachment, and emotional development (Osborne & Alfano, 2011). When asked whether they thought that they were the appropriate person to address the issue being discussed in the consultation, 86% of EPs thought that they were while 98% thought that they were to some extent (Osborne & Alfano, 2011). In the cases where they answered "to some extent" the EPs considered that it would have been helpful for other people, such as school staff, to be present. The carers were able to invite other people to attend such as social workers, school staff and education workers. While in some cases the carer attended with another person, the majority of consultations took place with only foster carers or adoptive parents. The breakdown of the identity of these other attendees was not made explicit. The carers stated that they valued discussing their concerns with a professional and receiving practical advice (Osborne & Alfano, 2011). The carers concern rating and their level of confidence in addressing these concerns was measured on a scale of 1-7 before and after the consultation session. There was a reduction in the average concern rating post-session by 1.58 and an increase in the average confidence level by 1.56 points with both changes statistically significant (p<0.0001). There were no follow-up or review sessions so it was difficult to assess whether there was any long-term impact on the carers or the children. A small number of carers also stated that it would have been useful if school staff or the school EP had more involvement with the consultation sessions (Osborne & Alfano, 2011). This study indicated that carers could be supported through consultation sessions in the short-term by increasing their confidence in managing concerns and in doing so this reduced the level of the concern. Another finding of interest, that is pertinent to the present research, is that some EPs and carers thought that it would have been helpful in some instances to have members of school staff involved in the consultation process.

1.4.2 Executive Skills Interventions involving Consultation

The following study was located through reference harvesting and was the only example that the researcher could locate in the literature that involved practitioners using consultation to indirectly support the executive skills of fostered children. A paper by Lansdown, Burnell, and Allen (2007) outlined the work of the Family Futures Consortium with children who had experienced early trauma and were living with adoptive families or with foster carers. They hypothesised that the children's experience of early trauma had resulted in neurological developmental damage which in turn led them to consider screening the children's executive skills. The Behavior Rating Inventory of Executive Function (BRIEF) screening questionnaire (Gioia et al, 1996) was used and the child's parent/carer and teacher completed the scales based on their knowledge of the child. Lansdown et al. (2007) stated that all of the 86 children, aged 6-18, who they screened for executive functioning using the BRIEF had difficulties in the clinically worrying range. The criterion they used to indicate a clinically worrying difficulty with executive function was a standard score of 65 or over in a single domain. An EP working with Family Futures consulted with teachers and informed them about the child's executive functioning difficulties as well as imparting relevant literature and strategies to help staff support the child (Lansdown, et al., 2007). The authors stated that whole

class strategies, to support the development of executive skills, were given to the teachers as well as individual strategies to address the specific difficulties experienced by the child in question. In their parenting support programme, Family Futures also integrated information and strategies to help parents/carers support their child's executive functioning (Lansdown, et al., 2007). The degree to which the consultation and information giving was collaborative, identified priorities, and built on strengths was not discussed nor was there any explanation of the way that this information was used by parents and teachers. There was no evidence in the paper that this programme was evaluated, although they anecdotally report that the awareness of executive function difficulties and the integration of this knowledge into their strategies programme for families "had a positive impact" on the families who used the service (Lansdown, et al., 2007, p.52). While it is difficult for future researchers to replicate their study or to draw any firm conclusions from their work, it does highlight the need for an evaluation to add practice-based evidence to explore the potential of integrating executive function information into a support programme for parents and teachers of children who are fostered or adopted.

1.5   Summary and Rationale for this Study

Executive function is an umbrella term used to describe the skills needed to enable people to purposefully guide cognitive, emotional and behavioural processes and actions when confronted with a novel problem to solve. The developing brain can be affected by exposure to abuse and neglect through a lack of environmental experiences that affect the way in which the brain's architecture develops (Fox et al., 2010) and due to the brain's response to stress which creates elevated levels of cortisol in the hippocampus and prefrontal cortex (Glaser, 2000). The permanence of the impact on the developing brain is still being researched and debated and the plasticity of the brain should be noted.

Executive function difficulty is known to be associated with academic achievement and behaviours relating to successful learning (Best, et al., 2009; Best, et al., 2011; Blair, 2002; Brock et al., 2009; Bull, et, al., 2008; Cartwright, 2012; Clark et al., 2010; Latzman et al., 2010; St Clair-Thompson & Gathercole, 2006; Willoughby et al. 2011) although Willoughby et al. (2012) advised caution as they argued that a causal relationship had not, as yet, been established.

Abuse and neglect is the most common reason for children being taken into care (DfE, 2012) and the lower educational outcomes of LAC have been an on-going concern (Goddard, 2000). LAC are more likely to have SEN, a statement of SEN, most commonly for BESD, and are more likely to be excluded from school (DfE, 2012). There are many factors which contribute to the underachievement of LAC in the educational system (SEU, 2003) and the impact of abuse and neglect on the executive skills of LAC may be a further barrier to good educational outcomes.

There are few studies that examine how executive function interventions translate into classroom settings although books aimed at a school audience have been published (Dawson & Guare, 2010; Meltzer et al., 2007). Lansdown et al. (2007) outlined the work of the Family Futures Consortium in disseminating information about executive function in their supportive work with foster carers,

adoptive parents and teachers. There was no mention of collaborative working or joint discussion between parents/carers and teachers and it was not clear if the strategies were based only on assessment information or if they also reflected the priorities and strengths of teacher and parents/ carers. Evaluation of the process and outcomes of their work was also lacking.

Consultation is the method in which most EPs apply and adapt psychological knowledge to problem situations faced by CYP, adults in their life and supporting agencies (Kennedy, et al., 2009).The present research aims to address the gap in the literature through an exploration of the process and outcomes of an consultation-led executive skills intervention for the carers and class teacher of fostered children who had experienced maltreatment. The intervention employed the structure and techniques of CBC (Sheridan & Kratochwill, 2007) which is an evidence-based, eco-behavioural type of consultation that aims to improve behavioural outcomes while strengthening the relationships between home and school.

Strengthening home-school partnerships is increasingly being prioritized in the US (NASP, 2012) and the UK (DCSF, 2008) and great importance is placed on meaningful parental engagement by the parents/carers of children with additional educational needs (Tucker & Schwartz, 2013) and adoptive parents (Cooper & Johnson, 2007). The intervention is termed Conjoint Executive Skills Consultation (CESC) to reflect the influence of the structure and theoretical underpinnings of CBC and the shift in focus from the presenting problem behaviour to the underlying executive skills difficulties. The aim of the research is to contribute to the knowledge base of EPs and other practitioners working with foster carers and foster children by providing the rich information about intervention processes and outcomes which was not included in the reporting of the work of Lansdown et al. (2007).

This research aimed to explore the following research questions:

Research question 1: What are the perceived facilitators and barriers of operating a collaborative consultation intervention in a school setting to support the executive skills development of children in foster care?

Research question 2: What do participants identify as the outcomes of the conjoint executive skills consultation intervention?

2. Methodology

This section is a critical discussion of the methodology used to answer the study's research questions. A summary of the research design is outlined followed by the philosophical underpinnings of the research including the epistemological, ontological and axiological stance of the researcher. The choice of a case study design and how this was applied is critically discussed in addition to the sampling and participant recruitment strategies, the data collection techniques and the actions taken to maximise the robustness of the study's findings. The section is concluded by examining the ethical considerations made in the course of this research including the dual role of the researcher.

2.1 Summary of the Research Design

This research was designed to explore the following research questions:

Research question 1: What are the perceived facilitators and barriers of operating a collaborative consultation intervention in a school setting to support the executive skills development of children in foster care?

Research question 2: What do participants identify as the outcomes of the conjoint executive skills consultation intervention?

The research utilised a multiple case study design with embedded units of analysis (Yin, 2009, p. 60). The methods used to address the research questions were to gain the views of the carers and school staff who participated in each intervention using a semi-structured interview schedule. A research diary was also kept to record participant-observer information.

Each interview was audio recorded and fully transcribed by the researcher. A computer-assisted qualitative data analysis tool, NVivo 10, was used to code the transcripts as part of the thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) on the data set. The results section contains an overview of the themes from each case study and across both case studies.

2.2 Philosophical Stance of the Researcher

The philosophical stance or worldview of the researcher is "a basic set of beliefs that guide action" (Guba, 1990, p.17) and it is this worldview which lays the foundation for the research methodology adopted by the researcher (Coolican, 2009). This section will outline key concepts in the philosophical stances adopted in research by looking generally at epistemology, ontology and axiology and then specifically at how these concepts were conceived in this research.

Epistemology refers to "the theory of knowledge, especially with regard to its methods, validity, and scope, and the distinction between justified belief and opinion" (Oxford Online Dictionary, 2012). It relates to the researcher's beliefs about how knowledge can be validly achieved in order to answer a study's research questions which in turn lead to particular methodology being adopted. Healy and Perry (2000) define ontology as the reality that researchers investigate,

epistemology as how the researcher relates to that reality, and methodology as the technique used by the researcher to investigate that reality.

The researcher adopted a pragmatic epistemological position and in so doing sought a middle ground between the traditional dualisms of positivism and relativism (Robson, 2011). Specifically the position taken by the researcher was critical realism which is synonymous with the writings of Bhaskar (1986) who promoted a change in direction from prediction to explanation. Critical realism assumes an ontological realism where there is a reality independent of the mind and where there are facts and truths that may be postulated through causal explanations (Wikgren, 2005) but it is also concerned with the causal mechanisms, including social structures, acting in contexts. Eatough (2012) stated that "critical realists acknowledge the existence of an objective and real world but argue that that our access to it is mediated through a lens of social, cultural and historical practices" (p. 328) including the linguistic and discursive practices that we have experienced from birth. Critical realism is an approach that is useful in real world research where the setting is open, without firm boundaries and in research which is concerned with answering "how" and "why" questions (Robson, 2011). These were the types of questions that the researcher wanted to address in this exploratory, flexibly applied intervention. Critical realists argue that "causal outcomes follow from mechanisms acting in contexts" (Pawson & Tilly, 1997, p.58). In the case of this research, the *outcome* was the perceived outcomes of the intervention from the point of view of the participants, of an *action*, the intervention, following the *mechanism*s- the processes, acting in particular *contexts*, the case study setting (Robson, 2011 p33). A graphical depiction of this realist position can be seen in Figure 1.
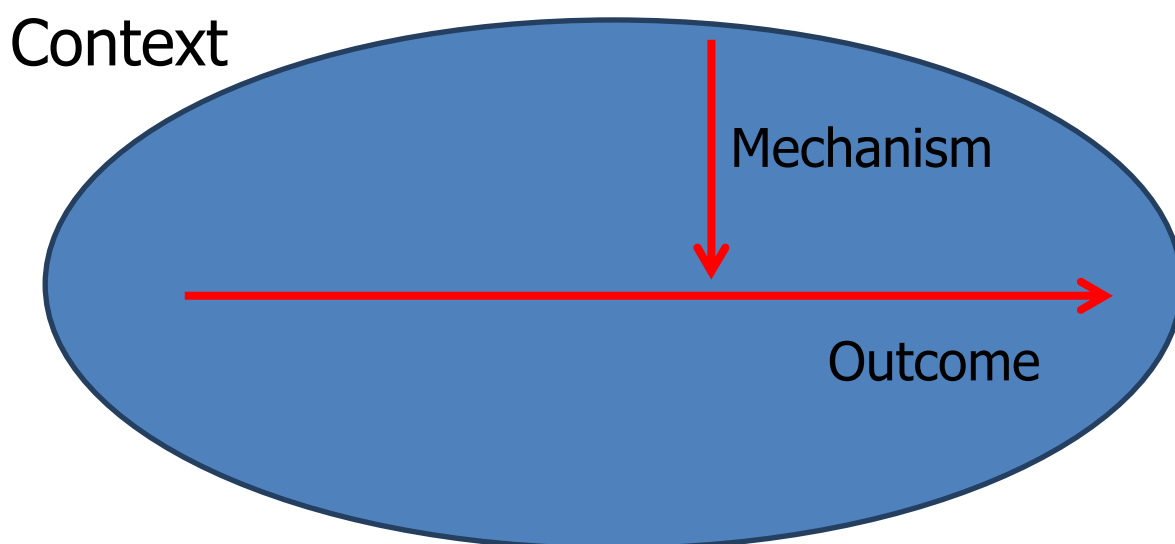
Figure 1: The Context, Mechanism, Outcome (CMO) Model

2.3   Case Study Design

This exploratory research employed a multiple case study approach and the following section discusses the suitability and appropriateness of this design in answering the research questions. See Figure 2 for an overview of the research design.

Yin (2009) defined a case study as "An empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p.18).

Yin's (2009) definition of a case study allows for the frequent lack of distinction in real-life situations between phenomenon and context by adding that the case study design:

- Copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result;

- relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulated fashion, and as another result;

- benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis. (Yin, 2009, p.18)
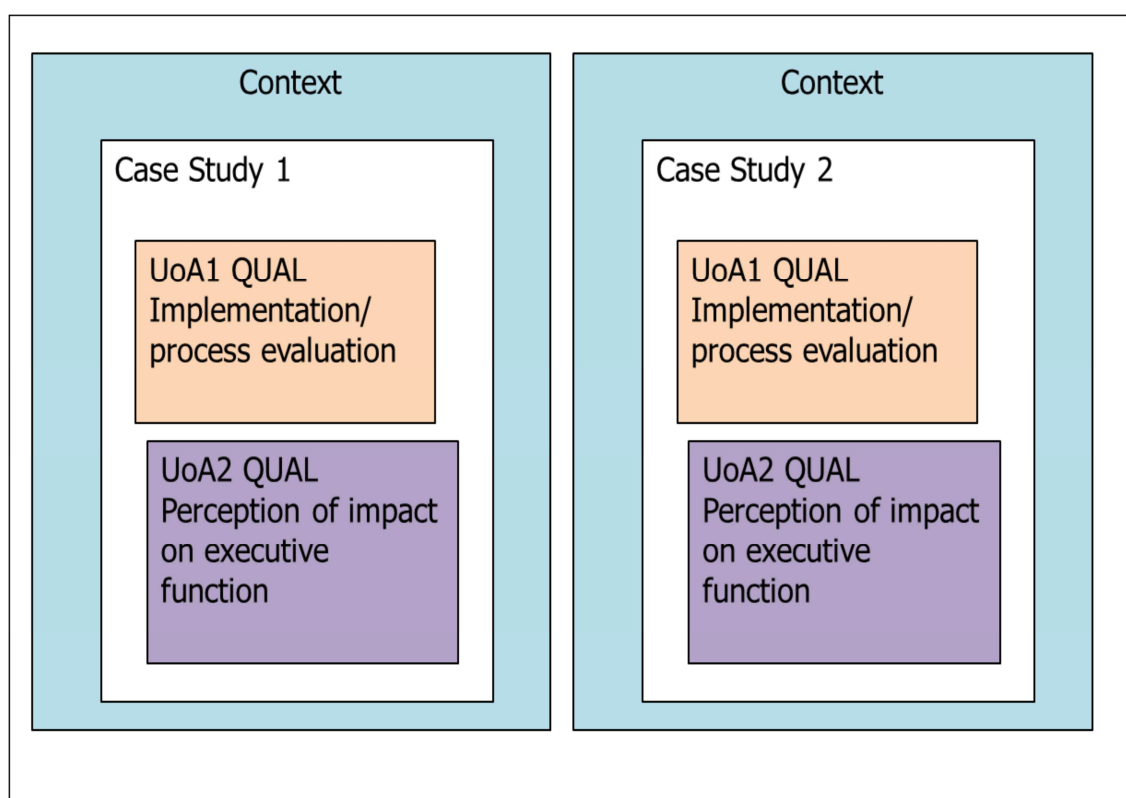
Figure 2: Overview of the Research Design

A case study was an appropriate and suitable design as the literature review had uncovered few examples of school based, consultation-led, executive function interventions and no discussion of implementation process (Lansdowne, et al.2007). Case studies provide a unique example of real

people in real situations and can establish cause and effect in real contexts (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). This study would take place in a real-world context with a flexibly implemented intervention without firm boundaries between the phenomenon, the subjects of the case study, and the context, the data external to the case (Yin, 2009). The aim of case studies is to precisely describe or reconstruct a case (Flick, 2009) and the researcher decided that this was the most suitable design for this exploratory study. The literature on case study design indicates that the role of the researcher, in a case study, should be interpretative as the researcher puts together the viewpoints of multiple stakeholders in order to gain a rounded view (Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1991). This was the researcher's intention in the present study.

2.3.1 The Components of Case Study Design

Yin (2009) outlined five components of a case study design:

- A study's questions

- Its propositions, if any

- Its unit(s) of analysis

- The logic linking the data to the propositions

- The criteria for interpreting findings (p.27).

The present study's questions were derived from a review of the literature which helped to narrow the researcher's focus to key topics of interest and develop a theoretical framework for the research. The literature review also identified a key study (Lansdowne, et al., 2007) which stimulated the researcher's thinking about gaps in the literature that informed this study's research questions (Yin, 2009). The systematic literature review led to the following research questions:

Research question 1: What are the perceived facilitators and barriers of operating a collaborative consultation intervention in a school setting to support the executive skills development of children in foster care?

Research question 2: What do participants identify as the outcomes of the Conjoint Executive Skills Consultation intervention?

A study's *propositions* narrow the researcher's attention to what should be feasibly examined within the study (Yin, 2009). A proposition states the researcher's views about possible answers to the study's questions and enables the researcher to know where to look to find relevant evidence (Yin, 2009). In some research, as in this study, there is a legitimate reason for not having propositions when the study is exploratory and therefore does not assume particular outcomes (Yin, 2009). The design for exploratory research, despite not requiring propositions, should have a clearly stated purpose and criteria for judging the successfulness of the exploration. Yin (2009, p.19) discusses four applications of case study design in evaluation research. The first and most important application is to *explain* the proposed causal connections within a real-world intervention

that are too nuanced to be collected by surveys and/or experimental approaches. The second application is to *describe* an intervention within the contextual, real-life environment where it took place. Thirdly, a case study can *illustrate* certain topics within the evaluation. Finally, it can *enlighten* when there is not a clear, single set of outcomes in the study. The researcher envisaged that the purpose of this research design could be used to *describe* the intervention within its real-life context, *illustrate* the process involved in implementing the intervention, and *enlighten* in terms of discussing the outcomes of the exploratory intervention. The criteria for judging whether the study's purpose has been successfully realised will therefore be measured by whether, or not, another researcher or EP could conduct a similar intervention and whether, or not, the outcomes are meaningful to the participants and readers of this research.

A study's *unit of analysis* is a way of defining what the *case* is and they usually develop from the research questions. Cases can be an individual, a situation, a small group, an organisation, a decision, a program, an implementation process, or any other point of interest within a context (Robson, 2011). To address the research questions, a multiple case study design was employed with embedded units of analysis. Each case consisted of an intervention using a conjoint consultation approach to support the executive skills development of a child who had been in the care of the LA as a result of neglect. The research questions relate to the utility of the intervention and its efficacy and therefore the units of analysis in each case were:

1.   The implementation process – how was the intervention implemented and how did the participants perceive the process

2.   The perceived outcomes of the intervention

The *logic linking data to the propositions* refers to the need, during the design stage, for the researcher to choose data collection and data analytic techniques that suit the study's propositions or purpose (Yin, 2009). Case study design can contain a combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques (Yin 2009) and although this study originally planned to use a mixed methods design the researcher opted to use only qualitative techniques to answer the research questions. The critical realist position of the researcher influenced the decision to use a qualitative design as this approach could unpick the participants' perceptions of the intervention process and outcomes as well as exploring the mechanisms that were involved in achieving the outcomes. The data collection procedures are discussed later in the methodology but at the design stage the researcher opted to describe each case followed by a cross-case synthesis.

The final component of a research design is to identify *criteria for interpreting a study's findings.* One of the main ways of doing this is to identify and address rival explanations for the potential findings at the design stage. By predicting likely rival explanations at an early stage the researcher can include information about them during data collection (Yin, 2009). As this is an exploratory study with no assumed propositions the researcher is open to rival explanations and will explore what alternative events or explanations may have impacted upon the perceived outcomes of the CESC approach.

2.4 Sampling and Participant Recruitment

This section outlines contextual detail in relation to the LA where the research took place and this is followed by the sampling strategy including inclusionary and exclusionary procedures and participant recruitment strategies.

2.4.1 Background to the Local Authority (LA)

The research was conducted in a LA in the North West of England. It is a LA with a high level of social deprivation. In 2010, 33% of the Lower Super Output Areas (LASO) in this LA were in the 10% most deprived in England (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2011). At 31st March 2012 this LA had 80% higher rates of LAC than the national figure (DfE, 2012). Abuse and neglect (61%) and family dysfunction (28%) were the two most common causes of children being looked after in the LA for the year ended 31st March 2012 (DfE, 2012).

2.4.2 Sampling Strategy

As a multiple-case study, using literal replication logic (Yin, 2009), a purposive sampling strategy was adopted to promote a homogeneous sample. An overview of the inclusionary and exclusionary criteria can be seen in Table 8. The researcher critically considered the inclusionary and exclusionary criteria that would provide a sample that could illustrate the process under exploration (Silverman, 2005).

The inclusionary criteria were Key Stage 2 age children, 7-11 years, who were deemed by the social care team to be in a stable foster setting, for at least two years, who had previously been taken into care, after the age of two, on a non-voluntary basis due to abuse and/or neglect. Research suggests a step-like association between age at adoption and executive function difficulties with school-age children adopted after the age of 18 months having greater deficits in executive function compared with younger adopted children (Merz & McCall, 2011). Applying executive function difficulty as an inclusionary criterion was initially based on discussion with the head of fostering and subsequently checked out as an area of need with carers and educators through discussion and by using the BRIEF (Gioia et al., 2000).

An exclusionary criterion was if another need was identified which was considered a higher priority by the Social Welfare team or by carers and/or school teacher. A further exclusionary criterion was to avoid selecting a case where the social care team thought that there could be anxiety related to placement stability on behalf of the social worker/carers/child. If the social care team thought that participation in the intervention might have a negative effect on the child or their carers then the child was excluded. For example, the social worker who knew the family also had to have confidence in the carers' ability to engage in the intervention while being sensitive in their explanation of executive functions so as not to label or pathologise their child. An example of an explanation for children can be viewed in Appendix A.

Table 8: Overview of the Purposive Sampling Criteria

Inclusionary Criteria	• Areas of executive function need as perceived by social care/carers/teacher • Key Stage 2 age pupil • Taken into care on a non-voluntary basis post 2yrs • Physical abuse or neglect main reason for entering care • Currently in a stable setting (>2years)
Exclusionary Criteria	• The primary concern is related to attachment, trauma or a diagnosed condition such as Autism Spectrum Condition/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder/ Foetal Alcohol Syndrome • Participation might cause anxiety or concern over placement stability (trigger memories) • Carers will struggle to explain to the child why they are participating in the study (may unduly pathologise or label the child)

2.4.3 Participant Recruitment

Participants were sought for the intervention using two strategies which can be seen in Table 9 below.

Table 9: Overview of the Participant Recruitment Strategies

Stage in Process	Case Study 1 – The School Route	Case Study 2 - The Social Care Route
1.	Researcher liaises with EP to describe intervention and inclusionary and exclusionary criteria	Researcher liaises with head of service for fostering to apply inclusionary and exclusionary criteria • Age 7-11 • History of neglect and/or abuse • In placement > 2 years Discussion on EF to apply this criterion (no names given)
2.	EP planning meeting with SENCo. Raises topic of research and discusses inclusionary criteria (no names given)	Head of Service spoke with Social Worker of potential children
3.	Child identified (anonymously). SENCo gives carer letter to ascertain initial interest in speaking with researcher	Social Worker contacts carer to ascertain initial interest in speaking with researcher
4.	Discussion with carer, suitability of EF to child's needs. Informed consent sought using University procedures. Permission sought to contact teacher to seek informed consent. Researcher contacts Social Worker	Discussion with carer, suitability of EF to child's needs. Informed consent sought using University procedures. Permission sought to contact teacher to seek informed consent.
5.	Contact school to give class teacher informed consent	Dialogue with carers, suitability of EF to child is discussed. Permission to contact school provided to allow teacher to give informed consent.
6.	Behavioural Rating Index of Executive Function (BRIEF) used as final check of EF difficulty	BRIEF used as final check of EF difficulty

Liaison with the social care team was the primary strategy but inclusionary and exclusionary criteria significantly reduced the number of potential children. One pupil was identified using this strategy and became the child in Case Study 2.

Utilisation of EP planning meetings to identify potential LAC with EF difficulty was a second strategy. This approach identified two pupils one of whom was the child in CS1. The carers of another child identified using this strategy declined to take part. For a more in depth account of the participant recruitment process please refer to Appendix B.

2.4.4 Overview of Participants

The researcher planned for three cases but data were only collected in two case studies. The third case involved a Year 4 male pupil who was in the care of the Local Authority but placed with his mother. Due to a number of factors which are discussed at the beginning of the results section data from this case were not included in this study. In CS1 the participants were both carers of a

Year 4 male pupil and his class teacher. The child in CS1 was originally placed into care, 2 years and 9 months prior to the CESC intervention, with the parents of one of his current carers. He was taken into care as a result of ongoing concerns regarding severe neglect, domestic violence, poor home condition, and non-attendance at school. He had been with his present carers for 4 months and this was his second placement. It was deemed a stable placement by his Social Worker and was planned as long-term care. The school in CS1 was a smaller than average inner-city school in the North West of England. It was deemed a "Good" school by Ofsted (Maloney, 2013). The proportion of children eligible for free-school meals and who are in LA care is well above the national average (Maloney, 2013).

In CS2 the participants were the carer and TA of a Year 6 female pupil who was placed into the care of the LA when aged 6 due to neglect. The current placement had been for the last 3 years and it was the child's third foster placement since being taken into care. The school in CS2 was deemed by Ofsted to be a "satisfactory" school with the number of children eligible for free school meals at twice the national average (Drake, 2012).

2.5   Data Collection Procedures

This section will present the data collection techniques adopted by the researcher and will justify their use through a critical discussion. Participant observation and semi-structured interviews were the two data collection methods used and this section will also include a discussion of the interpersonal skills needed to use these methods and the dual role of the researcher. A description of the interview process with school staff and carers concludes this section.

2.5.1   Participant Observation

Observation is a commonly used method in an exploratory phase of research to uncover the processes involved in a situation (Robson, 2011). Participant-observer methods were employed as one means of addressing research question 1. As will be discussed in section 2.5.2.3, the researcher had a dual role in this study which involved delivering the CESC intervention as the consultant while simultaneously employing participant observational methods as the researcher. The classification of observational methods used in this study will be critically discussed followed by a description of the method of recording the data.

When classifying observational methods the level of pre-structure can be viewed as one dimension and the role adopted by the observer as a second dimension (Robson, 2011). The researcher used informal methods without pre-structure and was a participating observer rather than a pure observer. Informal observational methods lack the reliability and validity of formal methods but they are better at capturing the complexity and richness of the situation under observation (Robson, 2011).

At each meeting, the researcher recorded key information, participant's views, and decisions made by the group by annotating the meeting agenda. From the beginning of the design stage the researcher kept a research diary in which reflections, data on the research process, and a history

of the project was recorded. The researcher entered observational data into the diary after each consultation meeting, using the headings shown in section 2.6.2. The dual role of the researcher is likely to have had an impact on the reliability of the observations made particularly during the consultation meetings. In these meetings the consultant was responsible for managing the CESC process, following the procedures for each meeting, while at the same time attempting to promote relational objectives that are characteristic of CBC (Sheridan & Kratochwill, 2007). This was a complex task and reduced the capacity of the researcher to informally observe during these meetings. The observational data about the consultations collected by the researcher was likely to have been impacted upon by the processes described by Dallos (2012):

- Selective attention – the aspects of a situation that the researcher attends to might be influenced by preconceptions. The researcher will have a limited capacity to attend and not everything can be taken in.

- Selective memory and forgetting - events fade from memory very quickly.

- Selective encoding – the observer's recording of events can be selective and based on pre-conceived ideas and desired outcomes. (p. 361)

After each meeting, within 2-3 hours, the researcher recorded observations in the research diary but this still exposed the observations to the process of forgetting and selectively attending to memories that support the researcher's pre-conceptions. Despite this the participant-observations helped record the researcher's thoughts on the implementation issues, key components of CESC, and the effectiveness of CESC as close to the actual event as was feasible given the dual role.

2.5.2 Qualitative Interviewing

Interviews vary between the structured and the unstructured and qualitative interviewing usually falls in between in a style known as semi-structured (Howitt, 2012). In a semi-structured interview "the researcher has a number of topics to cover but the precise questions and their order is not fixed; they are allowed to develop as a result of the exchange with the respondent" (Breakwell, 2012, p. 372).

Semi-structured interviews were used to gather data to answer both research questions in this study. Robson (2011) stated that this qualitative data gathering approach is most appropriate to use when the interviewer is closely associated with the research, such as when involved in the evaluation of a small-scale project and as an appropriate means of finding out the views of the participants in a flexible and adaptive way (Robson, 2011).

Howitt (2010) listed characteristics of qualitative interviews which the researcher considered to be appropriate to answering the research questions and was suited to the critical realist epistemological position adopted in this research. In a qualitative interview:

- The researcher wants to promote 'open' answers whereby the interviewee gives elaborate and detailed responses about their perspectives and thinking.

- The answers of the interviewee steers the interview and interviewer is able to explore the interviewee's thinking further using secondary questions.

- The questions are exploratory and have more to do with hypothesis generation than hypothesis testing (Howitt, 2010 p. 61).

The researcher also considered the disadvantages of using interviews as a data collection method. As Robson (2011) pointed out, interviews are time consuming for all participants and can depend on the co-operation of the interviewees. Interviews, as a primary data collection method, have also been criticised with reference to their place within the general conception of scientific research, their reliability, and their validity and generalisation (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) summarized the 10 standard criticisms of the quality of interview-produced knowledge. The qualitative research interview is not:

1. Scientific, but only reflects common sense

2. Quantitative, but only qualitative

3. Objective, but subjective

4. Scientific hypothesis testing, but only explorative

5. A scientific method, since it is too person dependent

6. Trustworthy, but biased

7. Reliable, since it rests upon leading questions

8. Intersubjective, since different readers find different meanings

9. Valid, as it relies on subjective impressions

10. Generalisable, because there are too few subjects (p. 168)

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) argued that if any of these criticisms are considered valid to the particular interview investigation then they can be factored into the design of the study at an early stage to improve the quality of the research. Many of the criticisms levelled at the use of interviews in research reflect a positivist epistemological position where interview data is not viewed as scientific or able to lead to the testing of hypotheses. Positivist researchers aim for "objectivity, measurability, predictability, controllability, patterning, the construction of law and rules of behaviour, and the ascription of causality" (Cohen, et al. 2000, pp. 27-28).

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) pointed out that there is no single definition of science in existence, so the categorisation of the interview as a scientific or unscientific cannot be achieved. Their working definition of science as the methodological creation of new, systematic knowledge suggests that the focus of whether or not a specific interview is scientific or not, will depend on how the key terms *methodological*, *new*, *systematic,* and *knowledge* are addressed in the research (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The criticisms of reliability and validity of the case study design will be discussed further in section 2.7.

2.5.2.1   Interview Schedule

Each interview was semi-structured and followed a standardised interview guide. The researcher followed the advice of Howitt (2010) by structuring the topics and questions in the interview guide in a natural, sensible, and helpful sequence. The sequence of questions in each schedule was guided by Robson (2011) and included:

- An introduction – outline the purpose of the interview, given as the rationale, deliver assurances about confidentiality, request permission to audio-record (on consent form but important to ask again)

- A warm-up – relaxed, easy to ask/answer questions at the start to ease both interviewer and interviewee

- The main body of the interview – addressing the main purpose of the interview which was to answer the research questions

- Cool off – straightforward questions to end the interview to allow any built up tension to be defused

- Closure – debriefing as to the purpose of the interview, the option to remove any comments and to gain further consent to meet to member check the themes (p. 284).

Yin (2009) discussed Level 1 questions, the verbal line of inquiry represented by the questions asked of the specific interviewees, and Level 2 questions which represent the mental line of inquiry and are the research questions. Yin (2009) recommended keeping in mind the Level 2 questions while simultaneously asking Level 1 questions and the interview guide was designed to enable the researcher to distinguish between these two levels of questioning during the interview. During the design of the interview schedule, the researcher was mindful of how the individual questions mapped onto the Units of Analyses (UoA) and how it related to the CESC model. An example of this can be seen below in Table 10 with the full interview schedules located in Appendix C and Appendix D.

Table 10: Example of Interview Questions Mapping onto Unit of Analysis

U of A 1 Implementation of strategies	7. Can you describe to me what the strategies looked like at home? 8. On a scale of 1-10 with 1 representing impossible and 10 representing incredibly easy -what were the strategy (ies) like for you to implement at home? Prompt: What helped? What was difficult? What would have made it easier? 9. What would _____ (Child) say about the strategies?

2.5.2.2   Audio Recording and Transcription

A digital audio recorder was used in each interview. The informed consent form signed by the participants stated that interviews would be audio recorded and the use of recordings was explained to participants immediately prior to the interviews so that they were able to express any misgivings. Participants did not communicate any concerns about the audio recordings.

The interviews were fully transcribed by the researcher. Transcription is an arduous task but one in which the data first becomes familiar to the researcher and it can be viewed as one of the central processes involved in thematic analysis (Howitt, 2010). Braun and Clarke (2006) stated that transcription "requires a rigorous and thorough 'orthographic' transcript -a 'verbatim' account of all verbal (and sometimes nonverbal – e.g. coughs) utterances" (p. 88). Every attempt was made to include non-verbal communication in the transcript but it is inevitable that not all of this will have been recorded.

2.5.2.3   Dual Role of the Researcher

The dual role of researcher and TEP was reflected upon throughout this process. There was potential for the participant to feel pressured into becoming involved with the study because of the researcher's role within the LA. This was alleviated to an extent by the fact that the author was not the named TEP for either school involved in the study. In addition, it was stressed throughout the recruitment process that the author was acting in the capacity of researcher from the University of Manchester. All written communication used the University of Manchester letterhead and logo.

2.5.2.4　　Carer Interviews

The carers in each case were asked if they would prefer to be interviewed at school or at home and both chose to be interviewed at home. In CS1 both carers were interviewed so when the interview was transcribed the views were directed to the source by either using CJ (carer John) or CD (carer Deirdre).

2.5.2.5　　School Staff Interviews

The teacher in CS1 and the teaching assistant in CS2 were interviewed using semi-structured schedules in quiet rooms in their respective schools.

2.6　Data Analysis

This section outlines the data analysis methods used in this study. Thematic Analysis is critically discussed and this is followed by a description of the decisions that guided the analysis. The use of computer assisted qualitative data analysis software to facilitate the analysis and the researcher's use of a fieldwork diary are critically outlined.

2.6.1　Thematic Analysis

The interview data was analysed semantically by the researcher which meant that the primary focus was on what was said rather than how it was said (Howitt, 2010). Braun and Clarke (2006) defined thematic analysis as "a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79).

2.6.1.1 Thematic Analysis and Critical Realism

Epistemology is concerned with the nature of knowledge. One of the advantages of thematic analysis is that it can be applied across many, though not all, epistemological positions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis can be used within a realist method, to explore and report the experiences, meanings, and the reality of participants, or it can lend itself to a constructionist method to examine the ways in which events, realities, meanings, and experiences are the effects of a range of discourses operating within society (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This study is taking a critical realist position and from this perspective thematic analysis can be used to reflect the participants' experience of reality, while enabling the researcher to explore that reality by looking at the broader social context that affects that reality and examine the material limits of reality (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

2.6.1.2 Limitations of Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis was viewed as a "poorly demarcated, rarely acknowledged, yet widely used qualitative analytic method in psychology" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 77). The thematic analysis "brand" was not very well recognised despite its frequent use in research and this was often

because researchers failed to explicitly state the methods they used in the analysis (Robson, 2011) which led to questions about the validity of the findings. One of the perceived limitations of thematic analysis is that it is often used only to explore and describe with little interpretation (Robson, 2011). This is a reflection of the opinion that researchers do not seem to be doing a great deal of analytic work in the development of themes, the themes are often described as having "emerged" from the data (Howitt, 2012). There has been a basic lack of transparency in many thematic analyses where the reader is unaware of how the researcher moved from interview data to themes and whether the themes that are presented represent all of the data (Howitt, 2012). The recently developed systematic approach by Braun and Clarke (2006) aimed to address these limitations and has led to greater transparency (Howitt, 2012).

2.6.1.3 Decisions that Guided the Thematic Analysis

Despite the flexibility of the approach, there are a number of decisions for the researcher to make when conducting thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This research analysed the entire data set at a semantic level using a hybrid process of inductive and deductive analysis. The thinking behind these key decisions is now discussed.

The focus of the analysis is an initial decision. The researcher can chose to analyse the whole data set which can give the reader a sense of the overall and predominant themes but can lead to some depth or complexity being lost (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Alternatively the focus could be on one particular theme or a group of themes and provide a more thorough and nuanced analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This was an exploratory study where the views of participants on the intervention were not known, the researcher chose to focus on the entire data set during the analysis which accords with the advice of Braun and Clarke (2006).

Codes are used to describe the content of a line or two of data from the interview transcript (Howitt, 2010) but the coding process depends, in part, on whether the themes are *theory driven* or *data driven (*Robson, 2011). Braun and Clark (2006) refer to this as a decision between *theoretical* or *inductive* thematic analysis. Theoretical analysis is determined by the researcher's engagement with the literature which has shaped the research questions and forms the basis of pre-existing theoretical prepositions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is a top-down analysis whereby the researcher attempts to fit the data to a pre-existing coding frame. In contrast, inductive coding is a bottom-up approach that involves analyzing the data without the use of a pre-existing coding frame so that the data drives the coding rather than the researcher's theoretical position (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This is presented by the authors as a straightforward decision between the two approaches and as an exploratory study an inductive analysis would appear to allow for a greater openness to the novel and unexpected findings that is hoped for in exploratory studies. However, it is difficult to be entirely free from the influence of prior engagement with the literature which has led to the research questions in the study. The researcher's theoretical preconceptions are useful as they help to tune the researcher into subtle features of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A hybrid approach to coding was adopted where the researcher used inductive analysis as the

primary focus while acknowledging that elements of theoretical coding was likely due to the influence of the prior engagement of the literature. This approach is consistent with the combined approach used by Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006).

Themes were identified at a *semantic level* rather than at the *latent analysis* level when approaching the data. In a semantic level of analysis the themes are identified from the data on their explicit or surface meaning which means that the researcher is not attempting to look at what is behind the participants' responses (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The process of semantic analysis involves moving from an initial description and summary of the patterns of the semantic content to interpretation of the semantic content where the significance of the patterns is discussed more broadly in relation to theory and the implications are then allied to previous literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The latent level of analysis attempts to delve beneath the semantic level by identifying or examining the underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualizations that are thought to be shaping the surface content of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A latent analysis was not chosen as the researcher wanted to present the themes explicitly. A semantic level of analysis was also more in keeping with the critical realist position of this research.

2.6.1.4 Phases of the Analysis

The researcher used the Braun and Clarke (2006) model to guide the thematic analysis as it is viewed as the best available systematic approach to thematic analysis (Howitt, 2010). The six steps are listed in sequential order but there is overlap within the steps and the researcher frequently moves backwards and forwards between stages during the analysis to check one part of the analysis against one or more of the other steps (Howitt, 2010). The six stage process as presented by Braun and Clarke can be seen in Table 11 below (2006, p. 86).

Table 11: The Phases of Conducting a Thematic Analysis

Phase	Description of the Process
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data:	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes:	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report:	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

2.6.1.5 Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis

The researcher used a computer-assisted analysis of qualitative data (CAQDAS) program, called QSR NVivo 10, to support the analysis. In deciding to use specialist software such as NVivo the researcher considered the advice of Robson (2011) who reminded the reader of the need to base their decision on the balance between the time and effort spent in becoming familiar with the software against the time efficiencies generated by the use of the software once that familiarity has been attained. The researcher uploaded both the carer and school staff interview transcripts for each case into NVivo 10 and then began to code the transcripts within the software. For the researcher this was a more efficient way of managing the large amounts of interview data that had been generated and it enabled the development of an organised single location storage system for the coded data (Robson, 2011). This undoubtedly could have been achieved in a paper-and-pencil fashion and there is a danger of assuming that the analysis is thorough because specialist software was employed (Robson, 2011). For the researcher the main benefits were that the coded material was easily accessible, it supported multiple coding of single lines of text in an efficient way, and

helped in the development of consistent coding schemes. For all the advantages of CAQDAS it does not replace the researcher's primary role in analysing the data. It is possible to use NVivo 10 to move beyond coding and using it to facilitate the creation of themes. The researcher chose to do this using pencil-and-paper methods rather than NVivo. The balance between efficiency and time saving of using NVivo to facilitate the generation of themes based on the initial coding was not thought to outweigh the effort and time that it would take to become familiar with how to achieve this aim. The process of the stages of analysis can be seen in Appendix E.

2.6.2 Research Diary

The researcher kept a research diary from the proposal stage to the completion of the study. The research diary contained brief summaries of relevant reading, reflections about the study, questions to bring to supervision, reflections on the CESC meetings, conversations with LA staff about the study, records of supervision sessions with the researcher's university supervisor and general thoughts related to the project. This research followed Altrichter and Holly's (2005) diary structure with the following headings:

- Date of entry

- Event details

- Researcher's reflections of the event

- Questions

- Next steps

2.7 Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research

The issue of ascertaining the quality of qualitative research, or the trustworthiness of findings, is the subject of continuous and repeated attention (Flick, 2007). Case study methodology was used by the researcher to explore, and draw tentative conclusions from, the perceived outcomes of CESC within the real-life contexts in which the interventions took place. The degree to which this exploration and its tentative conclusions can be viewed as valid and reliable and the steps taken by the researcher to ensure a high quality of trustworthiness will be discussed in this section. A reflexive account of the effect that the researcher may have had on the data concludes this section.

Reliability refers to the consistency and trustworthiness of the findings in research (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Validity pertains "to the degree that a method investigates what it is intended to investigate" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 246). Some argue that the terms reliability and validity should be avoided when engaging in qualitative designs with Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggesting that trustworthiness, credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability as being more appropriate criteria for qualitative research. Robson (2011) argued that this attempt to rename and create a distance between the traditional terms only strengthens the view that

qualitative studies are unreliable and invalid. Validation is not merely a separate stage of the research process but an ongoing part of an investigation (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). It is better to view it as quality control throughout the production of knowledge rather than as a required inspection before distributing that knowledge (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). To be classed as rigorous and scientific, qualitative research sometimes needs to proactively display reliability and validity (Robson, 2011) and this can be achieved by reformulating the traditional criteria (Flick, 2007) so that validity and reliability can be operationalised in a way that fits more closely with the contexts and conditions in which qualitative research is conducted. Flick (2007) advanced this argument by proposing that a way to address the concerns of validity and reliability is to focus on the possible threats to research quality that occurs in the process of analysis and then demonstrate the steps taken to reduce these concerns. This is the approach that the researcher adopted to promote quality in this qualitative research and the steps taken to combat threats to quality are now outlined.

2.7.1 Addressing Threats to Research Quality

The study used strategies suggested by Gibbs (2007) and Robson (2011) to improve the reliability and validity of the findings which included:

- Triangulation

- Member checking

- Audit trail

- Code Cross-Checking

- Peer debriefing and support

- Presenting negative or discrepant information

2.7.1.1 Triangulation

Triangulation is a process that is used in research to improve the trustworthiness or validity of the findings by getting more than one view on a subject in order to obtain a more accurate conception on the subject matter (Gibbs, 2007). Some challenge the use of triangulation as it assumes that there is a single, underlying reality which can be accessed through obtaining different points of view which may lead to an illusion of truth based on poorly developed research methods employing under-analysed data (Silverman, 2005). From the critical realist perspective adopted in this research, it was important to obtain observer triangulation, the views of all participants, to potentially allow for a greater understanding of the mechanisms at play in the intervention. The different vantage points afforded by interviewing both participants was aimed at uncovering commonalities as well as divergences in the data in order to provide a richer picture than might have been achieved if only some of the participants gave their views.

A further form of triangulation, data triangulation, was employed in this study as the researcher was also a participant-observer and this provided a secondary source of information that was utilised in the discussion section.

2.7.1.2 Member Checking

Lincoln and Guba (1985) viewed member validation as the most crucial element in establishing 'credibility' or validity. Seale (2007) described two types of member checking; a strong version where the participants are asked to evaluate the final research report and a weak version where participants are asked to comment on the accuracy of an interim document. In this research, due to time constraints, the weaker version of member checking was obtained by asking participants to verify the accuracy of the interview transcripts. All participants received an executive summary of their interview transcript to check the accuracy of their statements as transcribed. Each participant validated the accuracy of the transcription and stated that they were satisfied that it reflected their original comments.

2.7.1.3 Audit Trail

Durlak and DuPre (2008) stated that the collection of implementation data is essential for assessing the internal and external validity of an intervention and for accurately interpreting outcomes. An audit trail is a method of supporting external reliability where the researcher takes a systematic approach to methodologically accounting for the physical evidence that could be used to assess the adequacy with which raw data has been analysed (Seale, 2007). By keeping a full record of the activities undertaken during the research the researcher is attempting to ensure that the researcher's actions and activities are replicable despite the unique contexts in which the study took place. A case study protocol can be accessed in Appendix F. The research followed the University of Manchester's ethical guidance by storing all raw data including interview transcripts, audio recordings, and research diary on an encrypted data stick. This data stick will be returned to University and kept securely for five years. By using NVivo software the researcher was able to save the coding phase of the thematic analysis and the stages in the analytic process from raw data to the final report has been documented in Appendix E. The agendas that the researcher used during the intervention meetings can be accessed in Appendix G. The meeting agendas were used to provide a structure to the meetings but were not followed rigidly. The materials prepared to support the intervention strategies can be viewed in Appendices H-J.

2.7.1.4 Code Cross Checking

Once all identifiers had been removed, a section of coded interview transcript was sent to a TEP colleague to see if the transcript would be coded in a similar way. All coding of data can never be free from the values, assumptions, and theoretical perspectives of the researcher (Seale, 2007). This is true of the coding of this section of transcript by the researcher who was also a participant in the intervention, therefore close to the data, and the colleague who examined the data who was

more removed from the data but held their own values, thoughts, and assumptions. The process of inter-coder agreement is a way of supporting the reliability of the findings as it can provide evidence for the reasonableness of the coding used by the researcher (Creswell, 2009). The colleague stated that they would code the section of transcript in a similar way although this must be tempered with the consideration that a colleague might not wish to seem unsupportive.

2.7.1.5 Peer Debriefing and Support

During the course of this research, peer debriefing was utilised through regular contact with the research supervisor who helped to review and question the study so that it could resonate beyond the researcher. Creswell (2009) viewed this as involving an added layer of interpretation which helps to add validity to the account.

2.7.1.6 Presenting Negative or Discrepant Information

A more realistic and valid account can be achieved by providing discrepant information that is contrary to some of the themes. This avoidance of researcher bias (Robson, 2011) is particularly important in an exploratory evaluation of an intervention. The researcher evidences this commitment to presenting discrepant information in the discussion section in relation to some of the findings in CS1.

2.7.2 Transferability of Findings

This was a multiple case study in which the form of generalisation was analytic. The purpose of this study was not to achieve complete transferability of the findings to the wider population. Some argue that external generalisability is not the purpose of qualitative research with the true value being the particular description and themes that are described within the context of a particular setting (Creswell, 2011). Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued that external validity, or transferability as they term it, can be achieved by providing a rich, detailed description of the setting under examination so that the readers of the report can judge the transferability of the findings to other settings. Robson (2010) argued that qualitative research can produce analytic or theoretical generalisability by developing theory that helps in the understanding of other cases or situations. Analytical generalisation is described as "a reasoned judgement about the extent to which the findings of one study can be used to guide what might occur in another situation" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 262). The use of a multiple case design increased the capacity of the researcher to generalise findings as the similarities and differences between the two situations enabled analytic conclusions to be tentatively drawn (Yin, 2009). In order to maximise the homogeneity of the sample, the researcher used purposive sampling to locate cases that met specific inclusionary criteria. This reasoned judgement as advocated by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) of the conclusions that can be made from a multiple case-study takes into account the acknowledgement by the researcher of the differences between both settings, the lack of a homogeneous LAC population, and the lack of an agreed conception of the number of skills that

are covered by the term executive function. Robson (2011) stated that a critical realist case study can closely examine a set of mechanisms and the contexts in which they operate, which can form the basis for transferability of the analytic conclusions from the one particular setting studied to many other settings.

2.8   Researcher Reflexivity

Knowledge is always mediated by pre-existing ideas and values (Seale, 2007) and the researcher's axiological position will infiltrate all aspects of the research procedures, data collection, data interpretation, and conclusions. The researcher was formerly a primary school teacher and had mainly positive, and some negative, experiences of communication with parents of children in his class. From personal experience the researcher believes that all parents and carers want their children to be successful in school both academically and socially (Christenson, 1995).

The researcher fundamentally believes that parents and educators are essential for the growth and development of children. The researcher considers the education and socialisation processes as continuous and mesosytemic and that it is vital for parents/carers and educators to share responsibility for these processes so that the child can fully develop in these areas. The importance of developing positive channels of communication between home and school to strengthen relationships and build a supportive team ethos is also a strongly held belief of the researcher.

2.8.1   Impact of the Researcher's Background

The researcher was a TEP entering his final year of study with previous experience working as a primary school teacher. Having worked in this capacity for four years this gave him a degree of empathy with the role of educators and the pressure and challenges of the job. The researcher was aware that in the eyes of the participants, this prior history as a teacher might align him more closely with the points of view of education staff. During the meetings, the researcher was conscious of this and ensured that carers were central to all the discussions and that unfamiliar school-based terminology was avoided or explained.

As a TEP, the researcher was guided not only by the ethical checks made by the University but by a belief in the guiding principles of the British Psychological Society's four ethical principles of respect, integrity, honesty, and competence. The researcher was keen to explain the rationale behind the research, the confidentiality and data protection procedures employed during the research, and the value of having the views of participants in this exploratory study. The researcher views people as purposive actors (Robson, 2011) and was therefore interested in hearing at first-hand their experience of the intervention.

The author does not have a neuropsychological background and this meant that his working knowledge of executive function grew throughout the research process. In ways this was helpful as it focused the researcher on trying to make executive function an understandable concept for the participants. The consultant was open about his knowledge base in executive skills so as to reduce

potential conceptions of the researcher being viewed as an "expert". The researcher did not think an expert role would be facilitative of collaborative decision making and partnership.

The researcher's axiology in relation to the importance of respecting the expertise of parents is represented well by Hobbs (1975) who stated that "the foresighted professional person knows that it is the parent who truly bears the responsibility for the child, and the parent cannot be replaced by episodic professional service" (pp. 228-229). In practice based casework, the researcher has a client-centred approach when engaging in consultation. During the intervention the researcher aimed to facilitate the carers and educators in prioritizing and addressing needs based on a collaborative partnership process. The researcher respected the need to meet the participants at their level of competency and skills and aimed to scaffold this with the knowledge and experience gained by the researcher in doctoral training. The researcher was conscious of the personal learning opportunity available through working collaboratively with carers who brought their knowledge and experience of the social care system and the educators who work with these children on a daily basis. The researcher's axiological position was in line with the British Psychological Society's (2009) core principle of respecting the knowledge, views, and experience of participants. This axiological position was also consistent with the CBC model but it is important to note that EPs are professionals who operate in different ways. A consultant with a more directive consultative approach might apply conjoint consultation differently.

2.9   Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were built into the research process from the outset where participant recruitment was preceded by the submission of a Research Risk and Ethics Assessment (RREA) to the University of Manchester for ethical consideration. This was submitted at a medium level of risk and was granted on 25.07.12. (see Appendix K for an email confirming ethical approval). An amendment to the recruitment process was requested in October 2012 to allow the researcher to recruit additional participants using an alternative participant recruitment method. This was discussed previously in section 2.4.3.

The researcher was mindful of the potentially harmful effect of labelling a child. This is particularly true of LAC, a prioritised group of pupils nationally and locally, who are more likely to have SEN than non-LAC. The researcher did not want the adults involved in this intervention to think that the target children had a diagnosis of executive dysfunction. One of the inclusionary criteria for participants in this study was for the Social Worker to be of the opinion that the carers would be sensitive in their use of the information and appropriate in their discussion of executive skills with the child. During the CESC process the researcher explained the concept of executive skills by giving real-life examples of how adults use executive skills by using a Stroop test to demonstrate response inhibition and a digit-span backwards activity to demonstrate working memory. The researcher also described how the development of executive skills was a process that continued from early childhood into early adulthood (Anderson, 2002). The concepts of multifinality and equifinality (Glaser, 2000) were discussed in every-day terms to allay fears of a common outcome

from negative early life events. While the child's difficulty with executive skills at home and school was the focus of much of the discussion, the researcher was also keen to promote discussion about the child's strengths and the impact that carers and educators could have in supporting the child.

The researcher was aware of the power imbalance that the involvement of social care potentially created. The carers were assured that their participation was completely voluntary and that if they chose to participate they could withdraw at any stage without giving a reason. The researcher thought that it was vital that carers did not consider that their participation or non-participation would have any ramifications on their position as carer. A similar concern arose with the schools who the researcher contacted after establishing that the carer(s) for the child were interested in the intervention. The researcher was aware that there could be a pressure on the teacher to commit to participation in the study due to a perception that non-participation would be viewed negatively by others. The researcher contacted the school SENCo initially and stressed the voluntary nature of the intervention and that the personal capacity of the teacher to participate in the intervention at this time should be considered. The dual-role as a Trainee Educational Psychologist and researcher as discussed in section 2.5.2.3 was also an ethical consideration for the author.

Informed consent was sought and received in both cases, the consent forms can be accessed in Appendix L & M, and care was taken to ensure that all names, including those of people, place, and schools were changed to ensure confidentiality.

2.10   Critique of the Research Design

The multiple case study design fitted well with the needs of this exploratory study whose aim was to uncover the views of participants in the CESC intervention through rich description. The critical realist epistemological position was congruent with the use of a case study design as it allowed for an examination of the mechanisms that impacted upon the outcomes found in the study.

A criticism of case study methodology is the perceived lack of transferability of the findings to the wider population (Coolican, 2009; Yin, 2009). The uniqueness of every child and every context does not support extensive generalisation but Silverman (2005) outlined how some degree of generalisation can be achieved in a case study design. The purposive sampling meant that the participants were selected based on a critical analysis of the parameters of the population being studied. As an exploratory piece of research, CS1 was used to refine the model for CS2 but case study protocol guided the researcher in each case. By exploring two cases, albeit with slight modifications, this helped reduce the susceptibility of drawing conclusions from a single case study design (Yin, 2009). The use of a multiple case-study design enabled some cross-case comparisons to be tentatively drawn through analytic generalisation by comparing the findings with existing literature and theory.

The researcher considered employing quantitative as well as qualitative data collection measures in this study and this would have been consistent with the critical realist epistemological position. The Behaviour Rating Inventory of Executive Function (BRIEF) (Gioia et al, 2000) was considered for use to explore the perceptions of the key participants in relation to the child's executive functioning pe and post intervention.

The use of the BRIEF was to serve three purposes; as a pre and post intervention quantitative measure; as a screening tool to eliminate those children for whom there were no perceived executive function difficulties; and to highlight an executive function profile of strengths and weakness to help the researcher to prepare for the intervention. The BRIEF was utilised in CS1 for the latter two purposes but it was not used as a pre and post measure. In CS2 the carer completed a BRIEF prior to the intervention but the researcher decided to use an Executive Skills Questionnaire (ESQ) devised by Dawson and Guare (2010) to gain the views of the TA as the researcher thought that it provided a better indication of the school-based executive skills difficulties. The researcher decided not to use the BRIEF as a pre and post measure as the comparison in scores was thought to be unlikely to provide additional depth to the findings of the interviews. This is discussed further in section 4.6.

The use of mixed methodology can potentially lead to stronger evidence for a conclusion through convergence and corroboration of findings by adding the strengths of an additional method to overcome weaknesses in another (Creswell, 2009). The author acknowledges that mixed methods design could be employed in future studies to increase the triangulations of the findings.

2.11   Summary of Methodology

This chapter detailed the methodological approach adopted by the researcher, the data collection procedures, and the analytical approaches in this research. A multiple case study design with embedded units of analyses was utilised to explore the perceptions of participants on the outcomes and implementation process of CESC.

A critical realist epistemology was consistent with the aims of this research as it is concerned with uncovering the causal mechanisms that were acting in each particular context and how this impacted on the outcomes of the intervention.

A six stage thematic analysis of the interview data was used to systematically identify themes within and across cases and to provide an organised portrayal of the thoughts of participants in relation to their participation in CESC.

The findings of this study are presented in the results section and this is followed by the discussion which critically examines the findings across cases and within cases in relation to the literature and psychological theory.

3. Results

This study is an exploration of the implementation and outcomes of an intervention using conjoint consultation to support the executive skills development of children who were in foster care as a result of early maltreatment. The researcher interviewed the participants in each of the two cases to gain their views. This chapter presents the participants' views through the researcher's analysis of the data for each case. A colour coded thematic map is presented for each case with overarching themes presented in green followed by two levels of subthemes in the order of blue and orange. Each thematic map is followed by a description of the theme, illustrated by direct quotations from the participants. To enable the reader to identify the source of the quotation, the following codes were used: C= carer, T= teacher, TA= teaching assistant and the researcher's questions or comments are written in italics. In case study 1 both carers were interviewed simultaneously so the quotations can be directed to the source using the code: CJ=carer John and CD= carer Deirdre. As mentioned in section 2.4.4, the researcher planned for the inclusion of three cases in this research. In the third case the child was in the care of the LA but lived with his mother. The child was in the care of the LA because of a history of drug misuse, domestic violence, and neglect. The mother was no longer misusing drugs, was not with the partner who was the perpetrator of the domestic violence, and the child was no longer experiencing neglect. Initial contact was sought in October 2012 through the senior social worker who had deemed this placement to be stable. The mother indicated to the social worker that she would be interested in speaking to me about participating in the intervention and I then initiated contact. This was a long process with a number of delays due to changes of phone numbers and it was difficult to get to speak with the mother of the child. The start date for the intervention was therefore delayed by at least two months. The mother attended meeting 1 but did not attend meeting two which had to be rescheduled. The researcher was unable to get in contact with the mother via the telephone number provided and had to rely on school to make contact about the next date for the meeting. At the rescheduled date the mother did not attend and the intervention as proposed was suspended. The researcher met with school staff to discuss steps for continuing to build up contact with the mother of the pupil and he discussed strategies to support the child in school.

3.1 Case study 1: David

3.1.1   Case Background

David[1] was a Year 4 pupil, aged 8, who was placed into care 2 years and 9 months prior to the CESC intervention. This was as a result of ongoing concerns regarding severe neglect, domestic violence, poor home condition, and non-attendance at school. David was the second youngest of eight siblings. David and his older sister were originally placed in the foster care of Deirdre's parents. Due to the elderly age of Deirdre's parents and a desire to provide a long-term fostering placement for David and his sister, John and Deirdre began caring for the two children 4 months before the start of the CESC intervention. This was David's second placement since entering the

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[1] All names were changed in this study

care system. He had contact with his parents six times per year. David attended a smaller than average inner-city school that was deemed a "Good" school by Ofsted (Maloney, 2013). The proportion of children eligible for free school meals was well above the national average as was the proportion of children who were in local authority care (Maloney, 2013).

Table 12: Case Study 1 Intervention Chronology

Stage of CESC	Meeting details
1. Preliminary meeting	**Month:** November **Attendees:** Carers John and Deirdre & class teacher Keith (separate meetings due to Keith's teaching commitments) **Focus of discussion:** Description of CESC and ES, Parent BRIEF completed with carers, Teacher BRIEF left with Keith to complete
2. Needs Identification	**Month:** November **Weeks since previous meeting:** 2 **Attendees:** Teacher, carers John and Deirdre, & Consultant **Focus of discussion:** Child's presenting difficulties, ES profile from Teacher and parent BRIEF questionnaire, co-constructed potential ES to target during intervention **Actions:** Participants asked to think of areas of need that they would like to focus on for this intervention
3. **Linking needs to Strategies**	**Month:** December **Weeks since previous meeting:** 1 **Attendees:** Teacher, carer John, & Consultant **Focus of discussion:** Targeting specific behaviours and linking these to ES needs **Actions:** Structuring playtimes to support inhibition, Keith to speak to other staff who will be involved. Carers to discuss and implement 'my cooling-down plan' and use feeling thermometer made by teacher.
4. Review	**Month:** February. **Weeks since previous meeting:** 12 **Attendees:** Teacher, carer John, & Consultant **Focus of discussion:** Reviewing the outcomes of the strategy implementation **Actions:** Interview dates set. Consultant to attend transition meeting.

A chronology of the intervention can be viewed in Table 12. The focus for meeting 1 was to gain an understanding of David's needs across home and school settings and to explore how his behaviours might link in with his executive profile. John and Deirdre had completed the Behavior Rating Index of Executive Function (BRIEF) (Gioia et al., 2000) prior to meeting 1 and it indicated that the main executive function difficulties at home related to inhibition, shift, metacognition and planning/organization. Keith completed the Teacher version of the BRIEF and it indicated that the areas of executive function that were deemed to be areas of concern at school were initiating, working memory, and metacognition.

At meeting 2 the participants chose to target response inhibition in the playground as well as supporting his emotional regulation across both settings by creating a *feelings thermometer* which could be used to help David to communicate the strength of his feelings. The participants would also help him to develop strategies to reduce his arousal levels or the strength of his emotion by engaging in pre-planned cooling-down activities. Meeting 3 was a review meeting to evaluate the outcomes of the strategies.

3.1.2   The Views of Participants in Case Study 1

Semi-structured interviews with John and Deirdre, carers of David, and with Keith, David's teacher, were conducted to gather their views of the CESC process and outcomes. This was then thematically analyzed to form the thematic map seen in Figure 3 below.
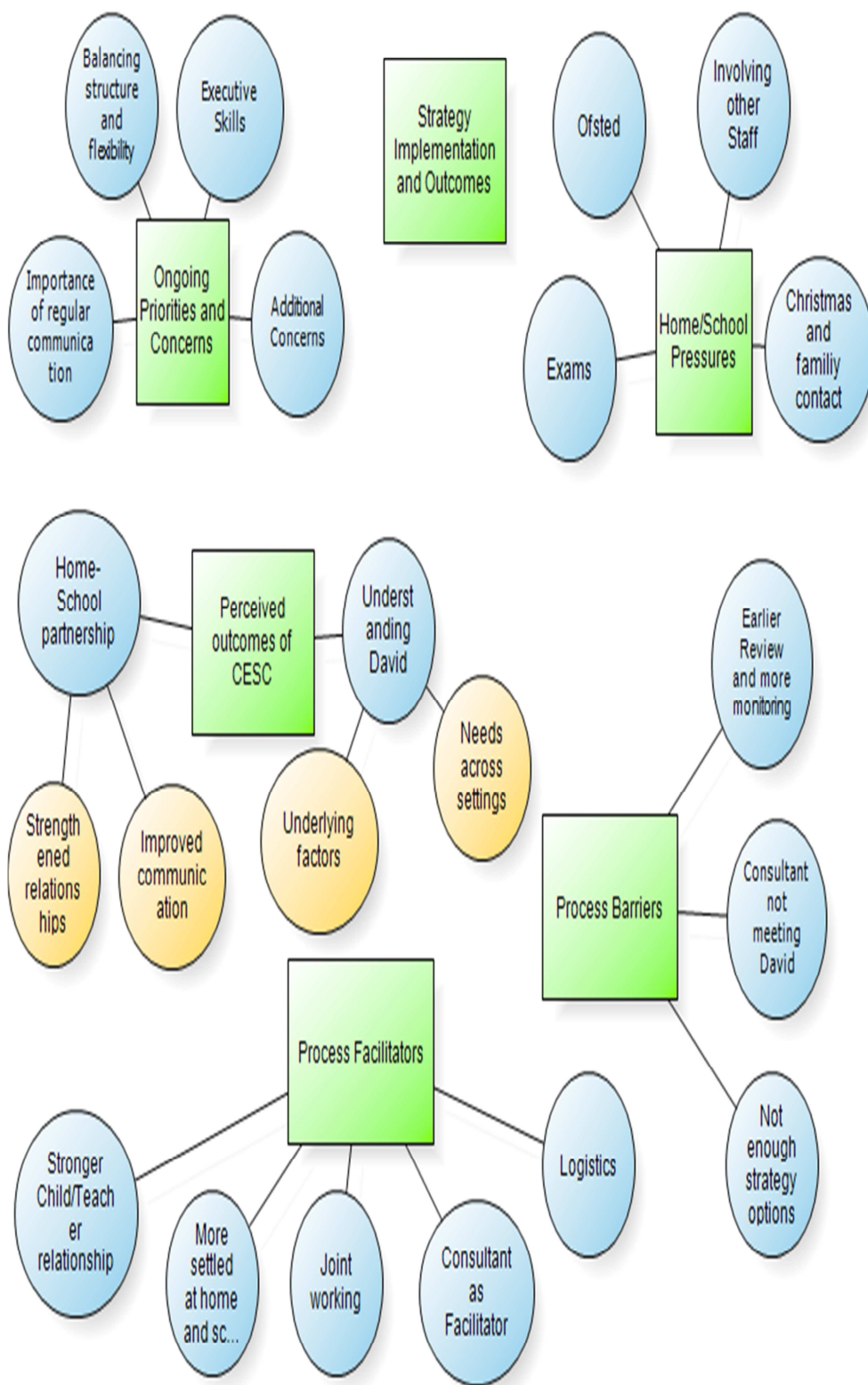
Figure 3: Thematic Map for Case Study 1

3.1.2.1 On-going Priorities and Concerns – Overarching Theme

David's carers and his teacher thought that external events that happened during the intervention meant that other priorities impacted on their capacity to fully implement the strategies. The participants also did not think that the strategies that were implemented were effective in addressing David's needs (see section 3.1.2.3). The content of the interviews largely reflected this as the participants discussed ongoing concerns and priorities in more detail than their responses to the outcomes and processes of the intervention.

Importance of Regular Communication - Subtheme

David's teacher and his carers thought that it was important for there to be regular communication between home and school to reinforce their respective roles in supporting David. This communication was described as being informal, at the beginning and end of school days, and the aim was to inform each other of David's mood and emotional state and/or events that had occurred that might impact on his behaviour at home or at school.

> "We tell him if he's had a bad weekend or a bad day just so he is pre-warned before he starts". (CD)

> "It gives him an idea of what's going to go on throughout the day" (CD)

John saw this as giving the teacher the required information that would allow him to use his professional judgement to decide how best to manage David's behaviour. He viewed this communication as a two-way process and one that enabled him and Deirdre to respond appropriately to David having knowledge of what had taken place during the school day. Deirdre agreed that the communication could simply be about significant events during the day.

> "I think he needs to know like we need to know because he is with him for 6 hours a day. He needs to know what kind of a presence he's got because does he put his arm round him, does he be a bit sterner or whatever. That's up to him then isn't it". (CJ)

> "Just to know what's gone on during the day". (CD)

Keith valued this informal daily communication and agreed that it helped to give him background information about David's mood.

> "we have the time to take 30 seconds or a minute to speak about how David has been and he will give the heads up if he is in a mood or will give me some background to why he is upset". (T)

> "So we have had those ties and that communication has been invaluable". (T)

John thought that if this level of daily communication with David's teacher was not present it could lead to misunderstandings and assumptions due to not having information from Keith's perspective.

"Without that communication and without that knowledge, you are just lost. You are just making assumptions and sort of finding things that might not even be there". (CJ)

Keith viewed regular communication as being vital in parent-teacher relationships.

"I think parents and teachers should always informally communicate and with some parents that is something that happens on a regular basis, they will have spoken to the teacher two or three times a week just in 5, 10 second little bursts when they are dropping the kids off. The informal back and forth is absolutely necessary". (T)

Finding the Balance between Structure and Flexibility - Subtheme

John and Deirdre both thought that David benefited from strong boundaries and a firm approach at school and they thought that school was more regimented than the environment at home.

"What way you would like a teacher to deal with David?"

"I think that perhaps the way that X (previous carer) dealt with him which was just like 'this is it, this is what you do'" (CJ)

"this is what's happening and that's it" (CD)

"No real room for manoeuvring because he can't do it". (CJ)

John was very positive about Keith's ability to manage and work with David this year but thought that his strict approach was an initial response based on David's behaviour in previous years and that this strictness was easing off as the academic year progressed.

"So you've appreciated the way that Keith already works with David"

"Definitely" (CJ)

"I'm not sure about the strict bit. I think, reading between the lines, Keith was apprehensive about David coming into his class because of all the stuff that had gone on before. Now that he has got him, I think he started off before Christmas (thinking) 'I'm going to put the rules down and that's that.' Now I think he is a little bit more pliable with him". (CJ)

Keith discussed his expectations that he holds for the pupils in his class regarding personal organisation and responsibilities.

"They are expected to take care of their personal admin.... The more they have to do on their own without me telling them, sort of like the classroom jobs, giving out milk and at what time, they take them very seriously the children and take pride in them". (T)

In this regard his expectations for David were the same as for all of the other children.

"Because he's expected to as he's expected to with the other kids. He's no different to them and he doesn't feel any different". (T)

David had to remember and organise his materials for lessons and the expectation was that he could do this independently.

"He knows when it is literacy, before he sits down, he needs to make sure he's got his whiteboard, his whiteboard pen, and his duster and these are quite a lot of things to remember as soon as he's come from playtime and he's still thinking about whatever he is thinking about. So he's got to gather up those and he's got to do it independently because I'm not going to tell him every day". (T)

Keith thought that David was progressing with these expectations of personal responsibility and that it was helping him become more self-reliant and mature.

"Things of that nature, there's lots of little examples like that, have started to steadily progress and he is able to cope with those… So that will have contributed towards his maturity, I'd say because it tends to for all the kids". (T)

John and Deirdre thought that the routines at home were not as tightly structured as the environment at school. They stated that their less regimented routines contrasted with the high level of structure provided at school and by his previous foster carers. They aimed to provide David and his sister with a more relaxed and communicative style of parenting.

"we are relaxed but in school it is quite regimented and Keith was saying that's how he's got to deal with him" (CJ)

"I think X did a great job when they were this big but going into… Jane is (says age) and David is getting older, we are a bit more relaxed and hopefully a bit more communicative towards their needs as well as what they're thinking if you see what I mean. The adolescence side of it a bit more I think".

John and Deirdre were trying to find a balance between structure and flexibility at home that would enable David to develop greater independence and responsibility but they thought that he was finding it difficult to manage when the boundaries were less structured than the school environment.

"that's why we say we are relaxed. We are trying to give him that but he always keeps tripping himself up and it's very difficult because then you are picking up the bits but we are just going to have to keep going and keep going and keep going until we can get him to that point". (CJ)

John thought that David did not have high self-efficacy when faced with challenges or when given responsibility

"It's more about giving him the opportunity to do it but it's his perception of it isn't it. I'll never be able to do that. No resilience". (CJ)

Understanding Executive Skills -Subtheme

Executive skills was a new term for participants and one in which they initially found confusing.

"it is a massive umbrella statement, executive skills, and it is initially confusing as to what they might be" (T)

The teacher found the information on executive skills useful and thought that he had a greater understanding of what the term meant following the intervention.

"I definitely didn't have a handle on executive skills. I could have… if I had a shot in the dark I'd have got some of them but I didn't understand them. I'd never really come across them in a professional sense or anything like that so I've got a greater understanding". (T)

Deirdre perceived that David did not have any executive skills.

"He doesn't have executive skills (laughs) full stop". (CD)

John discussed the benefits of school based work on executive skills at a universal level and expressed the view that many children could have difficulties in these areas.

"I think that lots and lots of children should benefit from executive skills (teaching) because it's what we've all got to learn isn't it and sometimes it's not just looked after children who haven't got those skills its other people. When we are all going out to work and leaving them at nurseries and things like that sometimes that doesn't happen does it"(CJ)

Home and school chose to support the executive skill of emotional regulation and for John this was an area of priority. The strategy aimed to enable David to communicate the strength of his emotions with adults using a feeling thermometer which was adapted from the *Think-Good, Feel-Good* materials (Stallard, 2002). John also worked with David on a *cooling-down plan* which David was to implement when he was feeling angry or upset. This was a planned response to help him to cool down by engaging in activities that he had chosen in advance. Keith was also going to use the feeling thermometer with David at school.

For John it was important to work on an executive skill that was meaningful and a priority issue.

"as I've said to you before I think that for me personally the task that we gave ourselves was really the insight into what he needed" (CJ)

John was clear that this executive skill was a priority for David and focusing on it was more helpful for him personally than if they had chosen to work on an executive skill such as planning and organisation that perhaps could have been easier to implement and monitor.

"from my point of view looking at emotional regulation like we've done, and where we've been and what he's going through I think that's helped me in particular more than just doing a basic sort of, not minimal, but that sort of task". (CJ)

Keith thought that the decision to focus on emotional regulation strategies happened naturally and he felt that it was always likely to be an area that the group would concentrate on.

"Yeah it seemed the natural sort of thing to head towards and we just built it up from there". (CT)

He thought that the strategy was suitable for David and that he could continue to use it to help him communicate how strongly he was feeling an emotion.

"I think the strategy is suitable for David and we are still going to…I'm still going to use it really because we want to keep the dialogue going between how he is feeling, where he is progressing towards in terms of his behaviour". (T)

Additional Concerns - Subtheme

<u>Managing in High School</u>

John stated that David had only two years left in primary school and John and Deirdre were worried about how David would manage the transition if he did not improve his executive and social skills.

"But that's where, he's eight now and in a couple of years' time he'll be going to high school won't he and you can't be dropping him in the classroom at high school can we. He's got to get his executive social skills or whatever or else he's not going to be able to survive is he". (CJ)

<u>Cause and Effect and Empathy</u>

Keith thought that future strategies needed to teach David to better understand the consequences of his behaviour. This would help him to catch up with his peers who Keith perceived as having a more developed sense of empathy and a greater understanding of cause and effect.

"If only just to get him to be aware of why he has gotten angry, why this person has gotten angry with him, and how doing this has led to that". (T)

"Yeah so like I've said about empathy and cause and effect and catching up to his peers, in his class there is a more intuitive level of cause and effect that obviously children pick up under what you would classify as normal situations and scenarios. He is a little bit behind that and those are the executive skills". (T)

3.1.2.2 Home and School Pressures –Main Theme

Meeting 2 of the CESC intervention took place at the end of November. Following the meeting John and Deirdre discussed emotional regulation with David and helped him to devise the cooling-down plan. They began implementing this the week before school finished for the Christmas period. Keith decided to start implementing the strategies after Christmas so that continuity could best be maintained. There were competing home and school pressures over this period which impacted upon the participants' capacity to fully implement the strategies or for those strategies to be used successfully.

Exams after Christmas - Subtheme

The first week back in January was an assessment period at school which was a competing pressure for Keith in commencing with the emotional regulation strategies with David. This was also a difficult week for David as he struggled academically and was required to sit still and concentrate for long periods of time without support. John and Deirdre thought that this was a very challenging week for David and they had to support him emotionally during this period.

> "He said he couldn't do anything and he just sat there". (CD)

> "He gets so frustrated with himself doesn't he" (CJ)

John and Deirdre did speak to Keith during this week. They accepted that although Keith was doing his best to support David, this was in the context of an assessment where David was expected to work independently.

> "I had a word with Keith the next day and he said 'I know he didn't have a good day'. Unfortunately because he is a looked after child and he has got his issues he has support in most lessons because they are doing assessments they can't have any of that". (CJ)

Ofsted -Subtheme

Keith started the school-based emotional regulation strategies in the middle of January. In the same week that he began using the strategies, the school was contacted by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools in England (HCMI) to inform of an upcoming inspection by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted). This was a very stressful time for Keith and it impacted on his capacity to use and refer to the emotion chart with David during this period.

> "Yes absolutely it was a bit of a stressful time and other things took priority" (T)

> "Yeah things went on the back burner when obviously the school got Ofsteded and other pressures took over for a little while and although it had been set up before the Ofsted (inspection), in and around that it lost a bit of momentum with David. He still had it (the chart) but perhaps I didn't refer to it…because the only way it is going to bed in with David is if I refer to it and make it like every day normal language. So the only way that was

going to bed in was if I referred to it and I know for a fact that the week we got Ofsted and the week after that I was, it took a little bit before I...that took precedence". (T)

Difficulty Involving Other Staff -Subtheme

During meeting 2 the participants discussed how to support David's response inhibition during break-times. Keith stated that this was a less structured environment and that David often became over excited and displayed impulsive behaviours that led to him getting in trouble or led to disputes with peers. As part of the school-based strategy David was going to *check-in* with the adult on duty in the playground to communicate how excited he was feeling using his emotions chart. Keith reported that a barrier to the implementation of this element of the school-based strategy was a difficult working relationship with a lunchtime coordinator.

> "it became quite complicated to have the person on the playground getting involved with it. I didn't have... I do not have rapport with the current dinner lady" (T)

> "So it never really took off in that regard and I didn't feel like it was worth pursuing that with the people out there. That's not to have a go at all the dinner ladies because the dinner ladies are fantastic. We've had a few continuity issues with certain dinner ladies perhaps which made that untenable". (T)

Keith reported that the strategy was only implemented when he was the adult on duty and that he did not involve other staff members in this strategy.

> "So unless it was the playground duty I did once a week it didn't really bed in with the other staff who were out there". (T)

Family Contact at Christmas - Subtheme

At home the Christmas period added competing pressures which made it difficult to stick to the emotional regulation strategies that had recently been started.

> "Yeah and he did try but then Christmas took over" (CJ)

Christmas was an emotionally unsettling time for David because of a contact session in which his parents did not turn up. He received no Christmas presents from his family.

> "No presents from Mum and Dad". (CJ)

> "When was his contact? Was it Christmas eve?" (CD)

> "Yeah he went to contact and they weren't there". (CJ)

David's way of managing strong emotions was to keep it hidden, not to talk about it or acknowledge it but a few days later a small event would trigger a huge emotional response. John and Deirdre had only been caring for David for less than a year and were still learning about how David responded to situations or events that created strong emotions.

"The trouble were, like I've said to you, that with only knowing him for…well having him for seven months, well we've known him for ages but, he just bottles it all up and it's hard for him to express his emotions so when we are trying to do this (the emotional regulation strategy) with him it's like BOOM (explosion noise). The shutters are up and he's just not having it". (CJ)

When David began to express his emotions they came out extremely strongly and he damaged the room and engaged in self-injurious behaviour.

"No emotionally he just has a complete and utter breakdown". (CJ)

"The bedroom was wrecked, he ended up kicking the door and John ended up taking the door off. (CD)

"We had an incident last week where he was pinching and biting himself before he went to bed. He was pinching and biting himself, scratching himself. We ended up getting him to calm down eventually". (CD)

The strategy that was put in place to support emotional regulation was a cooling-down plan which aimed to enable David to recognise escalating feelings of anger or anxiety and to respond to this by engaging in an activity that would help to reduce the strength of the particular emotion. This strategy was developed to help carers to support David in managing his emotions during incidents at home that caused him to lose his temper or get upset. An example of this which was discussed at meeting 1 was David having an argument with his sister over use of the bathroom in the morning. John and Deirdre thought that using this strategy was not effective in responding to the strength of David's emotions arising from his interactions with his family over the Christmas period.

"He's really…well I'm sure you'll ask me later but he's not in a good place". (CJ)

"Yeah I think basically it's just his emotional state". (CJ)

"Yeah the strategies were good; they just didn't work for David" (CD)

"Because he's got too much emotions going round" (CJ)

John and Deirdre tried to use the feelings thermometer in discussion with David during these incidents that John referred to as "emotional meltdowns" but David did not want to use it at that point. Instead they talked with him to help him express his feelings and thoughts.

"At first we reminded him about the chart and that got screwed up and thrown down the stairs – 'I'm not bothered about that'". (CJ)

"We just talked to him didn't we" (CD)

John and Deirdre thought that the strategy that had been planned was not the best response for the level of emotions that David was experiencing.

"So your strategy which was looking at what to do when you are getting upset or getting angry, he had just gone past that".

"Yeah every time that's why I say I've worked for 10 years with adolescents and stuff, this is brilliant and I really believe in it but for David, the kids have got to buy into it haven't they, they've got to buy in to any strategy and David just couldn't do it because there was too much going on". (CJ)

The emotional regulation strategy that had been discussed at meeting 2 was viewed as potentially a good idea but it was not fit for purpose given the events that occurred over Christmas and David's emotional responses.

"It's just that…I think, you know, this…if he'd been in a different place this would have been quite a good idea". (CJ)

3.1.2.3 Strategy Implementation and Outcomes -Main Theme

The implementation of the feelings thermometer which was designed by Keith to resemble a volcano, see Appendix I, was shared with John and Deirdre so that both home and school were using the same language to communicate about feelings.

"With us and school and Keith sort of saying what level are you at now and where are you coming from". (CJ)

John also discussed a cooling-down plan with David which can be viewed in Appendix H. This asked David to think about how his body feels when calm and how it feels when getting angry, things that made him get angry (triggers), list some of the things he does when he is angry, and to think about relaxing activities when the can tell that he is beginning to get angry or upset. A volcano was used as a visual image with accompanying levels of anger.

"I sat down with David and we worked out his strategies and our strategy was to try and fit in with what he did and obviously Keith dropped in with the volcano bit" (CJ)

John and Deirdre both thought that the emotional regulation strategy was not effective with David.

"And can you describe for me what the strategies looked like at home, what they ended up being at home?"

"They didn't (laughs)". (CJ)

"They didn't really work well for David". (CD)

They felt that David did not buy into the strategy and that his emotions were too strong for the

"David's not been bang into it because of where he is emotionally" (CJ)

Although they had known David since he was taken into care and placed with Deirdre's parents, John and Deirdre had only been caring for David for four months when they began the CESC intervention. They were learning about supporting David in managing his emotional responses and John thought that the emotional regulation strategies had given them new ideas to try.

> "I don't think it gave a different view it just gave us some more tools that we could use in the toolbox. Perhaps sometimes we use a spanner when we needed a screwdriver". (CJ)

While David had not applied his cooling-down strategies independently or with support, John reported that David had engaged in discussion with him about his feelings.

> "Practicalities-wise directly he's got his chart from school and I've done the…we've done a few sessions on what he feels and what he can do about his strategies so practicalities-wise he's been able to engage in that I suppose". (CJ)

Deirdre provided an example of David giving his sister advice on calming down when she had lost her temper which John interpreted as David becoming aware of the knowledge about regulating emotion.

> "What made me laugh is that his sister was having a paddy (tantrum) in there and she was raising her voice or whatever and he was saying to her 'you need to calm down' (laughs)". (CD)

> "He's got the knowledge". (CJ)

In school Keith thought that David was using the feelings thermometer more and that it was becoming a way of communicating strength of emotions or arousal.

> "He is starting to use that more (the feelings thermometer) and when I am referring to it now I am aware that he is aware of what I'm referring to" (T)

Keith plans to continue using the feeling thermometer with David at school and for it to be passed on to his next teacher. He had reservations about whether it would be useful to continue to use the feelings thermometer at home.

> "I want to keep that going into Years 5 and 6 so I think that continuity will help him. I don't know if it will continue at home, I don't know if it is as appropriate at home but he is starting to gel more with that now. He's getting more aware of it now and he is using it more now than he has during the initial time". (T)

Keith expressed a concern that this strategy could be a fad or effective for only a short period of time before the pupil lost interest.

> "I don't know if it's going to be a fad for him, for other kids it has worked before and then completely lost all use after a while but this seems to be going well at the moment". (T)

3.1.2.4 Perceived Outcomes of the CESC Process –Overarching Theme

An analysis of the interviews with John and Deirdre, carers, and Keith, teacher, led to two main themes outlining their perception of the outcomes of the CESC intervention. These themes are home and school partnership and understanding David.

3.1.2.4.1 Home-school Partnership –Main Theme

Prior to the intervention John and Deirdre communicated regularly with Keith to inform each other about contextual information that might affect David's mood and emotional state thereby helping each other in supporting David. The home-school partnership was established and valued by all participants. Following the CESC intervention the participants thought that this partnership had improved. Keith discussed this mainly in terms of strengthened relationships and understanding of each other's roles and perspectives and John and Deirdre expressed the improved home-school partnership in terms of improved communication.

Strengthened Relationships - Subtheme

Keith thought that he had got to know John better after participating in this intervention and thought that it is a good process for building rapport with parents.

> "I've got to know John better from speaking to him in these meetings" (T)

> "if they do something like this you are going to have a better rapport with the parents". (T)

Keith thought that the meetings helped the participants to share their perspectives and he found it useful to hear what it was like for John and Deirdre at home and develop his understanding of the reasons behind David's behaviour and responses.

> "it was good to hear things from the perspective of John and Deirdre. It was good to hear their take on things and the realities at home and the differences between his behaviour at school and at home and understanding why that was" (T)

The meetings had created an opportunity for participants to communicate and share their perspectives which enabled them to empathise with each other.

> "Yeah so that is communication and that is empathy for his scenario and his with mine and to have a forum such as these meetings where we could discuss that"

Keith thought that it was important to acknowledge the influence of the environmental setting on David's behaviour and the adults' role within that setting so that John and Deirdre did not think that they were being judged for responding to David in a different way to his approach at school. Having a clear and honest discussion about each other's role within the two settings was a part of the CESC process that Keith found beneficial.

"obviously he was able to say and I was able to say I understand how I am with David is not indicative of how you should be with David because it is a completely different likewise how they are with him. Basically understanding each other's roles and accepting and letting each other know that we accept that our roles are completely different. One is more pastoral and one is more regimented and structured and one can't be the same as the other because there are other needs that David has. They can't be the way that I am with David and I can't be the way that they are with David. That has definitely blossomed as a consequence of these meetings". (T)

Improved Communication -Subtheme

John and Deirdre viewed the improvements to the home-school partnership as resulting from better communication with Keith due to having focused time to discuss David. They valued the informal communication that already had been in place but John thought that the amount of time that they were able to spend with Keith was a positive outcome of the CESC process.

"I know we exchange 5 or 10 minutes every morning but to be sat with Keith there who sees him x amount of hours a day that was the positive bit about it, you know the communication bit" (CJ)

"I think it was the time element, being able to sit in the room for an hour and sort of get his views on David". (CJ)

Keith also thought that communication had improved as a result of the intervention through getting to know John better and from speaking to each other more since the intervention started. Deirdre attended meeting 1 with John but was not able to attend meeting 2 or meeting 3.

"since we've started the intervention and this research it's been more…I don't know if it's made us communicate more…yeah we seem to be on the page more because I've got to know John better from speaking to him in these meetings and obviously we've spoken a little bit more after, I feel, since we've started this". (T)

From the perspective of a teacher, Keith thought that this had helped him to be more open in his communication with John. Through discussion and perspective taking during the meetings he felt that there was a shared understanding and no agenda on either side.

"I mean naturally as two people interact you get to know someone better so I know him better now. I wouldn't say I was ever guarded but I'm less guarded now. I can talk to John without an agenda and there is no agenda on his end. I'm not trying to catch him out and he's not out to catch me out so we can talk on the level about what is happening with David straight to the point" (T)

John shared this view that communication had become more positive and that an outcome of this was being able to be more open and honest with Keith in relation to personal issues about David.

I think from the process it's gotten better and more positive than it was. I think that I wouldn't have that many qualms or apprehensions maybe in speaking to him about personal issues with regards to David. (CJ)

3.1.2.4.2 Understanding David –Main Theme

An outcome of the CESC process was that it enabled the participants to learn more about David through sharing knowledge and content information but also by jointly exploring and discussing their perspective of David as teacher or carer so that each participant was more aware of the home and school environment in which David operates. This subtheme has two components; better understanding of factors underlying David's behaviour and better understanding of David's needs across settings.

Better Understanding of Factors Underlying David's Behaviour -Subtheme

Keith viewed the CESC process as giving the participants an opportunity to discuss David in detail and in depth to try to understand some of the factors that underlie his thinking, feeling and behaviours. He stated that this was not often is possible within a whole class situation.

"(CESC gave) a greater impetus to think about David, to discuss David and really look at why David is the way he is" (T)

"it's definitely given fresh impetus there because obviously with the whole class you can't give that level of attention to each individual child on such a regular basis perhaps or in as much detail or depth as we have done with this". (T)

John hoped that Keith would gain a greater understanding of David through the discussion that took place during the CESC meetings.

"I would hope that Keith got an insight into him" (CJ)

The consultant asked each participant to complete a BRIEF (Gioia, et al., 2000) before meeting 1 to gain their perception of David's executive skills at home and at school. David's executive skill profile showed some commonalities but many differences across the two settings. However David's teacher and David's carers both thought that using executive skills as a way of examining David's behaviour was very relevant.

"Some of those executive skills definitely reiterated our perceptions of David already and you could definitely see him gelling with the description of those executive skills and that really summed up David". (T)

"Because everything that was, everything around the executive skills was attached to David wasn't it" (CJ)

"Yeah" (CD)

"in one form or another. On what sort of basis whether it was high level or low level it was still for him". (CJ)

John thought that the information that they had learned about executive skills gave him and Deirdre an insight into how they could support David.

"I think it gave us a… a label is the wrong word but it gave us an insight into what we might be able to help him with. Because everything around executive skills was attached to David wasn't it" (CJ)

John expressed a concern that by giving Keith an insight into David's early life history and the impact of this upon him emotionally and in relation to development of his executive skills, Keith might change his approach with David. Keith was viewed by David's carers as having an effective approach with David and one that provided structure, boundaries, and a strictness which they thought was what David needed. John was worried that Keith would change this approach after gaining a more rounded understanding of David's life history and the difficulties with which he continued to contend.

"one of the problems is that Keith, the information we are giving Keith might impact on his dealing with David". (CJ)

"Do you know what I mean? It's a double edge sword. The more information you get I think it impacts on the way you deal with things and treat things particularly in relationships and stuff like that. I don't want him to go, he won't go all soft on us but you know, I don't want him to be". (CJ)

Involvement in the meetings had given Keith an insight into David's background and this helped him to empathise with David. This enabled him to have a greater understanding about how this impacted upon David behaviour and his responses to events.

"It has helped me try to empathise more with where he is coming from. We are all focusing on where we want him to get to but sometimes we need to look at where he is and why he is going to react the way he is. So it has helped me understand that more". (T)

Better Understanding of Needs across Settings -Subtheme

The participants also found that an outcome of the CESC process was to have a clearer communication of how David operates in home and school settings, how his needs presented differently across settings and how the structure of each environment impacts upon him. Keith saw this as being beneficial for John and Deirdre as carers and for him as teacher.

"I think they will understand more how David is in school... a lot of time there is no communication so people don't know what it's like at the other side. For them, I'm presuming hearing about how David is and having an opportunity to discuss it they're

definitely… they get the full picture as opposed to just the side of David they see at home". (T)

"It was good to hear their take on things and the realities at home and the differences between his behaviour at school and at home and understanding why that was. It helped show the puzzle more I suppose...so it's been very useful in that regard". (T)

Keith commented that a comparison of David's executive skills profile at home and school showed that there were differences to the perceived needs in each setting.

"it also highlighted some of his traits at home which are different to how I've come across them in school. So some of the executive skills that perhaps John and Deirdre felt were lacking I could relate to it but hadn't necessarily seen as much evidence of it myself in a school setting". (T)

Keith thought that these differences in executive skills related to the different environments at home and school and the difference in the role of carer and teacher.

"One is more pastoral and one is more regimented and structured and one can't be the same as the other because there are other needs that David has. They can't be the way that I am with David and I can't be the way that they are with David". (T)

Keith articulated his view that differences in David's behaviour and his executive skills profile at home and school were not as a result of better or worse behaviour management but related to the different demands within each setting and the impact of environment on behaviour.

"Obviously his behaviour, to clarify, if his behaviour at home is different I am not presuming he's been dealt with in a better or worse way, it's to do with the surrounding and the setting is totally different. How he is allowed to express himself at school and home is completely different. I believe his behaviour at home is a lot worse at home than it has been at school. I understand the reasons for that and I think John and Deirdre do as well. It's understandable; the structure at school isn't there so how he acts at home is different. I think that a lot of those executive skill issues are different for John and Deirdre than in the school". (T)

From the perspective of the carers, John thought that the communication during CESC facilitated their improved understanding of David in a school setting and gave them a more complete picture of him.

"you know the communication bit and seeing how he was in school and how he was at home...(CJ)

"Definitely because we were saying you got a different picture of him" (CJ)

3.1.2.5 Process Barriers –Main Theme

The participants identified three parts of the CESC process which could be improved. Keith thought that there were not enough strategy options and that the meetings gravitated towards targeting emotional regulation as the main focus for intervention across home and school settings. An earlier review meeting or a mini review soon after meeting 2 could have helped participants to adjust strategies especially in the home setting. John and Deirdre both thought that the process could be improved if the CESC consultant observed David in order to have firsthand knowledge of the child.

Earlier Review and More Monitoring Needed -Subtheme

Meeting 2 took place in the final week of November and the review meeting was planned for the first two weeks in January. Communication between the consultant and carers was maintained through telephone calls and between the consultant and teacher through email. Communication between carers and David's teacher continued between meeting 2 and review meeting 3 on an on-going informal basis. Home and school events during this period meant that other priorities and pressures took precedence and the review meeting was delayed.

> *"What might have helped to make adjustments to the plan if that was needed?"*

> "If that were needed, probably for me and Keith to, or us to discuss what was working and what wasn't but at the time neither of us were being able to progress with it because what was happening at home was happening at home and Keith had the issues at school with Ofsted and all the rest of it and it was just like the time constraints that we were on. But in a normal situation we perhaps could have gotten a bit further". (CJ)

John thought that an earlier review meeting would have impacted on the success of the home-based strategies but Deirdre did not think that it would have made any difference for David.

> "I don't know how your other one (case) came on but it was difficult for us but certainly I would have thought if we were making any progress or we were standing still or it was getting worse that needed to be monitored and to see where things could have perhaps been tweaked". (CJ)

> "I'm sure the outcome would have been very different". (CJ)

> "I don't think it would have made a lot of difference for David". (CD)

John expressed his view that if this type of intervention was being carried out over a longer time scale it would be beneficial to have regular review meetings throughout the process in order to monitor and evaluate the use of strategies.

> "if we had this plan over 2 months, 3 months or whatever it needs to be monitored in between maybe if you've got a 6 month plan you've got to do it every 2 months don't you

to see what's going right what's going wrong, what's helping one area what's helping another area". (CJ)

Consultant Not Meeting David -Subtheme

The consultant did not observe David during the course of the intervention. This was viewed by Deirdre and John as being a barrier to the process. They thought that the consultant was able to talk about David but did not know him and it puzzled them as to why this was not a built into CESC.

"I always wondered why you don't actually see David. To me then you get a better picture of what he's like". (CD)

"It's alright talking about David but you don't really….you've not met him so you don't actually know him and I think that would have been…" (CD)

"Again it's about assessment on human beings and you making an assessment of him". (CJ)

They noted that a one-off observation would only give the consultant a snapshot of David.

"That wouldn't be a true background because he…" (CJ)

"it would depend on what sort of day he's had (laughs)" (CD)

Not Enough Strategy Options -Subtheme

Keith thought that it was unlikely that a strategy could be found that could be successfully implemented at home and school.

"I think it was always going to be difficult to find an intervention that was going to work at home, or could be attempted at home or at school".

He did not think that the CESC process generated enough options from which the participants could then choose.

"I don't feel like we eh…well it's not like we had three or four options and then we steadied on this. It seems that we naturally went towards that didn't consider others…I'm not saying that in a negative way I just think that what we… it didn't seem like we were going to go towards anything other than that". (T)

3.1.2.6 Process Facilitators –Main Theme

Logistics -Subtheme

The carers thought that the time and location of the meetings was convenient.

"it was appropriate for it to be held in school and it was timed well for our purposes. I'm not quite sure how touched with you because obviously we were timed for ten to 3 and we had to pick up David". (CJ)

Consultant as Facilitator -Subtheme

John thought that the consultant struck a good balance between allowing the teacher and carers to communicate with each other about David while also linking the discussion about David's thinking and behaviour to his executive skills profile.

"I think you did quite well just letting school and us bat it about with a few prompts and cajoles sort of thing from your angle as well". (CJ)

The consultant was able to link the content of conversations to possible strategies for the participant's to consider and helped the participants to look at issues that were common to both settings.

"there were conversations and that was sort of backed up by yourself saying look at this look at that, what about this and we were sort of saying well okay let's go for this". (CJ)

"you kept us on task by sort of saying that this seems to be the same issue we've got at home and at school". (CJ)

The review meeting was important for Keith in that it enabled the participants to evaluate the planned strategies.

"It realigned what everybody thought about what was going on and what needed to be done" (T)

"I think it was useful otherwise it might have slipped off. It might have fizzled out had we not met up". (T)

Joint Working -Subtheme

The ability of participants to work collaboratively was seen as facilitative of the CESC process. Keith thought that his pre-existing strong ties with John made liaising with each other more straightforward.

"In terms of liaising with John or Deirdre, it's usually John who leaves him off at half 8 in the morning, or 20/25 minutes before I get the children. So I have strong ties with him anyway... we have the time to take 30 seconds or a minute to speak about how David has been and he will give the heads up if he is in a mood or will give me some background to why he is upset. So we have had those ties and that communication has been invaluable".

John believed that the strategies were appropriate and that they were developed through discussion.

"And in terms of the relevance of the strategies to David, what were your thoughts on that?"

Yeah because obviously we talked about them all. And as I say I've sat in strategy meetings and stuff like that with various objectives and it just goes round and round doesn't it whereas I thought we targeted a couple of that we both, school and home, thought it was appropriate to try and do, and try and help him with that particular issue. That's my opinion and I think Deirdre's is the same" (CJ)

Keith thought that the ideas and strategies generated in the meetings were collaboratively developed and that all participants had their input to the process, however there was a degree of uncertainty in the way that this was expressed.

"And in terms of people's involvement in generating ideas or getting towards potential strategies, what did you make of that?"

"It is hard to say in hindsight. I think we all seemed to be equal in our input. I'm not sure exactly, it's hard to say". (T)

"I can't exactly remember but it seemed like we came to it cohesively, well as one I don't know" (T)

Respectful relationships -Subtheme

A facilitator of the CESC process was that it was conducted at a time when David and his teacher had established a trusting relationship. John thought that Keith was apprehensive about teaching David because of his high-profile behaviour in previous years but that David respected his teacher. This is likely to have facilitated the CEFC process.

"Yeah… I had no rapport with him, obviously I had been in the school with him for a long time but I had no rapport with him prior to this year" (T)

"he obviously trusts me more now and so that is better". (T)

"I've got a great respect for Keith because he's got respect from David" (CJ)

This intervention was conducted at a time when David had been placed in long-term foster placement with John and Deirdre. Keith thought that this gave David a sense of stability that was a helpful at school and a factor that facilitated the CESC process.

"obviously him bedding into the scenario where he has got long term foster carers now. There is more stability now". (T)

Keith did not think that this intervention could have taken place last year due to David's behaviour in school.

"This could not have been done, an intervention would not have lasted 2 seconds last year, of that nature anyway so" (T)

"So the focus of what we would have been doing would have been very different".

"Yeah it would have been small steps, there would probably have been a reward based and something simple you know" (T).

David's behaviour in school has also stabilised since last year and Keith thought that David was more able to engage with this type of intervention this year in comparison to last year.

"he was always getting in trouble, temper tantrums, screaming, you'd see him screaming in the corridor and that kind of thing when something's gone on and he's much more calm. He's a very calm individual in school, he does get upset and things like that but nothing necessarily that is any different from the other children". (T)

Deirdre also stated that David was more settled in school.

"He is doing quite well at school because when he was at X they used to have a problem every day didn't they. It seems to be one problem a week". (CD)

"So I think at school he seems to have settled. I know he still struggles with the work but he seems to have settled". (CD)

3.1.3 Refinements to CESC between Cases

CS1 was intended as a pilot leading to refinements in the CESC process in subsequent cases. Due to delays in beginning the first meeting in CS1, there was a close proximity between the start dates of CS1 and CS2 which limited the consultant's ability to make adaptations based on reflection. In CS1 each CESC meeting lasted for one hour and the consultant thought that this time scale was rushed. In CS2 the consultant asked the other participants if the length of the meeting could be extended. The participants were amenable to this suggestion and each meeting took an hour and a half. In CS2 the Teaching Assistant (TA) completed an Executive Skills Questionnaire (ESQ) devised by Dawson and Guare (2010) rather than the BRIEF (Gioia et al., 2000). See section 4.6 for the consultant's reflections on this.

3.2 Case study 2: Kate

Background

Kate[2] was a 10 year old girl in Year 6 which was her final year of primary school. Kate was the second youngest of five siblings and she was placed into the care of the local authority when aged 6 due to neglect. At the time of the intervention Kate and her younger brother were in the foster care of Liz and Frank who were also caring for a child who was not related to Kate or her brother. Liz and Frank were Kate's third foster care placement and she had been in this placement for 3 years. Kate had contact with her parents every 12 weeks and with her siblings every 6 weeks. At the time of the intervention Kate attended a school which was deemed by Ofsted to be a "satisfactory" school with the number of children eligible for free school meals at twice the national average (Drake, 2012). A chronology of the intervention can be viewed in Table 13.

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[2] All names were changed in this study

Table 13: Case Study 2 Intervention Chronology

Stage of CESC	Meeting details
1. Preliminary meeting	**Month:** November **Attendees:** TA Jane. Carer contacted by phone call. **Focus of discussion:** Description of CESC and TA's role in the process
2. Needs Identification	**Month:** December. **Weeks since previous meeting: 1** **Attendees:** TA, carer, & Consultant **Focus of discussion:** Child's presenting difficulties, ES profile from Parent BRIEF and TA completed ES questionnaire, Child's history, Discussed priority areas for intervention at home and school **Actions:** Carer to get a baseline measure of the time it takes Kate to get ready on an average morning TA to record how often Kate shouts out an answer in an average mathematics lesson
3. **Linking needs to Strategies**	**Month:** January. **Weeks since previous meeting:** 3 ½ **Attendees:** TA, carer, & consultant **Focus of discussion:** Targeting specific behaviours and linking these to ES needs **Actions:** TA to use a desk top reminder and tally chart to record number of times Kate puts hand up to answer questions, Consultant to send morning routine chart through to carer. Carer to discuss with Kate and based on SMART targets and monitor using chart
4. Review	**Month:** February. **Weeks since previous meeting:** 7 weeks after meetings 2, 5 weeks after strategy implementation start date. **Attendees:** TA, carer, & consultant **Focus of discussion:** Reviewing the outcomes of the strategies **Actions:** Interview dates arranged

3.2.1 The Views of Participants in Case Study 2

A semi-structured interview with Liz (carer) and with Jane (TA) was conducted to gather their views of CESC which was then thematically analyzed to form the thematic map seen in Figure 4 below.
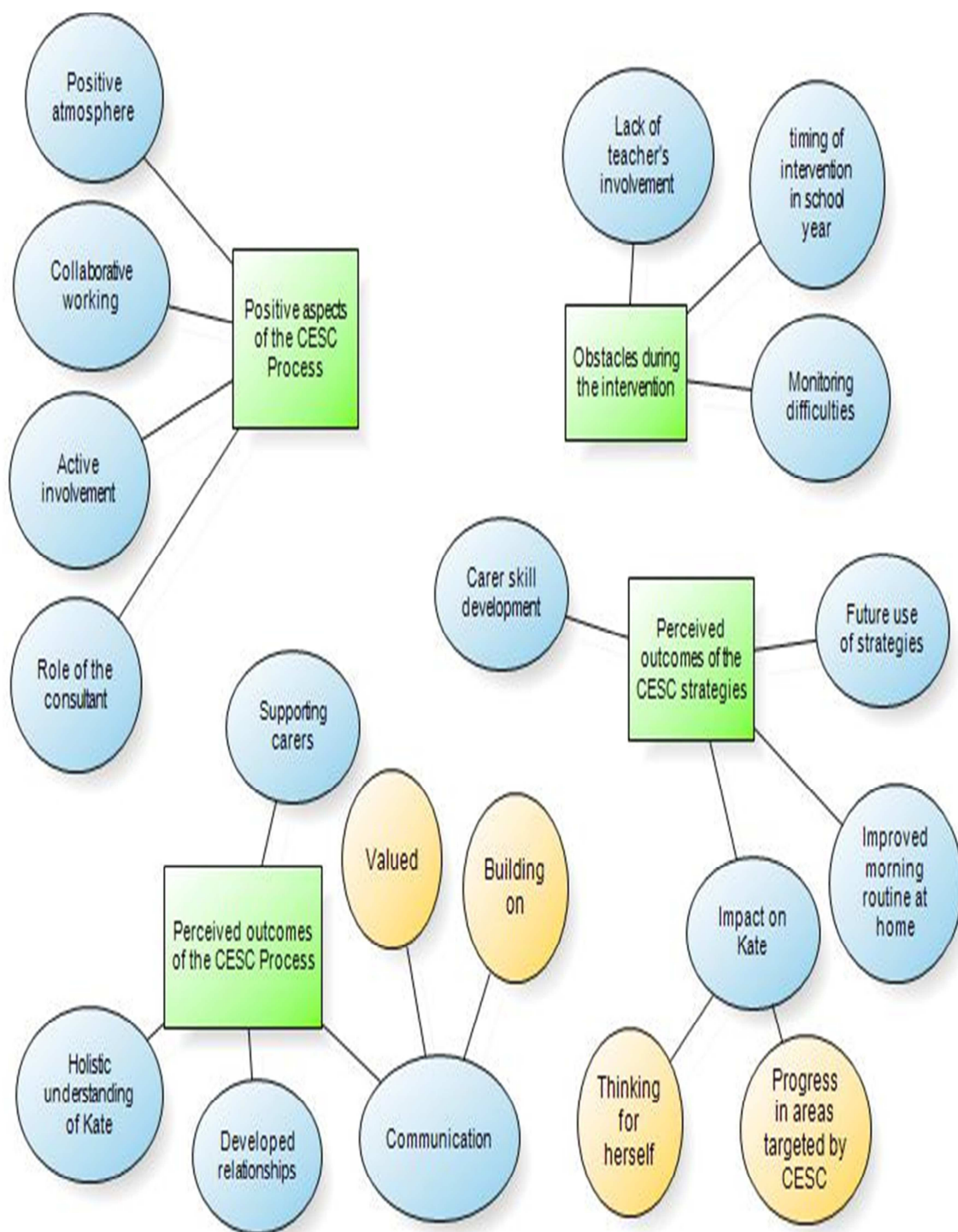
Figure 4: Thematic Map for Case Study 2

3.2.1.1 Positive Aspects of the CESC Process –Main Theme

Liz and Jane identified aspects of the CESC process that they viewed positively and which facilitated their engagement in the meetings.

Positive Atmosphere -Subtheme

At a basic level both Liz and Jane enjoyed participating in the meetings.

> "I think it was really good" (C)

> "I thought the meetings were good I enjoyed them, talking about the different behaviours and executive skills". (TA)

The participants described the atmosphere at the meetings as comfortable and easy going.

> "Even though you had the things you wanted to ask us we got chatting about other things and that was easier and more comfortable". (C)

> *"and was that a better experience for you because of that?"*

> "Yeah it was less formal".

This lack of formality and the comfortable atmosphere was also commented on by Jane when asked about her general thoughts on the intervention.

> "It was informative and nice to talk on a normal basis". (TA)

The way in which this comfortable and easy going atmosphere was facilitative was described by Liz as a feeling that the consultant and TA were not judging her.

> "Yeah I didn't feel like I was being judged. I just felt like I was trying to help and listening and getting help from you guys". (C)

In Liz's opinion this allowed the participants to be more open in their communication and to talk about things "off the agenda".

> "We were able to open up and talk about different things whereas when you are in a meeting for a reason, does that sound right because I know you are in the meeting for a reason as well, but when you are in a meeting in any kind of a situation there is an agenda". (C)

Collaborative Working -Subtheme

As a carer, Liz had attended many LAC meetings in school as well as parent-teacher meetings in which a central part of the process was listening to the views of teachers and professionals.

> "Well the other meetings that I've had were like prep meeting at school, her brother has a lot of SEN meetings so every year you have got to sit at those so they are more

informative, just going through what children are aspiring to, what they are good at, what they are not good at, where they are failing, and where they are doing well. So that is more like me sitting there listening to what they are doing in school as opposed to joining in". (C)

The CESC consultations, in comparison, were considered to be different to these other school meetings in that they were more interactive and this was perceived as leading to a greater potential for learning.

"At our meetings we could join in more and give our own ideas and then you come back with ideas, you could do this or you could do that so it was more interactive. Not just listening which is more like parent's evening where they are telling you stuff and you've got to listen and 'oh yeah he's been naughty' but this wasn't like that it's more that we could join in and learn from it really. That's how I felt". (C)

The TA also commented on the collaboration that existed between her and Liz during the consultations and how this was a positive aspect.

"I think it is good to work together, Liz and I to work together and listen to each other" (TA)

Both participants expressed the view that they were able to express their ideas and collaborate by incorporating other participant's views into the strategies adopted at the end of meeting 2.

"I think we all had our own ideas and we could all make them into one" (TA)

"we could see each other's ideas and bounce off each other's ideas so that was good" (C)

"It is always a good idea to listen and get ideas from other people". (C)

As a carer, Liz expressed the view that she felt very involved in the CESC process and that she was an active participant in the consultations.

"This felt more like we were doing the thing together. It is easier that way". (C)

"I did feel involved, I always feel involved. I just take it in and listen. It gives me some ideas and some ideas that I will use with Y in the future. I felt very involved and I really enjoyed it". (C)

Liz also expressed the view that collaborative problem solving between school staff and carers is important for supporting LAC.

"I think it is important to for parents and teachers to get together and make sure you understand each other and if you've got a problem you need to be able to tell them and they need to be able to tell you. We try to work together to help them (fostered children) as best we can". (C)

Tailored and Co-constructed Strategies -Subtheme

The participants both thought that the strategies arising from the consultations had been developed through discussion facilitated by the interactive and participatory atmosphere in the consultations. The participants mentioned that their active involvement during the intervention process enabled the strategies to be more tailored to Kate's needs by using the carers knowledge of Kate's motivators and personality. Their active involvement in strategy development was also deemed to have helped to ensure that the strategies were manageable for the participants particularly for Jane who had a busy timetable as a TA supporting many intervention groups within the school.

> *How would you describe how the intervention strategies were developed in meeting two?*

> "I think just to bounce off each other. Rather than saying 'you do this' getting other people's points of view about what they could do and change the strategies". (TA)

> "It was nice to talk about what strategies we could use because you can put strategies in place but they can't necessarily be carried out because it is hard". (TA)

The TA had previous experience of being given strategies to work on without a chance to discuss the way in which those strategies could be implemented which resulted in uncertainty in implementation.

> "Sometimes we've had things handed to us by Speech and Language and I haven't had a clue what to do, you know, years ago. I could have been doing it wrong. We started having meetings then. To be given something to read and you think - how do I know if I'm doing it right?" (TA)

Without this open and honest discussion, enabling participants to consider their own personal capacity to carry out proposed strategies, it would have increased the level of stress experienced by the TA.

> "I would have felt under more stress doing the work, knowing that I had to do them". (TA)

Liz thought that the meetings were interactive and this helped to generate ideas within the group.

> "At our meetings we could join in more and give our own ideas and then you come back with ideas, you could do this or you could do that so it was more interactive". (C)

The carer was able to utilize her expertise as Kate's carer to shape strategy direction and ultimately reject ideas that she did not think would work based on her knowledge of Kate.

> "I know Kate better than you do so I knew that certain things wouldn't work with her, like using music to motivate her when getting ready in the morning. I knew that would be a distraction for her, so that's why I had to turn it into a game". (C)

The carer felt able to challenge ideas that she didn't think would be suitable for Kate and she was able to adapt strategies to best fit with Kate.

"I felt like you gave some strategies that I knew wouldn't work". (C)

and did you feel able to say that?

"Yeah I did say that didn't I. There was one that was said about music and I thought that wouldn't work and there was another one, I can't remember what it was, and I said that's not going to work with Kate so I kind of took ideas from what you said and did them my way (laughs). Because I know her and I know what she is like". (C)

Jane thought that her experience as a TA and her use of interventions within school was useful in developing strategies and supporting Liz's decision in what type of strategy she could implement at home.

"I think we gave Liz more ideas as well about when and how to do it. Because I'm used to using strategies in class and around the school and in my own groups I think it was nice that Liz had someone else to talk to about it". (TA).

At meeting 2, the TA planned to speak to Kate and the group that she worked with and explore their thoughts on what helped them to concentrate and what distracted them. From this discussion, the TA thought of strategies which she discussed with Kate's teacher and implemented with Kate to support her ability to sustain attention and self-monitor during writing activities.

"You know the one about checking the partner's work when did that discussion or that idea take place?"

"Probably after our second meeting. I decided that because she was losing concentration and she was having writer's block so I just gave her so many lines to write then she could swap and then get on with it because otherwise she would spend a good 10 minutes reading the walls". (TA)

Role of the Consultant -Subtheme

Executive skill was initially an unfamiliar term to both participants. The TA, Jane, thought that the consultant was able to explain executive skills and helped the participants to think about how Kate's behaviour might be influenced by her executive skills profile.

So as a term it doesn't immediately jump into your head?

"No" (TA)

Did using an unfamiliar term make it difficult or hinder things?

"No I think you explained it pretty clearly and you know what terms they are so when we would say something you would then drop it into the area which it should be and reinforced it. But I think it takes a lot of studying to know about it". (TA)

The carer, Liz, saw the role of the consultant as being someone who could suggest strategies, based on their knowledge of executive skills.

"It kind of went over my head a little bit because I didn't understand what executive skills were, I still don't understand if I'm honest but obviously you know what you are doing so I just sit there and answer". (C)

"you gave us different ways to handle her even though some of those didn't work". (C)

The carer wanted to see positive outcomes from the strategies that she implemented and viewed the role of the consultant as having an overview of the intervention and someone who she would seek answers from if the strategy was not successful.

"If it hadn't of worked I would have wanted it to work. I would have wanted something else from you to help me do it because there is no point of doing this if nothing was going to come out of it at the end of it". (C)

The TA also saw the role of consultant as being the person who kept an overview of the intervention and who could provide information.

"I thought the meetings were fine, all the information was there". (TA)

The consultant kept a record of the meetings and kept in contact with the participants during the implementation phase of the intervention.

"You did a lot of work typing up the minutes and you kept in contact". (TA)

The consultant facilitated the process of strategy development.

"I think we all had our own ideas and we could all make them into one and having that support helped". (TA)

3.2.1.2 Obstacles during Intervention Implementation –Main Theme

The intervention was conducted with a TA rather than with Kate's teacher as had been originally planned. The TA, Jane, did not work with Kate in whole class settings so found it very difficult to monitor the strategy aimed at supporting Kate's concentration in class. The timing of the intervention was also viewed as an obstacle because Kate was in Year 6 and her class were busy preparing for SATs exams at the end of the year. This also affected Jane who was involved in taking booster groups which further impacted on her ability to monitor the strategies that she had put in place.

Lack of Involvement of Kate's Teacher -Subtheme

Kate's teacher was a Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) and when the researcher first contacted the school SENCo to enquire as to the teacher's ability to participate in the intervention the SENCo decided that it would be too much additional pressure on the teacher in her first year of teaching. Rather than not do the intervention the researcher asked whether a TA could participate and feedback to the teacher where appropriate. The lack of involvement of Kate's teacher was addressed by both carer and TA when they were asked for their thoughts on CESC.

The carer understood why Kate's teacher was unable to participate but thought that it might have given her an opportunity to understand Kate more.

> *"Would it have been useful to do the intervention with Kate's teacher?"*

> "I think it maybe it would have been only because she is a new teacher and she has been working so hard to get the children ready for SATS. If she could have taken the time off she might have found it useful in understanding Kate a little bit more instead of coming through Jane. Jane has known Kate a long time, for a few years now, whereas her teacher has only known her since September". (C)

The TA also understood the reason for why participating in an intervention of this kind would be difficult for Kate's teacher.

> "The teacher was an NQT this year and it just would have been a bit too much for her to do and because she didn't know Kate like I did". (TA)

The TA was able to meet with Kate's teacher to tell her what had been happening in the CESC meetings.

> "I spoke to the teacher quite often in the mornings or after we had the meetings about it and say what we were doing". (TA)

> "I have spoken to the teacher about Kate's concentration in class" (TA)

The TA suggested that it would have been helpful to have invited Kate's teacher to a meeting to give her an overview of the intervention so that she had a better understanding of the reason why the intervention was taking place and what the aims of the participants were in relation to Kate.

> "I think that if we had a meeting together and invited the teacher to one and said this is what we are going to do and Liz to say what she was going to do at home. That would have made the teacher understand why we were doing it". (TA)

Monitoring -Subtheme

It was difficult for the TA to monitor the interventions in class because she did not have much contact time with Kate in a whole class setting.

"The strategies I chose I found hard to monitor. I had to get Kate to monitor them on her own because I only take Kate out of class. I'm not very much in class with her" (TA)

"I just wasn't in her class. I was never in the class I only take her out of class for sessions. I think there is one morning when I go in for maths otherwise I'm not in there". (TA)

When the TA was working in small group sessions with Kate the difficulties with shouting out answers, response inhibition, concentration, and sustained attention were less apparent because pupils are allowed call out answers due to the small group size. They are also less likely to lose concentration due to a greater level of adult attention and fast paced lessons.

"when it is a small group situation like that, we were concentrating on keeping concentration and not shouting out, well when you are in a small group I encourage them to do that because there is only a few". (TA)

"yeah they can be a bit more vocal. So in a class situation with her being more vocal in a small group situation she is not going to be staring around the room and not getting on with her work because it is constant". (TA)

This meant that the TA was unable to use these sessions, which was the majority of the time she spent with Kate, to support her with the strategies from CESC. The TA talked with Kate about the strategies and asked her to monitor them herself in class.

"I tried to put these things in place but I've just not being able to monitor it because if you looked at my timetable you would know that I am everywhere. I did my best. I also made sure that I spoke to Kate I didn't just put them on her desk and say right you do that". (TA)

Jane thought that Kate became distracted by having to monitor her response inhibition targets of putting her hand up rather than shouting out answers. She thought that this was too much for Kate to do at once and perhaps led to poorer listening or missing bits of information.

"Yeah she did do it I just think that it would have been too hard for her to monitor and listen at the same time. She is either listening or thinking about the chart and when she has put her hand up and shouted out she then misses what was said next". (TA)

The TA considered whether the teacher could have helped to monitor if she had have been more involved with the intervention but she thought that the teacher would have needed support with this.

"She could have said I will carry on the monitoring for you but it is hard when you are teaching, you can't monitor as well. It's easier if you have someone who is watching everything going on". (TA)

The TA did get opportunities to check in with Kate and see how she was doing the strategies that they had discussed.

> "We have spoken about the strategies and she said that they worked" (TA)

> "We do get a chance to talk and I do know how she is getting on". (TA)

Timing of the Intervention in the School Year -Subtheme

Attendance at CESC meets was manageable for the TA.

> "It was fine because in the afternoons the children do topic or science so I wouldn't be needed as support as much. I would be doing booster groups now but I have been given another session. It's been fine". (TA)

The intervention was carried out in the spring term and this was a difficult time to conduct an intervention because of the pressure to prepare pupils for Year 6 SATs examinations. This meant that Jane's timetable was very full as she had booster groups to supervise.

> "It is just all about SATS at the moment. We are constantly testing them and finding gaps in their literacy and numeracy and re-teaching them and re-teaching them the same things that they have already been taught but obviously not retained it. So teaching for SATS". (TA)

The TA thought that had the intervention taken place in the autumn term then there would have been less competing pressures and she could have monitored the strategies more closely.

> *"Would it have been easier to do it in September?"*

> "Yeah I think so. I wouldn't have so many SATS booster groups so would be in class more to monitor it". (TA)

3.2.2 Perceived Outcomes of the CESC Process –Main Theme

An analysis of the interviews with the carer and the TA resulted in four subthemes that outlined their perception of the outcomes of the CESC intervention. These subthemes are developing a holistic understanding of Kate, building on the communication, developing the relationship between home and school, and support for carers.

Developing a Holistic Understanding of Kate -Subtheme

The participants expressed the view that the communication during the intervention process had enabled greater insight into Kate by being able to share information about Kate from the perspective of their respective settings. This allowed for a fuller understanding of Kate across home and school settings and for her TA to learn about some of Kate's early experiences which might impact on her current behaviour.

The carer stated that CESC gave her a chance to share some of her knowledge of Kate which might help school staff to have a better understanding of Kate.

> "There are things that you say in meetings that teachers aren't aware of and they need to be aware of. I know that the teachers think that Kate is a cocky little so and so but she is not. She is a very, very insecure little girl and I don't think they get that because she comes across as cheeky and rather cocky. She always wants to be 'me, me, me' and they don't see that other side to her". (C)

The TA stated that CESC gave her a chance to talk about Kate and she indicated that this was unusual for a child with Kate's profile as she does not have extreme behavioural or learning difficulties.

> "I think it's nice talking to Liz about Kate because you don't get the opportunity to talk about children really not unless they have got massive issues". (TA)

The TA thought that there were common concerns across both home and school settings.

> "When I was saying what was happening in school, similar things were being recognised at home". (TA)

Liz, the carer, thought that collaboration with the TA, through the consultation process, had been helped by being able to share with each other their knowledge of Kate in different settings.

> "I think we got there, maybe by the second and third meeting because Jane knew her needs at school and I knew her needs here (at home) so we kind of worked it together. I was alright with that, I felt like we were getting somewhere with that". (C)

The TA expressed her opinion that when working with LAC it is important to consider the home environment as one of many environmental factors. She did not think that an intervention that didn't explore environmental factors would be effective.

> "Let's say for sake of argument that I used a different approach and came in and assessed Kate, said that she struggled with attention and left strategies for you and home to get on with, what could you tell me about that approach?"

> "Obviously we would have done it. We have had people in coming in and doing that. I think sometimes it is better to talk about it and get an underlying picture of it because it is not always about what happens in class. Things happen before school, after school, at playtime, at home that knock children like Kate off balance. So I don't think that would have worked very well". (TA)

A strong value of the TA was to treat all pupils equally even when her own children attend the school.

"I treat all children the same they are all treated the same. My own son comes here and he is treated the same as all the other children and my eldest came here and he was treated the same". (TA)

Learning about Kate through the CESC intervention was a reminder for the TA of the impact of the home environment on children's learning and coping in school.

"Yeah I think some of it has changed my thinking. When I look at Kate in class or in a small group, it's not that you forget that they are looked after.... But I think when you hear what is going on in their lives you just think it is horrible to think that they have got to come to school and you are asking them why they have not done their spellings, and I'm not just talking about Liz's looked after children but other children who live with their parents who don't have particularly nice lives and you are asking them where are their spelling and it might be the last thing on their minds after a weekend at home with parents who are not very nice. But you've got to carry on as normal". (TA)

When she was implementing the attention and concentration strategies with Kate, the TA found that the information from the CESC intervention about the impact of neglect and maltreatment on a child's executive skills was helpful in building her awareness of why Kate struggled with this particular skill.

"understanding why she was like that helped" (TA)

As a carer, Liz thinks that it is important that teachers and teaching assistants are aware of the needs of foster children and she thinks that to have an intervention that looked at home and school issues was a good idea.

"We did this (intervention) at home and school, how do you think that works?"

"I think it is a good idea because teachers see them as much as you do if not more on an everyday basis so they need to be a bit more aware and have more understanding. I think they are an awful lot don't get me wrong, they have quite a few foster children and Kate's school so they know the problems and they have to be aware of them". (C)

Developed Relationship between Carer and Teaching Assistant -Subtheme

Before the intervention Liz (carer) and Jane (TA) had said hello to one another but did not know each other. Through involvement in CESC they developed a positive relationship which was valued by both parties. Liz thought that it was important for parents and teachers to meet and try to gain a mutual understanding.

"I think it is important for parents and teachers to get together and make sure you understand each other" (C)

Jane hoped that Kate's carer had got to know her as a person and that they were able to relate to each other on a parent to parent level.

"I think that she has learned more about me and hope that she thinks that I am a normal person...down to earth" (TA)

"...maybe not (only) on a TA to parent level but on a parent to parent level as well" (TA)

"It was nice that I could bring me being a parent into it. You know as a parent that in the morning you have a routine with time limits in it and as an adult you have time limits. (TA)

When we discussed Kate's needs at home Jane and Liz were able to relate to each other as parents and this helped to strengthen their relationship.

"She is more on a level as a parent and she was talking about her son and her experiences and things that she could implement with her kids. So it was more easy going". (C)

"She is easy to talk to and she is a parent just like me". (C)

Jane stated that she felt that Liz understood that work was only one aspect of her life and that she had demands outside of school which were also important to her.

"I think what I like about what she said is that she understands that I work and then I go home and I have got my children. Some people are not really bothered about your home life". (TA)

Jane valued Liz's role as a foster carer and as she knew the children that Liz cared for she thought that Liz had a difficult job and she respected her for doing it.

"I know that she has a lot to deal with. She is a foster carer and if it weren't for people like her they wouldn't have a chance to have a stable home life. It is a hard job and it takes a special person to do it". (TA)

Home-school Communication -Subtheme

Communication with school staff was seen as being very important to Liz in her role as parent and carer and she viewed herself as someone who already had good communication with school prior to this intervention.

"The relationship with Jane now, how is that different to relationships you have had with other teachers?"

"It probably is a bit more but not too much because I've always had meetings with teachers in the past through foster caring, you get involved with a lot of meetings. You've got to be that type of person to do it. You need to be able to communicate". (C)

"I have a good relationship with school. I always go in and go to all the meetings" (C)

The TA also valued communication with parents and thinks that approachability is a key component of successful engagement with parents.

"I think if you have already been approachable from the start then they will want to come in and sort things out. We always stand at the front when we are letting the children out so that parents can approach us. If it needs to be a private discussion or something that they are not very happy with then they can make an appointment and also if we need to speak to parents we go onto the yard and speak to that parent". (TA)

Following the intervention both participants expressed the view that they will be able to build on their developing relationship and will continue communicating to support Kate and the other children that Liz cares for.

"I think it's helped if she thinks she can come in and I'm hoping she can come in and speak to me if she needs to. Because I will be working with Kate's brother as he moves up the school". (TA)

Liz had very positive views on her relationship with Jane and thought that she would be able to talk to her if she had a problem with one of the children.

"Yeah she is great. I know that if I've got a problem I'll just grab her to one side because I see her every night and she is dead easy to talk to anyway. She is dead approachable and if I'd a problem I'd probably see her and she'd tell someone else rather than go to a teacher". (C)

The carer also thought that Jane could talk to her regarding school based concerns about Kate.

"Yeah it is yeah and on the flip-side Jane would come to me if she thinks Kate has done something not right or if she has been a bit quiet that day and she is a bit worried about her". (C)

Support for Carers -Subtheme

The TA thought that it was important for school to be supportive of foster carers and for them to feel able to engage with school staff when there are difficulties.

"I think it is important to let Liz know that it is alright, no matter what happens it is alright to come in and talk because everything can always be sorted". (TA)

You mentioned parents coming in to speak to school staff, what is useful about that?

"Because of what she does it would help her to come in and share it really. Because she is really doing the same job as us but in a home situation and it is nice for her to have support and understanding about it" (TA)

Liz also thought that it was important for foster carers to access support and to work with people who can help them gain new perspectives.

"But I think that any extra help you can get from someone who is different and who thinks differently and has more of an understanding and more knowledge, if you like, and can

give ideas. I say to any foster carers when I have done this to take every bit of help you can get". (C)

"But for me it was another way of looking at things because you don't always have the answers" (C)

Liz thought that this intervention would have been more helpful in her first 12 months of caring for Kate as this was a particularly difficult time for her.

"Maybe if we had done this (the CESC intervention) two years ago we would still be going on because nothing I was doing was working". (C)

Would this process have been useful 2 years ago?

"Yeah more useful because I didn't understand a lot then. I didn't understand her or where she was coming from and how to deal with her temper tantrums". (C)

"It (the CESC intervention) would be helpful yeah maybe not so much for me now but for new foster carers who have new kids in because those first 12 months are the hardest". (C)

Liz did have support from a therapeutic advisory service run by the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) within her LA during the first year of her caring for Kate and her brother Y.

"I was involved with 'LAC support service' because I couldn't handle her. I didn't know what to do with her but it was Y mainly because he had problems so I had 'LAC support service' as long as I needed it". (C)

3.2.3 Perceived Outcome of the Strategies Arising from CESC –Overarching Theme

The CESC intervention led to strategies to support the development of Kate's executive skills at home and at school. School strategies aimed to develop her sustained attention during class work and to improve her response inhibition by helping her to reduce the amount of times she shouted out answers during lessons. In a small group involving Kate and other pupils from her class, Jane discussed attention, concentration, and the things that distracted them from their work. She also created a chart for Kate's desk with a visual reminder about putting her hand up to answer questions and a tally chart which Kate ticked if she remembered to put her hand up before answering a question. The home strategy was to encourage greater independence in getting ready in the morning by supporting Kate's skills of time management, organization, and sustained attention. Liz broke the routine into three main parts, getting out of bed, washing face and teeth, and dressing. She measured that this normally took Kate 35 minutes and discussed with her the impact of this on the other members of the family. Liz challenged Kate to complete these three activities in 15 minutes by breaking each task into 5 minute chunks. Each morning Liz monitored Kate's performance using a checklist which enabled her to record the length of time each activity took and how many reminders she had to give Kate.

From the point of view of the participants, the outcomes of these strategies were

- positive impacts on Kate;

- carer skill development;

- potential for the future use of strategies; and

- improvement to the morning routine at home.

3.2.3.1 Positive Impacts on Kate –Main Theme

Thinking for Herself - Subtheme

The TA thought that one of the outcomes from having a discussion with Kate was that it helped Kate to become more aware of her own level of concentration and to notice when her attention had wandered.

> "because I put them in place now she is thinking 'I am looking at the board again I need to stop looking at the board and get on with my work', or 'I'm not listening to the teacher, I need to listen to the teacher', 'I've not understood what has gone on because I've not listened'. I think she is questioning herself now". (TA)

The carer had also noticed that Kate was thinking about her time management and organisational skills more when she was getting ready in the morning.

> "Because she is thinking for herself. She is thinking 'I'm on a timer here, is it 5 minutes?' She would ask me 'have I been in here 5 minutes yet?' …'3 minutes you've got 2 minutes left'… 'Okay well I've still got to do this and that'. It made her have more oomph and thinking to herself 'I need to get ready now because I've got to beat this time'". (C)

Progress in Areas Targeted by Strategies -Subtheme

Both Jane and Liz reported positive impacts on Kate following the use of strategies to support her executive skills. The TA noticed improvements in her attention levels and this was also noticed by her teacher with whom the TA discussed Kate's progress.

> "I think she is listening a lot better now". (TA)

> "Her teacher has said in her writing that she has been trying to get on and not walking around the room to sharpen a pencil or find a pen, trying to make time go on". (TA)

At home, Liz thought that Kate started to improve her task initiation and time management in getting ready each morning.

> *"So how did she get on with it?"*

"Fine – within a week she started to get better and it only took her 5 minutes to do each thing". (C)

Liz also thought that Kate started to think more about the impact of her behaviour in the morning on other members of the house.

"I think it has made her think a bit more about other people for a start". (C)

Kate had been with Liz for three years at the point of the CESC intervention and Liz thought that the intervention coincided with Kate starting to change her behaviour and her thinking due to a sense of stability in her placement.

"Kate has turned a corner in a lot of things. I don't know whether it is finally after three years with us that she feels as though she has some kind of stability. I don't know if they do get to a point where they think 'oh I'm staying here; I'm not going anywhere so I've got to get used to it and do what I'm supposed to do'. It kind of coincided funnily enough with us doing this and Kate starting to change. I think that has come in anyway but it all seemed to just click. She has been here three years and you don't know how long it takes them to adjust and think I'm staying here". (C)

Carer Skill Development - Subtheme

During the intervention, the carer was able to use and develop skills in strategy implementation. She viewed the meetings as an opportunity to learn different ways of managing Kate's behaviour.

"When someone else comes in and says well you could do this or you could do that. I'm still learning even though I've had kids of my own...So learning different ways of handling situations, finding out which way is best for Kate". (C)

"You can never learn enough, there are always different ways you can handle things and you gave us different ways to handle her even though some of those didn't work". (C)

Liz provided a structure for the morning routine by breaking it into three key tasks, monitoring performance, and turning the strategy into a challenge.

"She needs to have some kind of structure because if you left it to Kate she would do anything she wanted". (C)

"*You helped with this structure, you used the chart to tick off whenever you had to give her a reminder".*

"I put in how long it took her as well". (C)

"*Did you break it up into key tasks?"*

"Yeah getting ready, in the bathroom, how long to get dressed, how long to get out of bed, how many reminders she needed to get up". (C)

Liz used her knowledge of what might be motivating for Kate and turned the strategy into a challenge.

> "I said 'you are on a timer here, you are on a timer now and I am timing everything you do because you can't take more than 15 minutes in the bathroom or 5 minutes because everyone takes 5 minutes'". (C)

> "I made it more competitive, 'this is it you are on a timer'". (C)

Liz, faded her input as Kate's performance improved and rewarded successful completion of the task by giving Kate a choice of activities.

> "By the third week I didn't shout anything at her like 'you've got 5 minutes to do this'. I said to her 'you've got a clock there and you know what to do' so I weren't shouting at her. I eased off and she is still down most of the time within the time she has given to her". (C)

> "then when she would come down I'd say 'do you want to watch TV, play your DS or listen to some music?'" (C)

Jane admired the effort and success that Liz achieved in implementing the home based strategies.

> "I thought Liz did really well with those, she did better than me. She has got two other ones who are really hard work and I just thought well done". (C)

Development of Independence and Self-help Skills -Subtheme

The areas of executive skill prioritised by the carer related to time management, task initiation, and sustained attention during the morning when she was getting ready for school. This was an activity and a time of the day which Liz found very stressful.

> "Yeah it was getting up in the morning because she doesn't sleep well at night. Not being so distracted, not being such a dolly day dream, to move a little bit more quickly, a bit of a kick up the backside that she needs because I think she will always be late for things. She will always have no urgency in the things that she does. She is very laid back 'I'll do it later' or 'in a bit' and it drives me insane because she can't think on her feet. She can't think for herself that it is the basis of it". (C)

Liz saw this process as trying to establish greater independence in Kate before she starts High School next September.

> "As long as I can get her thinking for herself now it will train her to do a bit more when she is in high school". (C)

Helping Kate to develop a structure that she could use throughout life and a capacity to get through disliked tasks were key aims for Liz. This related to her explanation of executive skills.

"In class she has got to input that structure and doing things and finishing things and not going off on a tangent somewhere else. All the way through her life there will be things she's got to do. I have a structure and I have things I have to do in every morning that I don't like doing. I can't just stay in bed, I've got to get up and get on with it and that's just the way I am". (C)

"I think it (Executive Skills) is her way of dealing with the future, preparing her for the future". (C)

Liz thought that since the implementation of the strategy to structure Kate's getting ready routine, the morning involved less shouting.

"She knows how we do things, she is learning our ways and she is doing it. Now she can listen to her music every day while she is getting changed and it does take her a little bit longer but then I make sure I send her up a little bit earlier and we are not shouting and going mad saying 'get down and get ready now'". (C)

Liz thought that Kate would notice a calmer atmosphere and more independence.

"Probably I don't shout as much and it is calmer. So she'll probably think 'well she is just letting me get on with it' and she is not nagging me as much". (C)

Future Use of Strategies -Subtheme

The TA thought that Liz would be able to use the strategies discussed in the CESC meetings with her other children.

"When we talking about teaching Kate those things and the time limit that you do have in the morning maybe she could use those strategies with the other two which would be good for her". (TA)

Liz also thought that the strategies that she adopted with Kate would be useful to use with her other child and she could see how she would have to adapt the monitoring and incentives to make it more motivating for him.

"How do you think something similar might work with Y (Kate's brother)? Is it something you think would be helpful for your other children?"

"I think it would I definitely will... I think Y would definitely benefit more from charts and visual things. I could do something that Y could look at and think 'I could do this and that' I did that today in such a time and tick it on a chart. He would benefit from that because he is a visual child, he needs to see what he is doing whereas with Kate she is older and I ticked the chart myself I didn't involve her in that. So I think looking at those ideas that we put on the table is something that I would implement with Y". (C)

3.3 Summary of the Results

This research was an in-depth account of the views of the participants of two cases who took part in an intervention that used conjoint consultation to support executive skills in fostered children who had been taken into care as a result of abuse and/or neglect. The participants in each case identified what they thought were the outcomes of CESC and the barriers and facilitators to the process. The way in which the participants' views addressed the research questions will be presented in the discussion section. A summary of the themes within and across cases is presented in Table 14.

Table14: Comparison of Themes across Case Study 1 and Case Study 2

Themes	CS1 (David)	CS2 (Kate)
RQ1 Positive aspects of the CESC Process and Facilitators		
Positive atmosphere		X
Collaborative working	X	X
Tailored and co-constructed strategies		X
Role of the consultant	X	X
Logistics	X	
Child more settled at school	X	
RQ1 Obstacles during the intervention/ Home and school pressures(Barriers)		
Involving other staff /Lack of teacher's involvement	X	X
Timing of the intervention in the school year (Exams)	X	X
Monitoring difficulties (of strategies)		X
Not enough strategy options	X	
Consultant not meeting child	X	
Earlier review and more monitoring during CESC	X	
Christmas and family contact	X	
Ofsted	X	
RQ2 Perceived outcomes of the CESC process		
Communication	X	X
Developed relationships	X	X
Holistic understanding of child	X	X
Supporting carers		X

RQ2 Perceived outcomes of the CESC strategies		
Progress in executive skill targeted by CESC		**X**
Better meta-cognition by child		**X**
Improved morning routine at home		**X**
Carer skill development		**X**
Future use of strategies		**X**
Strategy not effective at home	**X**	
Potential for effectiveness of school strategy	**X**	
Ongoing priorities and concerns		
Balancing structure and flexibility	**X**	
Executive skills	**X**	
Importance of home-school regular communication	**X**	
Additional concerns	**X**	

4. Discussion

4.1 Summary of the Research

This study explored the implementation processes and outcomes of an intervention that aimed to support the developing executive skills of children taken into care as a result of prior experience of abuse and neglect. The intervention was conducted in two pieces of casework in the North West of England. A conjoint consultation process was used, based on the conjoint behavioural consultation (CBC) model (Sheridan & Kratochwill, 2007), and it was termed conjoint executive skills consultation (CESC). The study aimed to answer the following research questions:

Research question 1: What are the perceived facilitators and barriers of operating a collaborative consultation intervention in a school setting to support the executive skills development of children in foster care?

Research question 2: What do participants identify as the outcomes of the conjoint executive skills consultation intervention?

This exploratory study incorporated two cases and the following section will discuss the findings from each case and analyses the pattern of findings across cases. In both cases the researcher recorded statements, observations, and decisions made by participants during the meetings by annotating the agenda forms. The researcher also recorded his reflections about the sessions within 2-3 hours of each meeting in a research diary. Maykut and Morehouse (1994) stated that a detailed research diary can become a useful part of the data collection and analytic process. Robson (2011) discussed the value of consulting a research journal when "putting together the findings of the research" (p. 2). The researcher consulted the research diary during the data analysis stage of the research in order to verify whether the statements or views of participants were supported by the researcher's own notes. An example of how the research diary was utilized was during the analysis of the teacher's interview in CS1 when he was discussing whether a particular intervention strategy had been generated collectively. The research diary recorded that the consultant had generated that strategy. This supported the researcher's view that although the teacher stated that the strategy was generated collaboratively the way in which he stated this belied his true thoughts.

A synthesis of the themes from Case Study 1 (CS1) and Case Study 2 (CS2) can be found at the end of the results chapter. This is followed by a discussion of the limitations of this study, the researcher's reflections on the process as researcher and participant (consultant) and is concluded by an outline of the potential contribution of knowledge arising from this research.

4.2 Research Question 1: Cross- Case Facilitators

The participants identified process facilitators and barriers which will be discussed by first examining common subthemes, followed by case specific subthemes.

4.2.1 Collaborative Working

The participants across both cases viewed collaborative or joint working as a positive aspect of CESC suggesting that the CESC meetings were conducive to the relational objective of meaningful participation (Sheridan & Kratochwill, 2007). This is consistent with the study by Tucker and Schwartz (2013) which explored the views of parents of children with autism and found that the ability to make a meaningful contribution within a school setting was identified as a major factor in feeling included in their child's education (Tucker & Schwartz, 2013). Adoptive parents in the survey by Cooper and Johnson (2007) expressed the view that a joint forum for parents and school staff, to discuss how best to help the child, would be desirable. The present study, which is an example of such a joint forum, suggests that it is important for such a forum to work in a collaborative way. A collaborative ethos was promoted by the consultant in this research but this was not formally measured. Garbacz et al. (2008) explored the consultant's partnership orientation by devising a Partnership Orientation Measure (POM). The POM uses a 6 point Likert scale to rate the consultant's partnership orientation across 7 themes. Garbacz et al. (2008) found that the consultant's partnership orientation based on the POS, was significant at predicting teachers', but not parents', acceptability of and satisfaction with CBC.

4.2.2 Role of the Consultant

The views on the role of the consultant were positive. The participants in CS1 viewed the consultant as being a 'facilitator' of the consultation process. In CS2 the carer saw the role more as a source of ideas and solutions. Her conception of the role of the consultant was in line with that of realist consultation (Matthews, 2010). In both cases the consultant was viewed as being able to bring a distinctive expertise in the form of knowledge of executive skills (Wagner, 2008). The researcher adopted the framework and principles of the CBC model in preparation for the executive skills intervention. CBC is explicit in its focus on processes as well as outcomes and it aims to create the required conditions for collaborative working. It outlines relational objectives and examples of how the consultant can promote these aims (Sheridan & Kratochwill, 2007). The application of the relational objectives of CBC, in order to achieve these aims, was dependent to an extent on the interpersonal qualities of the consultant. The researcher outlined in section 2.8.1 that his consultation style was typically client-centred (Lippitt & Lippitt, 1978) and it was likely that this approach to consultation fitted well with the CBC model.

4.3 RQ1 Facilitators in CS1

The carers and class teacher in CS1 identified two subthemes that they thought helped the CESC process. The logistics of the meeting were conducive and the perception that David was more settled in school was thought to have made the process easier.

4. 3.1 Logistics

The carers and teacher in CS1 both thought that the logistics of the CESC meetings were good, as times were suitable and cover was arranged for the teacher. Although logistics might appear to be

a side issue, considerations such as child care arrangements, time, and transportation costs can often be a real challenge to the successful implementation of a home-school strategy (DfE, 2011).

4.3.2 Positive Child – Teacher Relationship

David's relationship with his school teacher had developed since starting in September and the carers thought that the overall level of concern about David's behaviour in school had reduced in comparison to the previous year. The improved relationship with David was consistent with the advice to teachers from the Teaching Agency which discussed positive relationships being an essential component in managing behaviour (DfE, 2012). The personal qualities of teachers are of great importance in terms of reducing social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) (Cooper, 2011). The style of teaching adopted by David's teacher appeared to be supportive of David's social, emotional, and behavioural needs. The carers stated that David was 'more settled' at school this year even though he still found academic work challenging. This is consistent with the views of the adoptive parents in the Cooper and Johnson (2007) study which suggests that parents/carers satisfaction with their child's progress in school takes in a range of factors other than academic concerns. The relationship between the class teacher and child, the greater degree of a positive atmosphere around David in school, and the respect towards the teacher from the carers was likely to have impacted on the relationship between carers and teacher which would have been facilitative of collaborative working during the CESC meetings.

4.4 RQ 1 Facilitators in CS2

4.4.1 Positive Atmosphere

The comfortable and non-judgmental atmosphere discussed by participants in CS2 was consistent with literature on CBC which proposes a framework for developing effective partnership (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001) involving four components; Approach, Attitude, Atmosphere, and Actions. In this framework 'Approach, Attitude, and Atmosphere' are seen as relational prerequisites for the successful implementation of partnership actions. The carer's perception of not being judged supported the notion of 'attitude' whereby parents/carers are respected and accommodated for "where they are" and not "where they should be" as perceived by educators (Sheridan & Kratochwill, 2007). This is consistent with recent best practice guidelines in the UK for promoting parental engagement (DfE, 2011). It is also worth considering that the perception of a positive and non-judgmental atmosphere in CS2 may also have been enhanced by the introduction of executive function/ skills as a 'new topic' for both the carer and the teaching assistant. The participants were engaged in a collective learning process and were communicating about how the recently acquired concept of executive function fitted with their knowledge of Kate in their respective settings. This may have had the effect of lessening the impact of hierarchies and professional status between home and school participants. The consultant actively acknowledged that although he brought knowledge of executive function to the consultations, he did not have their knowledge and experience of Kate which was the expertise that they contributed. Each

participant was therefore bringing a unique expertise and the consultation process was designed to enable this expertise to be combined to affect positive change for the child in question.

4.4.2 Tailored and Co-constructed Strategies

LAC have a range of needs that vary from child to child (Hare & Bullock, 2006) and carers each have different personalities, values, beliefs, and levels of tolerance so that an issue or concern for one carer might not be a concern for another (Rushton, 2003). The CESC process enabled the participants in CS2 to tailor the intervention to meet the needs of the child and to meet their priorities as carer and educator.

The ability to meaningfully discuss the co-creation and implementation of strategies was seen as beneficial to both TA and carer in CS2 but in slightly different ways. The carer was able to choose an executive skill to target that was a priority issue at home and one in which she had existing strengths. She was empowered to reject aspects of strategies that she felt were not suitable for the child she was fostering and in doing so asserted her expertise and autonomy to act in the child's best interest. This was compatible with the family-centeredness approach (Dunst & Deal, 1994) upon which CBC is partly based (Sheridan & Kratochwill, 2007).

For the TA, the chance to discuss strategies in advance meant that she was able to shape the strategies by adding her knowledge of the child in the school setting and her experience of implementing strategies. The TA had previous experience of strategies being given to her by external services in written form and without discussion. The expectation was that this was sufficient for the TA to carry out the strategies. This approach does not take into account a TA's existing workload and their capacity to take on additional work nor does it allow for clarification, explanation, or adaptation of the strategies. One of the reasons why EPs use a consultative approach, to achieve positive outcomes for CYP, is to reduce implementation barriers to psychological advice and interventions which can occur when strategies are recommended without meaningful discussion (Frederickson & Miller, 2008).

The carers in CS1 also talked about the strategies being developed by the participants but this was not discussed in as much depth perhaps because the strategies were not deemed to have been as effective as those in CS2. Despite the teacher in CS1 stating that the strategies were developed collectively, the researcher did not think that there was a complete cross-case perception about the co-construction of strategies. The researcher, upon listening back to the audio recording of the interview with the teacher, thought that there was some uncertainty in his response which had not been explored further in the interview. The research diary confirmed that it was the consultant rather than the teacher who had generated this strategy. The teacher's poor relationship with the Lunchtime Coordinator and its impact on strategy implementation will be discussed in more detail in section 4.5.1. It may have been difficult for the teacher to discuss his concerns over the feasibility of the strategy in front of parents because of a sense of professional duty not to reveal disagreements between members of school staff. Upon reflection the consultant could have reminded the teacher that the consultant's suggestions could be adapted or rejected based on his

better knowledge of his school's systems. Garbacz et al. (2008) found that the consultant's partnership orientation was significant at predicting teachers' acceptability of, and satisfaction with CBC. This reminds the researcher of the importance of parents/carers and class teacher feeling that they are responsible for strategy selection and that they can opt out when a strategy is not viewed as feasible.

4.5 RQ1 Obstacles during the Intervention – Cross Case Home and School Pressures

The participants identified barriers to the implementation process which reflected competing pressures at home and at school. Swanger-Gagne, Garbaz and Sheridan (2009), in their implementation of CBC, noted that the implementation of interventions in home and school settings was influenced by real world events. Additional barriers were also identified which related to the CESC process and ways in which it could be improved. As with the facilitators in section 4.3, some barriers were seen as being common across both cases while some were unique to the context of that individual case.

4.5.1 Involving Other Members of School Staff

In both cases, the school participants thought that a lack of involvement of other members of staff made it more difficult to implement and monitor the strategies. In CS1 the participants raised a concern about David's poor self-regulation and impulsive behaviour on the playground. The playground is a less structured environment and it is seen as a location in which some children may need additional support from members of school staff to support their emotional and social development (Groom & Rose, 2005). The suggested strategy was for the adult on duty to call David over to briefly 'check-in' with the adult on duty at specified times during the morning and lunchtime breaks. It was suggested that the adult on duty could have a pictorial aid that David could use to communicate his feeling or arousal levels (Stallard, 2002) and could speak to the adult about any concerns before returning to play. This strategy was consistent with an approach by Dawson and Guare (2010) who discussed intervening at the level of the environment. The additional adult supervision aimed to support David's response inhibition and difficulty in adjusting from the structure of the classroom to the freedom of the playground.

As mentioned previously, this strategy was suggested by the consultant towards the end of meeting 2 and it later transpired that the teacher was reluctant to use this strategy because of a poor relationship with a Lunchtime Organizer who had responsibility for his class at lunchtime. As a result, he did not feel comfortable involving her in this strategy and this led to the strategy not being implemented. The teacher's sense of ownership of this strategy may have been lessened because he had not generated it nor felt able to reject it based on his perception of a barrier to implementation. The consultant contacted the teacher after meeting 2 to ask if he wanted any further discussion around the school-based strategies or support in setting them up. Additional support was not requested but the consultant could have built consultant support for strategy implementation into CESC more explicitly.

In CS2 the class teacher was a Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT). The school SENCo decided that her involvement in this intervention would place too much pressure on her when she was also teaching a Year 6 class who would be doing SATs exams towards the end of the year. The involvement of the TA in this case had definite positive elements in that she knew the target child well, was experienced in intervention delivery, and was able to develop a good rapport with the carer. However, the Deployment and Impact of Support Staff project (DISS) argued that TAs have become the primary educators of children with SEN, and that these children spend less time in teacher-to-pupil interactions thereby missing opportunities to work with the most highly qualified members of the school (Webster et al., 2011). As LAC are much more likely to have SEN this is of concern for this cohort.

The overall legal responsibility for pupils' learning remains in the hands of the teacher (Webster, 2011) but often there are grey areas and uncertainties in the boundaries between teaching and non-teaching roles (Russell, Blatchford, Bassett, Brown & Martin, 2005). In 2010, TA's accounted for 32% of the mainstream primary and nursery school workforce in English mainstream settings (DfE, 2010). The DISS project advocated for an increase in the time that children spend interacting directly with their teacher (Webster et al., 2011) and as the school-based strategies in this intervention were located in class it would have been more helpful to have involvement from the class teacher. By working with the TA in CS2 there is a possibility that the researcher was inadvertently colluding with the status quo currently in practice in many UK primary schools where children needing additional support have more involvement with a TA than with their class teacher. This might be indirectly increasing the distance that exists between these pupils and their class teacher.

4.5.2 Timing of the Intervention in the School Year

In both cases, the intervention took place during periods in the school year when there were competing pressures. The study was delayed due to difficulties with participant recruitment and the interventions did not take place in the autumn term as had been planned.

CS1 was affected by the Christmas period and by January assessments which both delayed the start date for the implementation of strategies. In CS2, the intervention period took place in the first term of spring and the TA's timetable was altered to teach SATS booster groups which impacted on her capacity to monitor the strategies that she had put in place for Kate. If the intervention had taken place in the autumn term she thought that she would have been more able to monitor the strategies and support Kate's use of the strategies.

This intervention had to fit into a research timetable rather than a needs-led timetable and for future users of a conjoint consultation intervention it would be preferable to avoid certain times of the year as it might add a barrier to effective implementation of strategies. The researcher could locate little in the literature on the impact on the timing of interventions in the school calendar. Holliday, Audrey, Moore, Parry-Langdon, and Cambell (2009) briefly discussed the impact of school holidays on their intervention timetable when implementing a health promotion intervention in a

secondary school which some of the trainers felt had an impact on the capacity of participants to remain engaged in the intervention. In the present study the holiday period and events in the school calendar also appeared to impact on the capacity of participants to fully engage with the intervention.

4.6 RQ1 Barriers in CS2 –Home and School Pressures

4.6.1 Monitoring of Strategies in School

The TA in CS2 did not have much contact time with Kate in class (one session per week). Most of the work that she did with Kate was in small group situations outside of the classroom. The TA found that the presenting difficulties occurred less often in small group settings and therefore Kate had less opportunity to demonstrate her use of the planned strategies. The TA was able to ask her how the strategies were going in class but Kate was expected to monitor her own efforts to control her attention. Anderson (2002) notes that children aged 9 years and older tend to be able to monitor and regulate their actions well but that there is an increase in impulsivity that occurs for a short period around 11 years of age. Sustained attention was an identified area of need for Kate and the task of monitoring her own performance may have been a task that exceeded her capacities based on her current stage of development. This is likely to have been challenging for her and the TA suggested that it may also have been distracting for Kate. The TA made the teacher aware of the strategies but ideally the class teacher could have been more involved. Research indicates that high levels of teacher verbal behaviour including positive academic feedback was associated with higher on-task rates (Apter, Arnold, & Swinson, 2010) and this could have supported Kate's on-task behaviour while not being additional work for the teacher.

4.7 RQ1 Barriers in CS1- Home and School Pressures

4.7.1 Ofsted

Shortly after the teacher in CS1 began to implement one of the strategies, the school received notification that it would be inspected by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted). Schools are given a notice period of three days before an impending inspection, and it is a very stressful experience for all staff in school (Brimblecombe, Ormston, & Shaw, 1995). The class teacher stated that prior to the inspection he had just begun referring to the feelings thermometer in discussion with David, when issues arose in class, but that this discontinued in the period just before and during the inspection. This is a reminder of the unforeseen circumstances that can occur when conducting research in real life settings and it further delayed the full implementation of the strategies.

4.7.2 Family Contact at Christmas

In relation to developmental resilience, family contact can be both protective of resilience or a risk factor depending on the situation (Schofield & Beek, 2005). Rutter (1987) argued that processes and mechanisms need to be considered in understanding and promoting resilience in children

rather than looking at a list of factors or characteristics. In long-term foster care, a child's contact with his birth family can be protective of the child's sense of well-being when he/she feels valued by both carers and birth family and it can help children come to terms with their identity (Schofield & Beek, 2005). In other situations contact can be associated with risk when it leads to increased anxiety, rejection, greater confusion over identity, and lower self-esteem (Schofield & Beek, 2005). Although David had known his carers for 3 years, this was his first Christmas in their care. Christmas was emotionally challenging for David as his parents did not attend contact on Christmas Eve and he did not receive presents from them. Contact difficulties between fostered children and their families, particularly unreliability in visiting patterns and persistent parental rejection, often leads to disturbed externalizing behaviours and more strain on the carers (Farmer, Lipscombe & Moyers, 2005). A high level of parenting sensitivity is one factor associated with good progress in long-term foster placements (Schofield & Beek, 2005). During the interview with the researcher the carers conveyed large amounts of sensitivity and empathy in their reflections of how the events during the Christmas period impacted upon David's thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. The manner in which they helped David to manage his behaviours also demonstrated high levels of sensitivity and empathy. The emotional regulation strategy as discussed in the CESC meetings was not effective in supporting David's emotions during the Christmas period and understandably, as a result of the events that occurred in relation to family contact, the carers did not continue to use the cooling-down plan.

4.8 RQ1 Process Barriers CS1

The participants in CS1 identified areas of CESC which they thought could be improved.

4.8.1 Earlier Review and More Monitoring During CESC

John thought that an earlier review meeting or additional monitoring would have been helpful but Deirdre did not think it would have made a difference to outcomes. From the consultant's perspective sticking to the original review timetable would have enabled the participants to discuss the difficulties in implementation and allowed for alterations to be made to the plan if necessary. Although previous research on the effectiveness of consultations with foster carers has indicated positive outcomes (Osborne & Alfano, 2011) the extent to which there is any sustained impact is difficult to assess without a review meeting.

4.8.2 Consultant not Meeting the Child

The carers in CS1 expressed the view that the consultant did not know David having not observed him in school. They thought that this would be an improvement to CESC as it would provide the consultant with firsthand knowledge of the child. By observing the child in setting the consultant would have gained a snapshot of the child in which the child's presenting behaviours could be very dependent on variables including mood, time of day, type of lesson, events during the day, and so forth. However, this may have given the consultant's opinion increased credibility in the eyes of the carers and teacher. Golding (2004) outlined the danger of consultants being construed as experts who are able to dispense answers to concerns. By working directly with the child or observing him

in class this many have promoted the view of consultant as "expert" and perhaps hierarchically superior to the teacher in the eyes of the carers. This in turn could have reduced the emphasis on the unique expertise that the teacher brought to CESC as being the provider of expert knowledge of the child in the school setting.

4.8.3 Not Enough Strategy Options

The teacher in CS1 stated that he felt comfortable with the strategies and that they seemed to develop naturally. However, he did not think that there were many strategies discussed at the meetings and that the strategy that he implemented was one he was likely to have used anyway. There is not a requirement in CBC for strategies to be generated solely by consultees and it is aligned with realist consultation in that the consultant can donate ideas for the consultees to consider (Matthews, 2010). As was discussed earlier, the time available for strategy generation in meeting 2 was limited and the strategy proposed by the consultant, which required the cooperation of other members of staff, was not feasible for the teacher. In contrast, the TA in CS2 thought that the strategies were developed through discussion. There can be an expectation on behalf of parents/carers and school staff that the consultant/EP will offer helpful strategies based on their knowledge and experience. In order to increase the participants' ownership of the strategies and increase the likelihood of the strategies being implemented the consultant will often avoid donating strategies and instead will facilitate the generation of suitable intervention ideas based on the participant's own experience and knowledge. There is a balance between meeting the consultee's expectations of being a professional who can provide 'helpful' suggestions and enabling the participants to develop their own problem solving skills. This balance may not have been achieved for the teacher in CS1 who indicated that were not enough strategy options generated by the consultant.

4.9 Research Question 2: Perceived Outcomes

The outcomes as identified by the participants in CESC could be distinguished between outcomes of the CESC process and outcomes of the strategies implemented as a result of CESC.

4.9.1 Cross Case Outcomes of the CESC Process

4.9.1.1 Improved Communication

The belief that CESC led to improved communication was a common outcome for the participants. The TA and carer in CS2 did not know each other very well before the intervention but both thought that it they were likely to continue communicating in the future. The carers in CS1 already had good channels of informal communication with David's teacher and they valued this as a means of supporting each other in managing David's emotions and behaviour across settings. Both teacher and carers in CS1 found that the level of communication had improved during the intervention and that they were able to speak to each other openly and honestly. This is consistent with one of the process objectives of CBC in which an aim is to improve communication,

knowledge, and understanding about family, child, and school (Sheridan & Kratochwill, 2007). The open lines of communication during the meetings in CS2 gave the carer and TA an opportunity to discuss additional concerns. For example they found a practical solution to a concern related to numeracy homework. Parental involvement in homework is associated with parents' level of self-efficacy and their sense of being able to make a difference to the child's academic achievement (Hoover-Dempsey, et al., 2001).

4.9.1.2 Developed Stronger Relationships

The views of participants are consistent with CBC, from which CESC was adapted, being facilitative of positive mesosystemic interactions. The TA and carer in CS2 thought that they had built a strong working relationship though their participation and communication at the meetings. Liz stated that she would "grab Jane to one side" if she had any school related concerns in the future. This sense of being able to informally share concerns appears to be as a result of the relationship they developed through the CESC process and is consistent with CBC's overarching goal of strengthening home-school partnerships (Sheridan & Kratochwill, 2007). In CS1, the participants also thought that the home-school relationship had been strengthened. The teacher perceived that they had learned more about each other's perspective which helped to highlight the unique role that they each played in the child's home system and school system. The participants already had good, informal methods of communication in CS1 but the carers thought that the home-school partnership had improved following the CESC meetings due to the quality of the communication about David.

4.9.1.3 Holistic Understanding of the Child

The ability to learn from each other's perspectives on the strengths and needs of the child, within and across settings, was voiced as a common outcome of the CESC process. Although the participants found the executive skills term hard to explain, there was recognition that CESC had allowed school staff to gain a better understanding of the possible factors underlying the child's presenting behaviours.

In CS2, the carer thought that the meetings allowed her to share information that would allow school staff to gain a fuller understanding of the child. The TA thought that the information shared at the meetings helped her to empathise more with the child and reminded her of the influence of the child's life outside of school on her capacity to learn in school.

In CS1, both carers and teacher thought that the description of the executive skills given by the consultant summed up David's needs but the executive skill profile was quite different in the home and school settings. This is discussed further in section 4.6. Examining the assessment of David's executive skill profile generated a discussion of strength and need across settings. This was in fitting with a relational goal of CBC which was to increase perspective taking and promote understanding of a situation from the position of the other person (Sheridan & Kratochwill, 2007).

The teacher thought that he was able to have more empathy for David as a result of the CESC meetings. A teacher's display of empathy for and positive regard towards a pupil can be very important in facilitating the pupil's positive engagement (Cooper, 2011). John expressed a concern that the teacher might lower his expectations regarding behaviour based on having a greater knowledge about David's past as this knowledge would impact on the way he interacted with David. Armstrong and Hallett (2012) looked at the written accounts of 150 teachers about their experiences and perceptions of pupils presenting with SEBD. One of the categories that they developed was *chronic predisposition to failure.* In this category the teachers perceived that within-child factors or aspects of the family background diminished the likelihood of future educational success (Armstrong & Hallett, 2012). The carer's concern that the teacher might consider within-child or life-history factors as preventing David from ever reaching his potential was consistent with the idea of a chronic predisposition to failure. The teacher discussed how David had become more 'settled in school' and mentioned that the executive skills information gave him an insight into how he could help David more effectively. This suggested that the concept of chronic disposition to failure was not a category in which he saw David or a category that he might use for any child.

4.9.2 Perceived Outcomes of the CESC Process – CS2

4.9.2.1 Support for Carers

The supportive quality of CESC was raised in CS2 with the TA and carer both thinking that it had potential as a supportive process for foster carers. The TA's view was that the carer did the same job as school staff but in a home context. This is consistent with the partnership orientation discussed by Sheridan (2004) who stated that effective home-school relationships embrace a shared responsibility for educating and socializing children. The carer thought that the meetings allowed her to develop new perspectives and stated that this opportunity would be useful for carers in the first 12 months of caring because this was the most difficult period for her as a carer. Farmer et al. (2005) interviewed foster carers of adolescents and found that many were under strain and had difficulties with somatic stress, anxiety, and social functioning and that they attributed these difficulties to their role as carers. The carers stated that social support seemed to play a crucial role in alleviating strain and this support could be accessed through help and advice from friends or from professionals (Farmer et al., 2005). This was supported by the views of the carer in CS2 who stated that CESC had a comfortable and informal atmosphere and that the presence of a professional who could offer ideas and new perspectives was welcomed. It is also consistent with previous research on consultation with foster carers (Golding, 2004; Osborne & Alfano, 2011).

4.10 RQ 2 Perceived Outcomes of the CESC Strategies

The perceived outcomes of the strategies were case specific.

4.10.1 Perceived Outcomes of the CESC Strategies – CS1

4.10.1.1 Mixed Effectiveness of Strategies

In CS1 John discussed the cooling-down plan with David but the home based strategies were not deemed to have been successful due to the barriers discussed previously. John thought that they were in an early process of learning how David handled his emotions and he said that the intervention gave the carers more "tools" to use when caring for David's emotional well-being. It may have been more manageable to focus on a specific behaviour in relation to emotional regulation, for example an agreed approach to dealing with anger to reduce the damage that David was doing to his room rather than on a preventative approach such as the cooling-down plan to manage anger more generally. However, John did not think that a focus on a specific behavioural repertoire would have met their expectations for involvement in the intervention as David's emotions were the priority concern.

The teacher in CS1 thought that the strategies were suitable and that they were "working for now" but he questioned whether they would be short-lived. Sheridan and Kratochwill (2007) noted that there were no clear research findings identifying the minimum or optimal levels of intervention integrity. Despite intervention integrity being low in CS1 positive outcomes were identified which supports the dual purpose of conjoint consultation which aims to promote relational and outcome objectives. Sheridan et al. (2001) found that parents and teachers generally found CBC acceptable and effective despite objective measures finding variability in the effectiveness of outcomes. Osborne and Alfano (2011) stated that group support for carers often has high levels of participant satisfaction despite limited evidence of impact in other areas. The satisfaction with the CESC process despite variable outcomes on the areas of executive skills targeted was in line with these previous findings.

4.10.2 Perceived Outcomes of the CESC Strategies – CS2

4.10.2.1 Progress in Executive Skills Targeted

In CS2 there was a positive perception of progress in the areas of executive skill targeted at the post intervention review. The teacher's perception, according to the TA, was that Kate had made improvements in sustaining attention and in remaining on-task but the TA was not able to directly monitor Kate's performance on these executive skills in class. The other executive skills strategy that aimed to reduce Kate's behaviour of shouting out answers in class, which had been linked to response inhibition, was less successful. A functional analysis was not conducted and potentially reinforcing consequences of the behaviour may have been more relevant than the focus on response inhibition. The impact of strategies at school can only be made tentatively as they are based solely on the perceptions of school staff.

At home, where the carer recorded daily progress using a "morning routine checklist", Kate started to make progress after the first week. Kate had previously been taking 30-35 minutes to get ready

in the morning and now she was regularly getting ready in less than 20 minutes. The perception of effectiveness is consistent with the Sheridan's (1996) review of the literature on behavioural consultation approaches as it had at least one positive outcome and it suggests that conjoint consultation with foster carers has potential to lead to positive impacts on targeted behaviours associated with executive skill difficulties.

4.10.2.2 Greater Child Metacognition

In CS2, Kate was perceived as showing a greater capacity to think about her performance as tasks were taking place in both home and school settings. The adults perceived that she was developing self-monitoring and self-evaluating skills by the way which she engaged with the strategies at home and school. Best and Miller (2010) noted that metacognition may play an important role during the school-age years and adolescence. One of these areas might involve the detection of one's success or failure in focusing attention (Posner & Rothbart, 2007).

4.10.2.2.1 Possible Cross-case Factors for Differences in Child Outcomes

Despite purposive sampling every case is unique. The length of the placement in both cases was different with Kate in CS2 placed with her carers for 3 years which may have had a protective impact on her executive function (Lewis et al., 2007). Although planned as a long-term placement and having known David for over 2 years, David was only with his carers for 4 months prior to the intervention and this lack of stability may have been a barrier to the successful implementation of intervention strategies. However, it should be noted that Kate had two previous placements whereas David had only one previous placement and that was a managed move from the parents of his current carer Deirdre. The issue of stability within the care system is not easily defined as the number and/or length of placements does not always mean that the child perceives the placement as stable.

The behaviour of concern in CS2 was one that could be targeted using practical intervention strategies that more closely resembled targets that were specific, measureable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART). This was not easily achieved in CS1 where the focus was on emotional regulation. It may be that particular behaviours with underlying executive function needs are easier to address than others. As executive skills are internalized over time through modeling then it was also useful that the carer in CS2 chose to focus on targets (time management and organization) which were her own areas of strength.

Kate was older than David and was more involved in the strategies in both settings. The degree to which child age, motivation, and involvement impacted upon strategy outcomes was not uncovered in this study.

4.10.2.3 Carer Skill Development

The carer in CS2 decided to focus the intervention strategies on getting ready in the morning as this was a regular cause of tension and disagreement in the household. Skills training that uses behavioural techniques is consistent with parenting support interventions such as Webster-Stratton (1990) or Triple-P Positive Parenting program (Sanders, 1999). In implementing this strategy, Liz developed or utilized her own skills in providing proactive support to guide behaviour. In advance of meeting 2, Liz had obtained baseline data on how long it currently took Kate to get ready in the morning and during meeting 2 the participants talked through the steps needed to teach the skill as set out by Dawson and Guare (2010). Through this process the carer was able to define the problem behaviour, set realistic goals, break the task into key components, supervise the child and monitor progress, evaluate the progress and make changes where necessary, and fade her prompts when the routine was established. She used her knowledge of Kate to make the activity into a challenge and she reinforced Kate's behaviour by using rewards. It could be suggested that by successfully addressing the issue of Kate's behaviour in the morning Liz's sense of competency and self-efficacy had been promoted which is a key component needed in facilitating the empowerment of consultees (Dunst & Trivette, 1987).

4.10.2.4 Better Morning Routine – Development of Independence and Reducing Strain

Kate's lack of independence when getting ready for school in the morning was causing strain in the household and following the intervention this routine became more established and more agreeable for carer and child. Liz had admitted that Kate's lack of independence in the morning had "driven her insane". Farmer et al. (2005) found that one of the factors that contributed to the strain for foster carers was the culmination of specific child behaviours that had a negative impact on the family. While individual behaviours were not viewed as having a major impact on the family the cumulative number of behaviours did have a significant impact on the family (Farmer, et al., 2005). By successfully addressing a behaviour that was causing regular tension and stress in the morning this may lower the overall level of strain by reducing the number of behaviours viewed as problematic.

4.10.2.5 Future Use of Skills

The carer in CS2 stated that she could apply the skills and techniques that she had used during the intervention in future situations with Kate and with the other children who she fostered. She discussed the adaptations that she might make to tailor the strategies for these children which indicates that she had learned the skills to the level of generalisation and adaptation (Harring, Lovitt, Eaton & Hansen, 1978). A primary goal of CBC, from which CESC was adapted, is to improve consultees' capacity to address future problems (Sheridan & Kratochwill, 2007) and the outcome from this case indicated that this goal may have been met.

4.11 On-going Priorities and Concerns in CS1

During the interviews with the carers and teacher in CS1 a number of issues were brought up that did not relate directly to the research questions. This may be a reflection of the participants' difficulty in implementing the strategies fully or as had been originally envisaged. The carers stated that they were trying to create a balance between structure and flexibility for David in his home environment. Both carers and class teacher gave their thoughts on executive skills as well as reiterating the importance of communication between home and school.

4.11.1 Finding the balance between structure and flexibility

The carers in CS1 discussed their parenting style during the interview and described how they were trying to provide relaxed and communicative parenting. They perceived the school environment to be more structured and regimented than at home and they thought that this was helpful for David. They wanted to give him greater flexibility but they said he found this difficult to manage. There was a high level of reflection in this conversation with David's carers and their discussion of their parenting approach spoke of their sensitivity to his needs which is one factor associated with good progress in long-term foster placements (Schofield & Beek, 2005). David's teacher thought that David had made great progress this year in his organizational skills, independence, and concentration. The improvements noted were aspects of executive skills but not skills that were specifically targeted by the teacher during the intervention. These were independence skills that the teacher stated that he tried to develop for all pupils in his class.

4.11.2 Executive Skills

The teacher initially found the executive skills term to be confusing but thought that the consultant was able to explain it to the participants and by the end he said that had a better understanding of what it meant. The carers viewed the emotional regulation strategies positively even though they were not effective for David during the intervention period. John thought that by focusing on emotional regulation it gave them an insight into the support that David needed. David's emotions were clearly something that they wanted to prioritise and they found it helpful to focus on this executive skill rather than on an area that may have been easier to target but of less importance to them. CEFC allowed the carers to explore and address consultee-determined needs and this is consistent with the characteristics of CBC (Sheridan & Kratochwill, 2007).

4.11.3 Importance of Communication

Participants in CS1 stressed the importance of regular communication between home and school as a way of helping each other support David effectively. This was mostly realized in their daily, informal communication before and after school. This informal communication was used to pre-warn each other about David's mood or about prior events that might influence how the carers or teacher adjusted their management of David's behaviour. This informal communication was taking place before the CESC intervention and displayed prior evidence of joint responsibility for

addressing and meeting David's needs which is a relational objective of CBC (Sheridan & Kratochwill, 2007).

4.11.4 Additional Concerns

During the interviews, the participants raised issues that they thought were areas to continue working on with David. David's carers were concerned about how he would cope in high school if he had not developed stronger executive skills. The researcher discussed the developmental nature of executive skills with the carers and gave the message that executive functions continue to develop until early adulthood (DeLuca et al., 2003) and that the development of executive function is not in a linear fashion with development often occurring in spurts (Anderson, 2002). The teacher wanted David to develop a stronger understanding of empathy and cause and effect. Fostered children, in a sample of 3-5 year olds who had experienced maltreatment, were significantly more likely to show weaker emotional understanding and theory of mind (Pears & Fisher, 2005). The researcher informed them of the named EP for the school and explained how they would be able to contact the EP through the school SENCo or by contacting the EPS directly. A transition meeting in the summer was subsequently arranged with the consultant and the school EP both attending to support this process.

4.12 Consultant's Reflections on CESC/CBC

The author's training in consultation theory and practice provided the researcher with the learning and skills needed to apply and adapt CBC. The author was not specifically trained in the use of CBC and the relational and outcome objectives were challenging to accomplish in a 1 hour schedule. The time pressure imposed in the three meeting model may have led to the consultant donating an idea in CS1 without checking its acceptability fully with the teacher. Although a standard consultation session usually involves the identification of a needs and the development of strategies in 1 hour the additional objectives in CBC about strengthening relationships and building partnership may require additional time. The 1 ½ hour session in CS2 felt like a more conducive timescale to meeting the full objectives of conjoint consultation although at that stage the consultant was also more practiced than in CS1.

The description of executive skills at meeting 1 was time consuming and may not have fitted comfortably with the aim of collaborative discussion. It is difficult to avoid being didactic when introducing new knowledge. The consultant tried to keep the explanation of executive skills meaningful to the participants by asking them to relate the discussion to their knowledge of the child in the home and school context. The consultant realized that the participants wanted to talk to each other, to communicate, and co-construct the needs of the child across settings. The sharing of perspectives and learning from each other was a strength of this consultation model and the consultant was keen to facilitate this process. The executive skills aspect of the meeting helped to provide a focus but at times it was effortful to relate discussion back to this topic.

Prior to starting the intervention, the consultant thought that there may have been overly negative outlooks expressed about the child's behaviour and that the executive skills information could be used to *reframe* the participants' perception of the problem situation. In both cases, this was not required as both carers and educators shared empathetic views about the target child so the discussion about executive skills rather than behaviour did not appear to alter perspectives significantly.

The carers and teacher in CS1 completed their respective versions of the BRIEF prior to meeting 1. There is only moderate parent and teacher inter-rater agreement, $r.32$, on the BRIEF but Gioia et al. (2000) claimed that this is consistent with expectations for different environmental settings. The different profiles in CS1 led to an interesting discussion amongst the participants about the similarities and differences in their perception of David's executive skills across settings. They discussed the different expectations for behaviour at home and school and the differing degrees of structure and environmental modifications. This was a useful conversation for the participants and one that enabled perspective taking on both sides. The researcher reflected at the time that, unless sensitively handled, the different profiles could potentially create division between home and school as one might perceive the other as inadequately supporting the child's executive function development.

In CS2, the researcher posted the parent BRIEF to the carer as requested prior to meeting 1. In the time period between sending the BRIEF to the carer and commencing meeting 1 the researcher had reflected on use of the BRIEF in CS1. The researcher used the Dawson and Guare (2010) description of executive skills which required adapting the results of the BRIEF. This wasn't ideal as the BRIEF does not include skills from Dawson and Guare's model such as sustained attention, time management, and goal-directed persistence. The researcher also thought that the BRIEF was more heavily weighted toward executive skill weakness rather than on strength. Some studies have shown relations between teacher and parent ratings on the BRIEF and the child's performance on executive function activities while other studies have failed to find a significant association (Merz & McCall, 2010). For these reasons the researcher used the Executive Skills Questionnaire (ESQ) from Dawson and Guare (2010, pp.183-185) in the preliminary meeting with the TA in CS2. This assessment was easier to link with the interventions because they were derived from the same source. The ESQ did not result in standard scores for each executive skill domain which meant that the ability to directly compare parent and teacher scores was eliminated. It still allowed for a cross-setting comparison of executive skill profile but at a more meaningful, detail rich, level. The researcher considered the ESQ a more useful tool in assessing executive function across settings and informing the direction of the intervention.

4.13 Summary of the Findings

4.13.1 Research Question 1: Facilitators and Barriers

Critical realists argue that "causal outcomes follow from mechanisms acting in contexts" (Pawson & Tilly, 1997, p.58). Research question 1 examined the mechanisms involved in the CESC

intervention. Participants identified two common facilitators and two common barriers across cases. The opportunity meaningfully participate in a collaborative intervention to support their child was a key facilitator across cases which supported previous studies. The role of the consultant as facilitator of the process and as having psychological knowledge was identified as a positive theme across cases. The timing of the intervention in the school year was a barrier to the participants' ability to fully implement the intervention strategies which has implications for future practice. This finding is under-reported in research literature on the implementation of school based interventions. The second common barrier was the difficulty in involving other school staff in the CESC process. Further facilitators and barriers were identified that were pertinent to the participants in individual cases.

4.13.2 Research Question 2: Outcomes

There were three common outcomes of the CESC process and they were consistent with the relational objectives of CBC from which CESC was adapted. A stronger home-school relationship was a cross-case outcome. The participants also perceived that communication between home and school had been bolstered through involvement in CESC which may have been associated with the improved relationships. The consultees in both cases considered that a clearer mesosystemic view of the child was an outcome of CESC.

The outcomes of the strategies that developed through CESC were case dependent. In CS1, an emotional regulation strategy at home was viewed positively despite not being deemed effective. At school, the class teacher thought that the feelings thermometer had some potential in helping to create a joint language for communicating about arousal and emotions but was not sure if the strategy would have longevity. The strategy for supporting David's response inhibition in the playground was not implemented as had been proposed.

The participants in CS2 perceived the strategies to be effective in supporting improvements in Kate's executive skills particularly in the home environment. Additional benefits were that the carer developed her skills in promoting behavioural change, there was a reduction in strain experienced by the carer during the morning routine, and future use of the strategies was considered. Monitoring was a difficulty at school so the improvements in concentration and task perseverance were noted by her teacher who had not been actively involved in the intervention.

4.14 Implications of the Findings

This was an exploratory study, in two pieces of casework, of the implementation processes and outcomes of a collaborative consultation approach to support the executive skills development of fostered children who had prior experience of abuse and neglect. The findings were supportive of some of the key features of the CBC model upon which CESC was based and provided tentative conclusions of how such an intervention may be a helpful process for carers and teachers of fostered children with executive skills difficulties. The findings of this research will be discussed in

relation to the implications for; the CESC model; educational psychologists; schools; carers; and the Local Authority.

4.14.1 Implications for CESC

4.14.1.1 A Useful Adaptation of CBC but not a Separate Model

Lansdown et al. (2007) described how the Family Futures organization provided information about executive skills to teachers and carers of fostered children but provided little detail on implementation and evaluation. The results from the current study suggest that CESC was an acceptable method of providing executive skills information within the context of a collaborative problem-solving model. For the purpose of this research, CESC was adapted from conjoint behavioural consultation (CBC) (Sheridan & Kratochwill, 2007). CESC aimed to target executive skills indirectly by using a collaborative consultative approach that would enable the consultees to intervene at the level of the environment and/or by teaching and supporting the acquisition of behavioural repertoires that may have been undermined by weak underlying executive skills (Dawson & Guare, 2010).

CBC is a process that is suited to adaptation as it has "a structured and systematic process of addressing concerns for children across a variety of domains" (Sheridan et al., 2009, p. 108). The researcher thought that a utility of focusing on executive skills rather than on behaviour more generally was that it could potentially provide an alternative perspective, from the perspective of carers and school staff, in which to examine the underlying skills which guide the child's thinking and doing skills (Dawson & Guare, 2010). The consultant reflected that this reframing was not necessary in either case as the participants were already sensitive to the underlying needs of the child. However a benefit of the flexibility of the CESC approach was that the focus on executive skills, which has implications for many areas of a child's life, allowed for a wide range of foci such as behaviour, academic needs, and social and emotional concerns.

While a focus on executive skills perhaps emphasized a within-child explanation for the child's functioning and presenting behaviours, intervention strategies embraced a mesosystemic environmental perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The CESC intervention emphasized the adults' role, across home and school settings, in supporting the child's areas of executive skill need through environmental modifications, modeling of executive skill use, and identifying and teaching underlying skills deficits (Dawson & Guare, 2010). The continued development of executive skills throughout childhood (Anderson, 2002) along with the evidence of neural plasticity (Bryck & Fisher, 2012) was also a positive message for those working with children with executive functioning difficulty.

While it is clear that CBC is readily adaptable the researcher is less convinced of the utility in focusing on executive skills rather than on the needs of the child more generally – which may include aspects of executive skills. The most prominent outcomes from the study were the relational objectives across cases, which are common to both CESC and CBC, while the concept of

executive skills, although deemed a useful perspective at the time, was not represented strongly in the interview data.

4.14.1.2 What is in a Name?

A possible advantage of CESC over a focus on behaviour more generally is that Dawson and Guare (2010) identify 11 executive skills and this enables the needs identification meeting to address a wide range of potential home and school concerns and the identification of executive skills strength which may have been difficult to elicit using CBC. Behaviour can also be a loaded term with expectations on teachers and carers to "manage" behaviour whereas the emphasis in CESC is on supporting and guiding the child towards developing stronger executive function which will impact on their thinking and doing skills. The "behavioural" in CBC refers to the behavioural approaches employed by the participants during the process rather than a focus on behaviour. CBC as an eco-behavioural consultation is an evidence-based intervention but perhaps the name is not suited for children and their carers for whom behaviour is often a source of difficulty (DfE, 2012).

4.14.1.3 Parental Engagement a Common Outcome of Conjoint Consultation

Conjoint consultation is concerned with outcomes and processes (Sheridan & Kratochwill, 2007) and it has relational objectives that support the movement towards increased parental engagement in education (DCSF, 2008; DfE, 2011; NASP, 2012). It is also consistent with the aspirations of adoptive parents, many of whom are parenting children who were formally in care, who would like better communication with schools, more meaningful involvement, and a joint home-school forum to address children's needs (Cooper & Johnson, 2007). In a previous study of a consultation service for foster carers, Eps and carers stated that it would have been beneficial to include members of school staff in the process (Osborne & Alfano, 2011). This study has shown that such a joint home-school forum can be achieved using conjoint consultation and it can lead to improved relational outcomes.

4.14.1.4 Does CESC Omit Additional Concerns?

Executive skills is one hypothesized explanation for a child's level of functioning and presenting behaviours and by focusing on this area without looking at other explanations such as attachment this excluded children who could have benefited from conjoint consultation. Executive function is not a widely used term and during the participant recruitment phase the Senior Social Worker, who was involved in identifying LAC in the LA who met the criteria for selection in this research, removed a quarter of the children who met the other inclusionary criteria but were perceived not to have executive function difficulty or as "doing well". By focusing the intervention specifically on executive skills this was likely to have excluded some children and carers who may have benefited from conjoint consultation but were not included because of a limited understanding of the term.

The concerns raised by the teacher about empathy and cause and effect have some connection to executive skills in that poor response inhibition could lead to children acting impulsively without thinking about the effect of their action on others. The teacher did not use the executive skill term and it begs the question of whether it would be more ecologically valid to use the participants' terminology rather than trying to relate it to an executive skill. The possible association between weak response inhibition and the teacher's concern about cause and effect could still be made, discussing it as an underlying component, but there may be a danger of being dismissive of the teacher's use of language if the term he used is reformulated. In terms of future implications of the CESC model it implies that by imposing a framework on the participants there may be a danger of participants feeling that their concern has not been acknowledged, if it is renamed, or that other unrelated concerns are not discussed in the first place. A more general conjoint consultation would not have this dilemma as the framework focuses on the process and not the specific concern which could still include executive skills and/or other domains.

Looked after children and adopted children have a range of needs that vary from child to child (Hare & Bullock, 2006) and not all children who have been in care will present with executive skills difficulties or have concerns in that area identified due to the unfamiliarity of the term. It might be more helpful to view CESC as one potential way of adapting the conjoint consultation model to provide indirect support to the target child by enabling parent/carers and school staff to work in partnership to meet the child's needs. CBC can be used to address concerns in a range of domains (Sheridan et al., 2009). These needs might be located in a combination of domains such as social skills, self-care, physical, executive skills, attachment difficulties, motivation, and academic concerns. In the context of the varied needs of LAC it seems more appropriate to employ a broader conjoint consultation approach that is able to address needs across a number of domains rather than to pre-impose an executive skills framework.

4.14.1.5 The Timing of the Support

The carer in CS2 stated that this process would have been very helpful for her in the first 12 months of caring for Kate as it was a difficult time and her understanding of how to support Kate was low. This was a period when she was receiving support from other agencies and she attended sessions run by CAMHs. It is difficult to tell whether conjoint consultation at this time would complement other training and support or would have been overwhelming for carers. If the concerns were school related as well as home based then a general conjoint consultative approach could be useful over this period as it may be the only form of support which addresses needs, builds partnership, and seeks solutions across home and school settings. Again, it would seem more appropriate to use a general conjoint consultation at this time as the concerns would likely be in many domains.

There may be benefits in participating in conjoint consultation once placement stability has been established as the carer may be more able to shape strategies to the needs of the child, as in CS2, based on their greater knowledge of the child in comparison with the first 12 months of the

placement. The protective quality of stable care against the negative impact of prior experiences of maltreatment on a child's self-regulation and inhibition (Lewis et al., 2007) was outlined in the literature review. The carers in CS1, who had been caring for David for only 4 months, did not think that the intervention strategies were effective but they considered the focus on emotional regulation to be helpful for them. Supporting the child emotionally was a priority for them and they thought that they learned more about his emotional needs though the CESC process. It may be that conjoint consultation, when conducted in the early stages of a placement, is helpful in developing the carers' general understanding of the child's needs and ways in which the carer can support the child. When the child's placement with the carers has been more established, as in CS2, then involvement in conjoint consultation may help to give a fresh perspective that allows the carers to support poorly developed executive skills which are causing strain within the home system. These are tentative suggestions based on the findings in two cases.

4.14.1.6 Helpful Refinements to the CESC Model

The length of meetings in CESC has previously been discussed. Where it is not possible to extend the 1 hour time scale it might be useful to hold a strategy implementation meeting shortly after meeting 2. It could be used to promote greater intervention fidelity by helping participants to consider in greater detail how they plan to implement the strategies and the way in which the consultant could support the implementation process.

The participants also stated that closer monitoring and an earlier review meeting might have been a useful addition to the CESC process. It would have allowed participants to meet to discuss what was working with the strategy and what needed to be altered, modified, or changed entirely. The consultant maintained contact by telephone and by email but this contact could have been more supportive if planned with a specific date and time so that participants could think in advance about any concerns they wanted to discuss.

Where possible it would be helpful to avoid times of the year when assessments or exam preparations are taking place. The beginning of the second autumn half-term might be a good time to begin the CESC process as the teacher will be familiar with the child and it is early enough in the school year for the potential positive outcomes of CESC to be built upon.

4.14.2 Implications for Educational Psychologists

The report of the working group on EP practice with Looked After Children states that EPs are well placed to "influence the practice of significant people in the lives of LAC in the provision of appropriate and effective support" (DECP, 2006, p.9). This study provides practitioner EPs with an in-depth account of a consultation led intervention that developed stronger partnership and improved communication between home and school. In one case, CESC led to a perceived improvement in a targeted behaviour which was associated with underlying executive skills.

The researcher is also a practicing TEP and, unlike a research case, the day-to-day casework does not employ purposive sampling. An EP develops hypotheses through discussion with parents/carers, educators, and children. The opportunity to use CESC may be limited by a lack of cases where executive function is identified as a primary concern and by a lack of knowledge or experience in this area. The author believes that EPs could benefit from this research by its provision of a detailed account of how a broader conjoint consultation was adapted to support the needs of a prioritized group of children. CBC is adaptable and can be used to address concerns in many different domains. The adapted form as used in this research had three sessions but, as CS1 indicated, casework in real world situations does not always fit so neatly into a fixed number of sessions and there will clearly be cases where continued involvement is needed. In the light of the changes to the structures of Educational Psychology Services (EPSs) within Local Authorities it is unclear who will commission EPs to work with vulnerable children such as LAC. The Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP) (2011) identified three main ways in which EPSs are structured in England. The first is the traditional LA model which is fully core funded and the AEP stated that there remains a small number of EPSs that operate in this way. The second is the semi-traded model where *core/statutory* services are funded directly by the LA while other services are traded with schools and other organizations. The final structure is fully-traded/commissioned where the EPS is fully independent from the LA and generates all of its income through commissioned work with stakeholders who can include the LA, schools, and other services. While it is difficult to uncover the exact number of EPSs which are operating a semi-traded service or in the process of moving in that direction, the AEP suggested in 2011 that this model of service delivery was the most common structure in England. Conjoint consultation using the CBC model and adapting it to meet the individual needs of the child may offer one service that an EPS could offer as part of commissioned work with LAC services within a LA.

As discussed previously a TA was the role partner in one of the interventions. In some situations it may be appropriate to question why the school is deploying a TA to participate in an intervention rather than the class teacher because it may indicate that the school is not fully supporting their teachers in taking ownership of all the children in class especially those with additional needs.

Garbacz et al. (2008) suggested that a consultant's partnership orientation is significant at predicting the teacher's acceptability of and satisfaction with a conjoint consultation. There may be a perception of hierarchies and professional status between two professionals within the education system, the teacher and the EP, which could be a potential barrier to collaborative working and shared ownership of the case. It would appear beneficial for an EP to be mindful of lessening the impact of this perception when engaging in conjoint consultation in order to maximize the chance of achieving the relational objectives promoted in the CBC literature.

4.14.3 Implications for Stakeholders

Parental involvement in their children's education is associated with significant effects on educational achievement (Sylva et al., 2004). The current best practice advice for schools on how

to promote parental engagement is for strategies to be integrated into a whole-school approach rather than being a "bolt on" to mainstream activities (DfE, 2011). It has been argued that although the benefits of parental engagement are recognized, the practice of meaningful parental involvement in children's education is often not a reality for many parents (Williams, Williams, & Ullman, 2002). There is recognition that engaging parents is not a simple task and school staff could benefit from training and coaching to engage effectively with parents (DfE, 2011). Sheridan and Kratochwill (2007) see conjoint consultation as modeling and "giving away" a problem-solving process which could then be used to address future concerns. A conjoint consultation approach such as the one employed in this study could be used by schools as a means of engaging parents or carers, developing stronger communication and partnership, and to address difficulties that the child might be having across settings and for a range of needs including executive skills, social, emotional, behavioural, and/or academic concerns. Sheridan and Kratochwill (1992) suggested that in-service training could be employed to train teachers about conjoint consultation and their role in working collaboratively with parents in identifying needs and developing strategies.

4.14.4 Implications for the Author

The author chose this research topic based on previous casework involving foster carers and was determined to try and support them in their role. This desire has been strengthened as a result of the close collaborative work with the foster carers in this study. The author thinks that involvement as a consultant in this intervention has developed his experience of using a consultation model that can help to build meaningful home-school partnerships and support outcomes for LAC. It has developed the author's consultation skills and stressed the importance of building parents/carers into the dialogue about the children that they are helping to educate and socialize. It highlighted that there was a strong desire on behalf of the carers in both cases to get involved in the education of the child for whom they were caring. As a TEP, and in the future as an EP, the author hopes to facilitate this through the process of conjoint consultation. The author will be presenting the findings of this research to a regional EP forum related to LAC.

4.14.5 Implications for the Local Authority

At the proposal stage, the researcher met with senior management in Children's Services in the LA in order to gain their views of the feasibility of conducting this research. The researcher will send the aforementioned senior managers an executive summary of the broad findings of the study. The author is also scheduled to present the findings of the study to colleagues in the EPS. The national and local prioritization of LAC gives an impetus for the EPS to deliver a meaningful and effective service to support these children and the adults who care for and educate them. Previous research suggests that conjoint consultation is an approach with a strong evidence base and this research indicates that, in adapted form, it can lead to improved home-school partnership which has positive implications for the target children.

4.15 Limitations

When reviewing the conclusions of this study it is important to be mindful of its limitations. The following section reflects the researcher's views of the limitations of this study.

This intervention was conducted by a TEP entering his third year of doctoral training. The doctoral training course contains regular input aimed at developing the trainees' knowledge of consultation approaches and the use of consultative skills but there is no formal input on conjoint behavioural consultation (CBC) which was the model adapted for use in this study. Many of the consultants in the research literature on CBC have been trained to a mastery level of performance which is defined as meeting an average of 85% of CBC interview objectives as assessed by supervisors on a CBC Objectives Checklists (Sheridan et al., 2001). CBC has been adapted to address the needs of children presenting with selective mutism without the researcher documenting any training in CBC methods (Mitchell & Kratochwill, 2013). The consultant's lack of formal training in CBC should therefore be noted but it is counter-balanced by the training received, as part of doctoral training, in more general consultative approaches.

The dual-role of researcher and consultant also should be noted as a potential limitation of this study. Developing an intervention in addition to researching is challenging and in trying to take on both roles there is a likelihood that it may have diluted the author's capacity to attend to each role to its full potential. The dual-role was particularly difficult to balance during consultation sessions where the author was attending to the CESC process which included developing outcome and relational objectives, while at the same time attempting reflect on the sessions from the researcher's perspective. This might have reduced the capacity of the researcher to collect data as participant-observer which may have been compounded by processes such as selective attention, selective memory and forgetting, and selective encoding (Dallos, 2012).

The joint role of researcher and consultant might also have compromised the reliability of the participants' responses during the interviews. The researcher had worked collaboratively with the consultees during the intervention process and this may have made it less likely that the interviewees would report negative findings to the researcher. The interviewees were asked to voice their true opinions but it is possible that interviewees may have been more comfortable in voicing criticisms of the process if interviewed by a separate researcher. This was not possible due to the small scale nature of the study.

The purpose of this intervention was to promote the development of executive skills in the children in each case. In this study the educators' and carers' perception of improvements to the development of executive skills was sought but future research might consider observational methods as an alternative measure. The decision not to use observational methods in this study was based on a desire to retain the class teacher as the main source of expertise of the child in the educational context. Due to the small scale nature of the research the researcher was also the consultant and the researcher thought that pre- and post-intervention observational measures could have impacted negatively on the relational objectives of the conjoint consultation by

potentially increasing a perception of hierarchy among educational professionals. In future research, where the role of consultant and researcher is separated, observational methods could provide additional richness to the data.

The extended length of the CESC timetable in these two pieces of casework may be viewed as a result of researching in the real world where research timetables are secondary to the events in the lives of the participants. Subsequently, the interviews took place a lengthy period after the first two CESC meetings so it may have affected the ability of participants to remember their thoughts about earlier meetings.

The strength of the research design was the rich detail that came from using a multiple case-study design. However, the small scale of the study means that wider generalisation is not possible. Analytic generalisation has been developed by relating the findings to previous literature and the detail of the study should enable the reader to relate the findings in this study to their own situations.

Despite purposive sampling, the participants and the children were not homogeneous and therefore comparisons between cases are tentative. The lack of the class teacher's involvement in CS2 meant that the roles of the educators in the two cases were very different which may have weakened the cross-case comparisons.

A mixed-methodology was initially considered by the researcher. The BRIEF (Gioia et al, 2000) was to be used as a measure of the perceptions of the key participants in relation to the child's executive functioning pre- and post-intervention. The researcher reconsidered the use of this measure as the semi-structured interviews aimed to elicit the participants' views of the impact of the intervention on the child's executive skills as well as the impact of the intervention in other domains. The BRIEF information could have triangulated the data but the researcher considered that the change in perception as measured by the BRIEF was not likely to greatly add to the findings of the interviews. The cost in time to the participants was judged to be too high with not enough of an impact on the findings to justify re-administering the BRIEF. The researcher does acknowledge the additional methodological strength that mixed methods can accomplish and would consider an additional quantitative data collection measure in future studies.

4.16 Possibilities for Future Research

This research used qualitative methods to explore the participants' views of a collaborative consultation approach to support executive skill development in Key Stage 2 fostered children with prior histories of abuse and/or neglect. Future research could build on the findings of this study by using a mixed methods design to provide an additional source of evidence for the perceived impact of a broader and more flexible conjoint consultation intervention. This could take the form of Goal Attainment Scaling (GAS; Kiresuk, Smith, & Cardillo, 1994) which could be used to assess parents' and teachers' perceptions of whether the goals of the consultation had been attained.

As mentioned in section 4.2.2, the partnership orientation and/or effectiveness of the consultant in facilitating the meetings could be an additional area for exploration in future research particularly if the role of researcher and consultant is separated. As discussed in the limitations section, future research could use structured observations to enrich the data stream. This could be useful in assessing whether the meetings influenced how the educators structured the environment to support the development of the child's executive skills and the impact of teaching the child new skills or behavioural repertoires.

Future research could explore how children can be enabled to become more involved in this approach. Conjoint consultation is primarily an indirect form of service delivery but it would be interesting to explore how children, for whom the consultations are being conducted, could be involved with learning more about executive skills. This might be more appropriate with older children as with Kate in CS2 who had greater involvement with her school based strategies.

Research has identified associations between executive skills and achievement in nursery age children (Brock et al., 2009; Willoughby et. al., 2011). The transition from Foundation Stage to Key Stage 1 can be challenging for children, staff, and parents/carers especially in relation to the move from a play-based approach to a more structured curriculum which may place greater demands on a child's executive skills (Sanders et al., 2005). Future research could look at whether CESC could effectively be used to facilitate home-school partnership in supporting executive skills development in the Foundation Stage.

The carers in CS1 discussed worries about transition to high school and whether David would develop the required executive skills by the time he left primary school. Some of the factors that enable a good transition to high school are getting used to new routines and organization, something that David was developing this year, and establishing friendship which was an area of need for David (DCSF, 2008). The use of a broader conjoint consultation, incorporating elements of executive skills information, as an aid to transition for LAC in Year 5 could be a future use of this intervention.

Future studies, employing a multiple-case studies design with theoretical replication procedures (Yin, 2009), could investigate how additional factors impact on the effectiveness on a conjoint consultation approach. These factors could include the child's age at the point of intervention, the length of time the child had been in placement, the case complexity, the experience level of the teacher and/or the previous relationships between parents/carers. This would require a larger sample but it could strengthen understanding of how CESC operates in a school setting.

4.17 Contribution of Knowledge

This exploratory study was informed by a review of the literature that identified a research gap as a lack of an in-depth exploration of how to apply knowledge of the research literature on the impact of neglect and abuse on executive function to support the development of executive skills of LAC in school settings. Lansdowne et al. (2007) discussed how the Family Futures consortium

disseminated information about executive skills to carers/parents and school staff but had not detailed the way in which this was done nor the perceived impact of this work on the carers/parents and school staff. Cooper and Johnson (2007) outlined the concerns of adoptive parents regarding the need for a high level of communication and collaboration between home and school settings and suggested a home-school forum for supporting the child's needs. The gap in the literature was addressed by this study through the involvement of carers and school staff in a meaningful problem-solving partnership related to executive skills development. The processes and outcomes of this collaborative problem-solving intervention were outlined in detail and evaluated after eliciting the views and experiences of carers and school staff who had participated in the CESC intervention.

This study was heavily influenced by the conjoint behavioural consultation (CBC) model, devised by Sheridan and Kratochwill (2007), in its focus on processes and outcomes in supporting home–school collaborative working and positive outcomes for children and young people. It provides a further example of how this model can be adapted to meet the needs of CYP particularly in relation to children in foster care.

There is a paucity of research literature on consultation as a means of indirectly supporting fostered children and this research provided a unique contribution by adapting an evidence-based consultative approach to focus specifically on supporting executive function in Key Stage 2 fostered children. The findings suggest that carers and school staff had positive views of the intervention and that the strategies that developed from the intervention could be useful in teaching behavioural repertoires that are underpinned by executive skills. It also identified the timing of the intervention in the school year as a barrier to full implementation which is a neglected factor in school-based research on intervention implementation. The findings of this exploratory study provide a basis for future research.

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Appendix A: What are executive functions??

These are part of the materials given to the carers in each case study to help them explain executive skills to their child. It was sourced from the 'Learning Works' website accessed at www.learningworksforkids.com

What are Executive Functions?

"Executive Functions" is a big name for the skills you use every day to play games, do your best work and get along with other people. A part of your brain works like a coach making a game plan. It brings what you know and remember together to help you to pay attention to what's important, set goals and solve problems. Every person is better at some of these skills than at others. But the great thing is that once you begin to notice how they work, there are fun things you can do to improve the ones you would like to work better.

1

How Do
Executive Functions
Work?
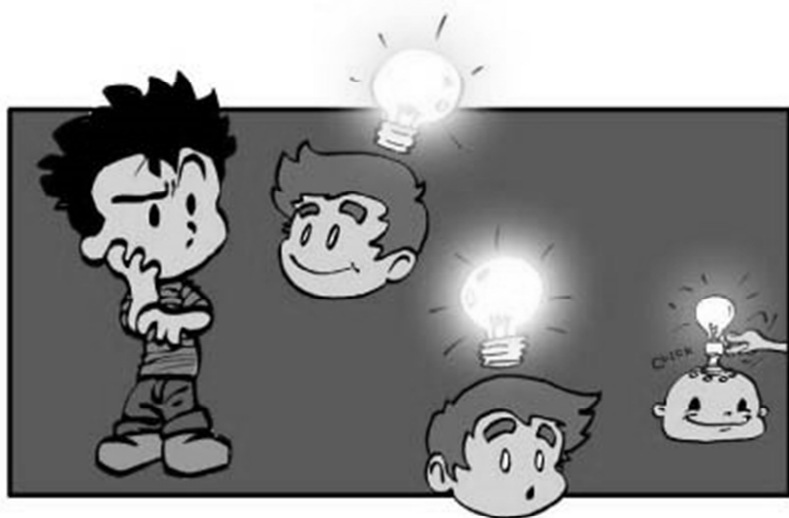
Executive functions help you figure out what things to do, where to start and how to finish. They help you to understand and organize what you know and feel from your experiences. And this information can help when you need to make decisions or a plan.

2

Appendix B: Participant Recruitment

At the proposal stage the researcher met with the Head of Integrated Services for Looked after Children in the Local Authority to discuss the research proposal. At this meeting the researcher summarized the theoretical underpinnings of the research to outline the rationale for a consultation based intervention focusing on executive skills with children who had experienced early neglect and abuse. Once the research had been given ethical approval by the University of Manchester the researcher met with a head of service for fostering who had a strong working knowledge of the children who were currently in foster care in the local authority. During the meeting the head of fostering used a database which holds details of all children in care from that Local Authority and applied aspects of the inclusionary criteria:

- Aged 7-11 (Key Stage 2)

- In foster care as a result of neglect or abuse

- In that placement for over two years (to increase the likelihood of it being a stable placement)

This generated a list of 29 children who met the above criteria. After discussion about the umbrella term 'executive function' and the types of thinking and doing skills that might be present in a child with executive function needs both in home and school settings, the list was reduced by 9 pupils. The list was further reduced after applying inclusionary and exclusionary criteria relating to placement stability, diagnosis of other conditions and if the child was placed with an independent fostering agency (IFA). While the latter criterion was not one that had been anticipated by the researcher there had been an emphasis in an earlier meeting with the Head of Integrated Look After Children's services that the research would have beneficial outcomes for children placed in the care of the Local Authority. From the original list of 29 pupils only two remained after applying the inclusionary and exclusionary criteria. In discussion with the named EP for one of the two children remaining on the list, the researcher was informed that one of the schools was in special measures and the researcher took the decision that the school might not have had the capacity to engage fully in implementing the intervention when other priorities existed. This first participant recruitment strategy identified one pupil who met the criteria for their carers and teacher to be contacted about potential inclusion in the research.

In order to identify additional participants for the study, a second strategy was employed which utilised the annual planning meeting between Educational Psychologists (EP) in the researcher's Educational Psychology Service (EPS) and the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) in the schools in which they were the named EP. This secondary strategy was developed due to the low number of children identified in the first participant recruitment strategy. During the initial participant recruitment strategy the head of fostering consulted the Carefirst system to consider

school related concerns that had been added to an individual child's file. This may not have included information about aspects of executive skills which could impact on the child on a day-today basis. The researcher thought that the SENCo's knowledge of fostered pupils in the school environment could add an additional perspective to that already gained from the head of fostering which might lead to other LAC being identified. In advance of their planning meeting the researcher gave each EP an information sheet to explain executive functions and details about the proposed intervention to the SENCo. At the meeting the EP asked the SENCo whether there were any Key Stage 2 pupils who were in foster care and had difficulties that could be viewed as relating to executive function. For ethical reasons pupil's names were not discussed at these meetings. This participant recruitment strategy identified two pupils in two separate schools.

In both participant recruitment strategies the researcher then followed the same procedure to make initial contact with the carers and teacher in each case. In the case identified through the meeting with the head of fostering the social worker for the child was provided with a letter to give to the carers to provide an overview of the intervention and ask whether they would like to give informed consent to speak with the researcher about the intervention in more detail. In the school based recruitment strategy the researcher gave each SENCo an adapted letter to give to the carers. In the school-based participant recruitment strategy the researcher had not asked the school EP to enquire about the reason for the child being taken into care, the child's age when this took place and the stability of the current placement. The researcher considered that the SENCo might not know this information and that it might be more appropriate to find out this information from the carers themselves or from the child's social worker. The letters to the carers in the school based strategy reflected this and informed them that if they consented to speak with the researcher additional questions would be asked to establish whether the child met the entry criteria for the study. In one case the carers initially thought that the intervention was a direct intervention with the child and when they were reminded that the intervention involved joint meetings between carers and class teacher they decided not to participate. In the second case, identified using the planning meeting recruitment strategy, the child was under the care of a neighbouring Local Authority but placed with foster carers within the LA in which the research was being conducted. Despite being in the care of a neighbouring LA the researcher opted to send the information letter to the carers of this child as the pupil was known to the named EP for the school and had executive function needs as identified by the SENCo and school EP.

In the two cases the carers gave their consent and the researcher phoned the carers to discuss the rationale of the intervention and the practicality of its implementation in greater detail. In each case the carers were informed that participation was completely voluntary and that the class teacher would also have to consent to take part in the study. Once consent was received from the carers the researcher contacted the school to arrange to meet with the class teacher in each case. In case study 2 the SENCo informed me that the class teacher was a Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) and teaching a Year 6 class which would be in preparation for SATS. The SENCo did not think that the teacher could commit to participate in the intervention due to time commitments

and personal capacity. The researcher suggested that if a there was a member of staff who knew the pupil well and had an opportunity to implement strategies that arose from the intervention then that person could participate in place of the class teacher. A Teaching Assistant (TA) agreed to meet with me and subsequently gave her informed consent to participate in the intervention. In case study 1 the pupil's social worker was informed about the intervention and the social worker confirmed that the child met the additional inclusion and exclusion criteria. The researcher then met with the class teacher of the child and discussed the rationale for the research and the practical implications in taking part in the research. The class teacher in case study 1 gave his consent to participate in the research.

Appendix C: Semi-Structured Interview Schedule with Teacher/TA

Introduction

Thanks for agreeing to meet up today. Would it be ok with you if I use an audio recorder to tape our conversation today? Interviews will be recorded but the recorder can be turned off at any point if you ask. At the end I will ask you if you would like anything removed from the recording or not reported (before transcription – afterwards anonymised)

Confidentiality – names will not be used nor will information relating to identity.

The purpose of meeting up with each other today is to find out your thoughts on the executive skills meetings. I will be asking your thoughts on what parts of it have been helpful or what things were not so helpful for you and for 'child's name'. Please be as honest as possible and don't worry about saying things that you might think are negative, it can often be very helpful to learn about things that could have gone better and we will treat it as constructive criticism to improve the meetings in future.

The research questions for this research are:

Research question 1: What are the perceived facilitators and barriers of operating a collaborative consultation intervention in a school setting to support the development of executive skills in fostered children?

Research question 2: What do participants identify as the outcomes of the Conjoint Executive Skills Consultation intervention?

Links to theory (not read to Interviewee)
Intervention strategies aimed at supporting the development of Executive Function can be implemented at home and at school.
Tailored EF intervention strategies will lead to improved adult understanding of EF needs and improved EF in the child.
Conjoint Executive Skills Consultation (CESC) will lead to improved executive function outcomes for children
CESC will promote parental engagement
CESC will establish and/or strengthen home-school partnership's on behalf of children

Warm up questions

Can you tell me how long you have worked in schools _____?

How would you describe your teaching style/way of working in class?

Can you tell me a bit about _____?

Prompts: Personality, interests, likes dislikes, strengths, difficulties.

Main body of the interview

Unit of Analysis Level 2 Questions (Yin,2009)	**Level 1** Questions (Yin, 2009) and Prompts
U of A 1 Process Meeting logistics and atmosphere	1. Can you tell me what it was like for you as a participant during the meetings? Prompt: Length, timing, convenience, atmosphere, information, pace, location, similarities or differences between other meetings, role.
U of A 1 & 2 Process	**In Meeting 1 we looked at better understanding _____'s executive skills needs at home and school.** 2. What did you think about the executive skills information that we talked about during the meetings? Prompt: Amount, clarity, usefulness. 3. How did that information fit with your knowledge of _____ and his/her behaviour at home and at school? 4. What else was helpful about the meeting? What could have made it more helpful?
U of A 1 Process Strategies	**In Meeting 2 we developed strategies to support _____** 5. How would you describe the way that the intervention strategies were developed in meeting 2? Prompt: Different participant's involvement in generating ideas. 6. What were your thoughts on the home and school based strategies? Prompt: Suitability, importance, usefulness
U of A 1 Implementation of strategies	7. Can you describe to me what the strategies looked like at school? 8. On a scale of 1-10 with 1 representing impossible and 10 representing incredibly easy -What were the strategy (ies) like for you to implement with _____? Prompt: What helped? What was difficult? What would have made it easier? 9. What would _____ (Child) say about the strategies?
U of A 1 Process Review Meeting U of A 2 Outcome on EF	**We met up to review progress in Meeting 3** 10. Was the review meeting useful? In what way was it helpful? What could be done to make it more beneficial? 11. We focused on particular executive skills in the intervention (e.g. response inhibition, emotional regulation, time management, planning and organisation, sustaining attention) – at the

	review meeting how would you describe the effectiveness of the intervention in relation to these skills?
U of A 2 Outcomes for child	12. What are your thoughts on the direct or indirect impacts of these meetings on _____? What helped _____? What could have helped to generate a bigger impact?
U of A 2 Outcome: Increase Communication Knowledge and understanding of child	13. Could you tell me what you think about the level of your current contact and communication with ......(parents names)? Prompt: Same, better, worse than before? What has helped, what could have helped more?
U of A 2 Outcomes Understanding	14. What might you think the parent/carer has learned from working with you in these meetings? Prompt: understanding of _____ at school, management of behaviour, teaching pressures. 15. How would you describe what you have picked up from carers during these meetings? Prompt: Perspective, understanding of home environment, fuller picture. In what way has this been helpful? What would have been more helpful?
U of A 2 Outcomes Impact on adults	16. Have the meetings and intervention had any impact on you? Prompt: Knowledge, understanding, skills, confidence in managing _____ 's needs?
U of A 2 Outcomes Alternative hypotheses	17. Have any other things happened outside of the intervention that might have led to change?
U of A 2 Outcomes	18. What do you think about the statement: Parents and teachers meet on parents evening and this should be enough because both settings are separate. *Agree or disagree –why? How does this relate to children in care?*

Cooling off questions

19. **Is there anything that you thought I might ask but haven't so far?**

20. **Is there anything you would like to add to what you have already?**

Closure – debriefing as to the purpose of the interview, the option to remove any comments and to gain further consent to meet to member check the themes. Thank interviewee for their time.

Appendix D:Semi-Structured Interview Schedule with Carers

<u>Introduction</u>

Thanks for agreeing to meet up today. Would it be ok with you if I use an audio recorder to tape our conversation today? Interviews will be recorded but the recorder can be turned off at any point if you ask. At the end I will ask you if you would like anything to be removed from the recording or not reported (before transcription – afterwards anonymised)

Confidentiality – names will not be used nor will information relating to identity.

The purpose of meeting up with each other today is to find out your thoughts on the executive skills meetings. I will be asking your thoughts on what parts of it have been helpful or what things were not so helpful for you and for 'child's name'. Please be as honest as possible and don't worry about saying things that you might think are negative, it can often be very helpful to learn about things that could have gone better and we will treat it as constructive criticism to improve the meetings in future.

The research questions for this research are:

Research question 1: What are the perceived facilitators and barriers of operating a collaborative consultation intervention in a school setting to support the development of executive skills in fostered children?

Research question 2: What do participants identify as the outcomes of the Conjoint Executive Skills Consultation intervention?

Links to theory (Not read to Interviewee)
Intervention strategies aimed at supporting the development of Executive Function can be implemented at home and at school.
Tailored EF intervention strategies will lead to improved adult understanding of EF needs and improved EF in the child.
Conjoint Executive Skills Consultation (CESC) will lead to improved executive function outcomes for children
CESC will promote parental engagement
CESC will establish and/or strengthen home-school partnership's on behalf of children

Warm up questions

Can you tell me how long you have been caring for _____?

How would you describe your parenting style?

Can you tell me a bit about _____?

Prompts: Personality, interests, likes dislikes

Main body of the interview

Unit of Analysis **Level 2** Questions (Yin,2009)	**Level 1** Questions (Yin, 2009) and Prompts
U of A 1 Process Meeting logistics and atmosphere	21. Can you tell me what it was like for you as a participant during the meetings? Prompt: Length, timing, convenience, atmosphere, information, pace, location, similarities or differences between other meetings, role.
U of A 1 & 2 Process	**In Meeting 1 we looked at better understanding _____'s executive skills needs at home and school.** 22. What did you think about the executive skills information that we talked about during the meetings? Prompt: Amount, clarity, usefulness. 23. How did that information fit with your knowledge of _____ and his/her behaviour at home and at school? 24. What else was helpful about the meeting? What could have made it more helpful?
U of A 1 Process Strategies	**In Meeting 2 we developed strategies to support _____** 25. How would you describe the way that the intervention strategies were developed in meeting 2? Prompt: Different participant's involvement in generating ideas.

		26. What were your thoughts on the home and school based strategies? Prompt: Suitability, importance, usefulness
U of A 1 Implementation of strategies		27. Can you describe to me what the strategies looked like at home? 28. On a scale of 1-10 with 1 representing impossible and 10 representing incredibly easy -What were the strategy (ies) like for you to implement at home? Prompt: What helped? What was difficult? What would have made it easier? 29. What would _____ (Child) say about the strategies?
U of A 1 Process Review Meeting U of A 2 Outcome on EF		**We met up to review progress in Meeting 3** 30. Was the review meeting useful? In what way was it helpful? What could be done to make it more beneficial? 31. We focused on particular executive skills in the intervention (e.g. response inhibition, emotional regulation, time management, planning and organisation, sustaining attention) – at the review meeting how would you describe the effectiveness of the intervention in relation to these skills?
U of A 2 Outcomes for child		32. What are your thoughts on the direct or indirect impacts of these meetings on _____? What helped _____? What could have helped to generate a

	bigger impact?
U of A 2 Outcome: Increase Communication Knowledge and understanding of child	33. Could you tell me what you think about the level of your current contact and communication with ......(name of class teacher or staff member)? Prompt: Same, better, worse than before? What has helped, what could have helped more?
U of A 2 Outcomes Alternative hypotheses	34. Have any other things happened outside of the intervention that might have led to change?
U of A 2 Outcomes Impact on adults	35. Have the meetings and intervention had any impact on you? Prompt: Knowledge, understanding, skills, confidence in you or school managing _____ 's needs?
U of A 2 Outcomes Understanding	36. What might you think the teacher has learned from working with you in these meetings? Prompt: understanding of _____ at school, management of behaviour, teaching pressures. 37. How would you describe what you have picked up from the teacher during these meetings? Prompt: Perspective, understanding of home environment, fuller picture. In what way has this been helpful? What would have been more helpful?

U of A 2 Outcomes	38. What do you think about the statement: Parents and teachers meet on parents evening and this should be enough because both settings are separate. *Agree or disagree –why? How does this relate to children in care?*

- **Cooling off questions –**

39. **Is there anything that you thought I might ask but haven't so far?**

40. **Is there anything you would like to add to what you have already?**

- **Closure** – debriefing as to the purpose of the interview, the option to remove any comments and to gain further consent to meet to member check the themes.

  Thank interviewee for their time.

Appendix E: Outline of the Phases of Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

Phase 1: Familiarise Self with Data

The interviews were fully transcribed from the audio recording by the researcher as a first step in data familiarisation. Each transcript was then read twice before being uploaded into NVivo 10.

An executive summary of the interview transcript was checked by each participant to ensure that it was a fair reflection of their original interview.

Phase 2: Generating Initial Codes

The transcripts from the semi-structured interviews were actively read with all data coded into what NVivo 10 refers to as 'nodes'. Coding was conducted semantically using a mainly inductive approach but which acknowledged the influence of prior engagement with the literature. A list of codes was generated for each interview.
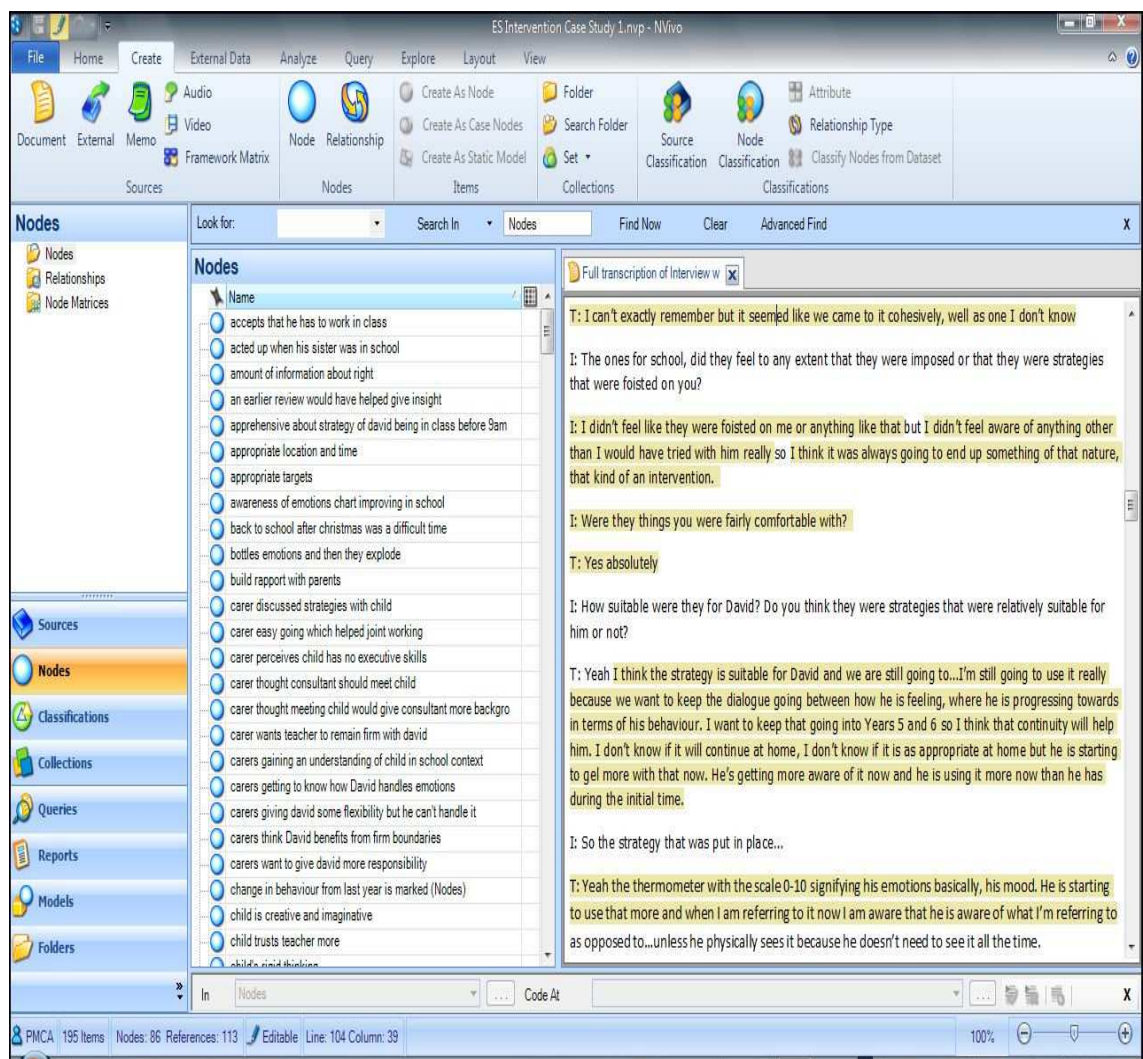

Figure A1: Phase 2 of Thematic Analysis

Additional Cross-Checking of Codes Phase

To promote the quality of the research the coding of the researcher was checked by a TEP colleague who thought that the coding used was reasonable.

Phase 3: Searching for Themes

At the end of Phase 2, the researcher decided not to use NVivo 10 to search for themes as the manual approach was more efficient and easier to visualise and manipulate. Each node from NVivo 10 was collated, see figure A.2, transferred onto a post-it note and stuck onto the researcher's wall with similar codes being place in rough proximity to each other. The post-it notes were colour-coded with blue notes representing interview transcript from more than one data source, pink representing a code that was discussed more than once by one a single data source and yellow representing a single code from a single data source. The codes were then sorted into potential themes by placing similar codes together on a single piece of paper. Figure A.3 below demonstrates the *searching for themes* exercise in Case Study 1:
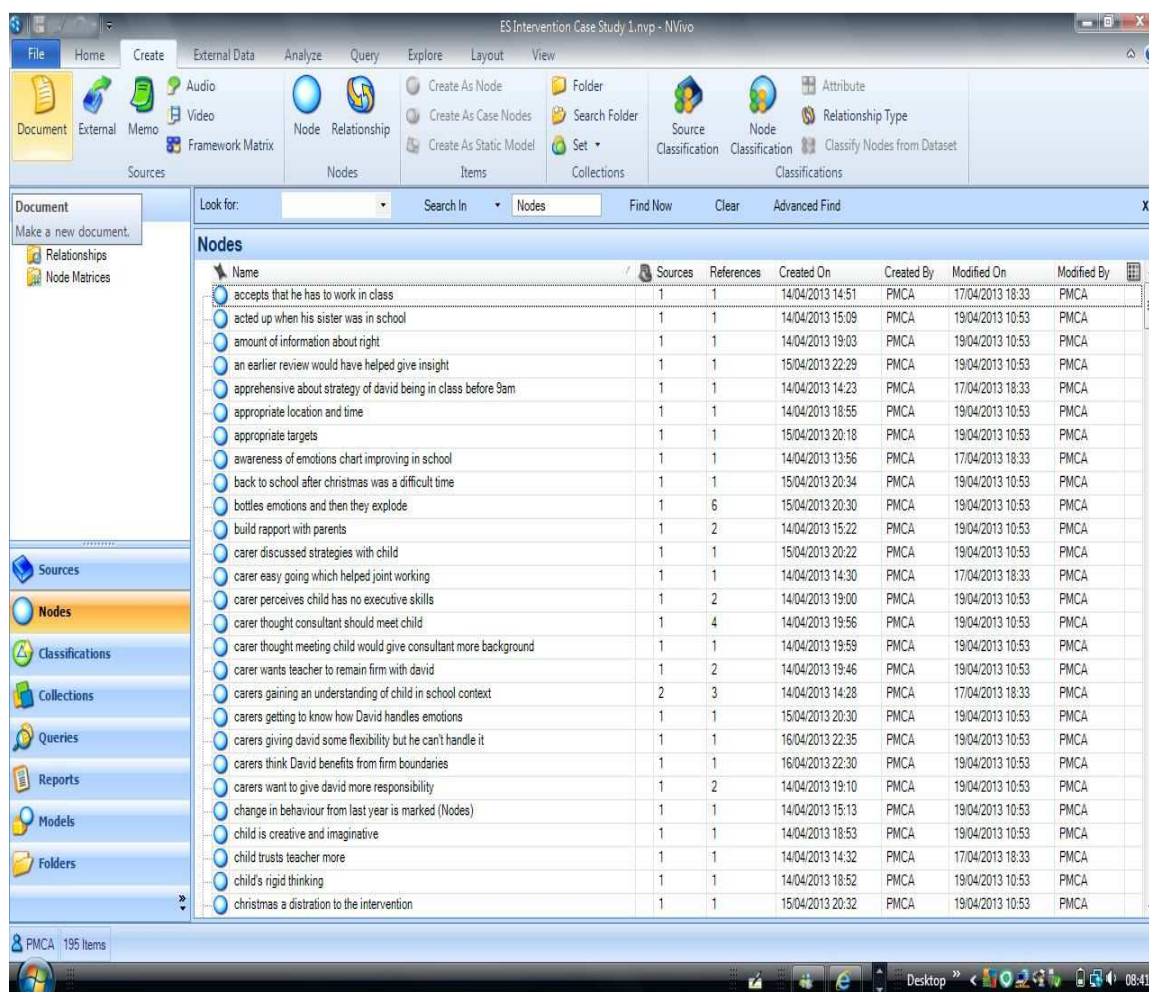

Figure A2: Collating Codes during Phase 3

Figure A3: Phase 3 of Thematic Analysis –Searching for Themes

Phase 4: Reviewing Themes

Each potential theme was examined to review how well they worked in relation to for the coded extracts and the data set as a whole. This was facilitated by the developing of thematic map prototype which was physically located on a wall in the researcher's study and by the easy access using NVivo 10 to the transcript that supported each code. The researcher was able to break down potential themes which were not adequately supported by the data, create overarching themes and to manipulate the codes between potential themes.

Phase 5: Defining and Naming Themes

The researcher began to define and name themes to create a reasoned and consistent account. Subthemes were developed by merging similar codes in one theme and layering the post-it notes together. See the photograph below for an example of how the theme 'home and school pressures' in CS1 was reviewed to create subthemes. Thematic maps were then made using NVivo 10.
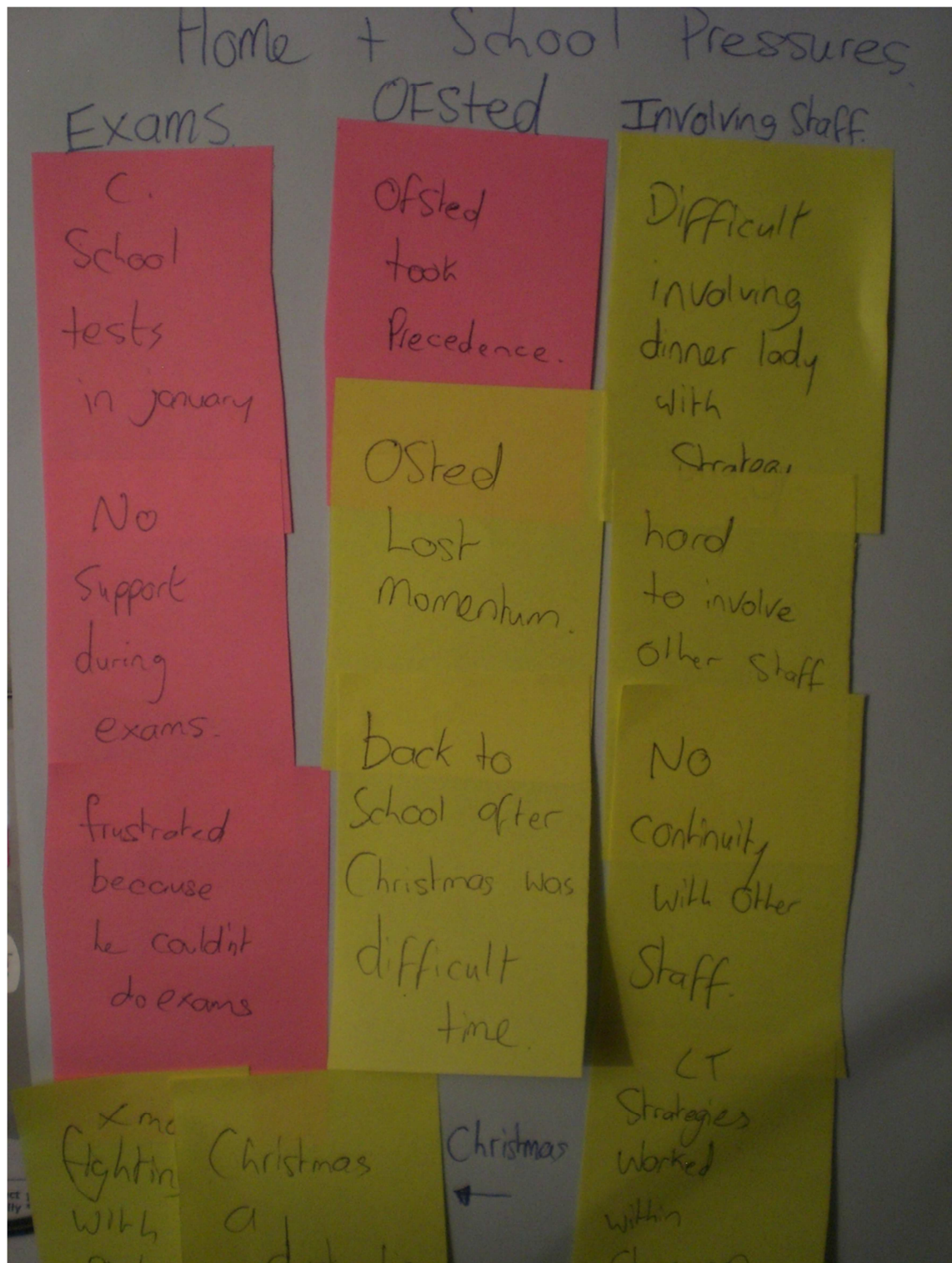
Figure A4: Defining and Naming Themes

Phase 6:   Writing the Report

This stage involved using the thematic maps and developing a cross-case synthesis of the themes to write a narrative for each case study. Please refer to the Results section for further details.

Appendix F: Case Study Protocol

Overview of the Case Study Project

This research is being conducted as research for a Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology. The researcher intends to explore how an executive skills intervention can be implemented within a school setting to support the needs of fostered children who have prior experience of physical abuse or neglect prior to being taken into care. Suboptimal care plays a major role in children being taken into care at a national level and to an even larger degree in the LA within which the author presently works (DfE, 2011). For those children who started to be looked after in England during the year ended 31st March 2011 the main reason why they were provided with a service was because of abuse or neglect (54 per cent) with the second most common reason being family dysfunction (11 per cent) (DfE, 2011). Glaser (2000) describes the impact of abuse and neglect on the developing brain and one of the areas affected is executive functions. The executive functions (EF) are a group of processes which have a responsibility for guiding, directing and managing cognitive, emotional and behavioural functions, especially when presented with a new problem to solve. The intervention will be delivered using a group consultation model which has been adapted from the evidenced based intervention Conjoint Behavioural Consultation (CBC). The researcher planned for 2-3 case replication case studies.

Field Procedures

Participant Recruitment and Selection

The researcher aims to recruit potential participants through discussion of the proposed intervention with members of the social care team knowledgeable of the children in the Local Authority who are in foster care and meet the criteria for inclusion. The researcher will also speak with members of the social care team with knowledge of the foster carers to discuss whether the carers could be considered potential participants in the research.

As this process did not uncover enough potential candidates an additional recruitment method was employed. The researcher asked his colleagues at the EPS to enquire in school planning meetings with SENCos whether there were any Key Stage 2 children who were fostered who displayed behaviour consistent with executive function needs. Names were not discussed at this stage.

Informed consent will be sought from all participants following the University of Manchester's ethical procedures. The researcher will meet with potential participants (individually with class teacher/school staff and foster carer/s) where possible (or by telephone) to describe the intervention. The potential participants will then given 2 weeks to decide whether or not they wish to take part. At this initial meeting point the researcher will give a brief outline of the intervention and give an introduction to executive skills. The researcher will ask participants to complete the Behavior Rating Inventory of Executive Function (BRIEF, Gioia et al. 2000) for the researcher to gain an understanding of the child's needs prior to the first meeting.

Schedule of Activities

The intervention will follow the structure outlined in the Conjoint Behavioural Consultation model devised by Sheridan and Kratochwill (2001). The needs analysis stage is incorporated into the needs identification meetings so the intervention will therefore consist of three meetings.

Meeting 1: Needs identification meeting

The researcher will begin the first meeting by summarising the executive functioning literature and describing how it relates to children who have experienced early neglect or physical abuse. The meeting will then follow an agenda set out in advance (see appendix*).

Meeting 2: Strategy Development

Meeting 2 will take place one week after meeting 1 and it aims to identify home and school strategies to meet the executive skills needs identified in meeting one and prioritised by the participants in meeting 2. These strategies can address executive skills needs in two ways; by the adults thinking of ways to structure the child's environment (in particular situations) to bolster weak executive skills, and to directly teach skills to address an area which has been identified as a concern. A flexible agenda will structure the meeting.

Planning and Intervention period: 1/2 week preparation + 4 week intervention period.

Meeting 3: Review

A review meeting will take place after the intervention period (4-6 weeks). Meeting 3 aims to review how the intervention was perceived by the participants and how effective they thought it was in addressing the behaviour and executive skills needs identified in meeting 1 &2.

Semi-structured interviews with participants are to be arranged at meeting 3 and the researcher's aim is for the interviews to be completed within 2 weeks of the review meeting.

Informed consent

Informed consent will be obtained for all participants using the documents approved by the University of Manchester Ethical process.

Case Study Questions

Level 2 questions (Yin, 2009 p.87) are questions asked of the individual case to be answered by the investigator during a single case. These are:

What are the perceived outcomes of the intervention from the participants' perspective?

Were there any outcomes that did not occur but were hoped for?

How were these outcomes achieved or not achieved?

How does CEFC operate within a school context?

What are the facilitators and barriers to implementation?

What are the key ingredients as perceived by the participants?

Introduction and Orientation Meeting

At this meeting, we will be answering the following questions, and any additional ones that you may have. You are welcome to take notes on this page.
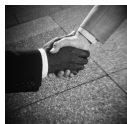
Introductions

What are executive skills?

What is conjoint consultation?

What's my role and the role of others?

What happens next?

_____will call me:

Date: Time:

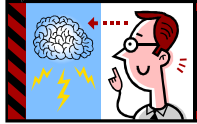Date: Time:

At this meeting, we will be answering the following questions, and any additional ones that you may have. You are welcome to take notes on these pages:

What does _____do well, what does he like?

What do the participants think their strengths are in relation to executive skills?

What are _____'s executive skills strengths and areas of need? Let's look at the assessment information and also talk about practical examples.

What are your goals and aspirations?

What executive skill do we want to focus on?

Let's define the behaviour(s) that demonstrate this executive skill need.

Does this behaviour look the same in both settings?

What are our goals for _____?

What have you already tried to help _____ meet this goal? Is there anything we could do more of?

For next meeting we will try to get a baseline measure for target behaviours.

Ways of keeping in contact:

Next meeting:

Date: Time:

At this meeting, we will be answering the following questions, and any additional ones that you may have. You are welcome to take notes on this page.

What behaviours do we want to target for this intervention?

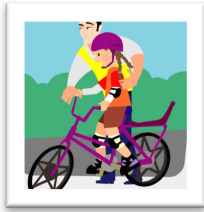What executive skill (s) might be underlying this behaviour?

Discuss possible plans?

Let's talk about how these plans will look in your home/classroom and the tools we will need.

- **Environmental supports**

- **Teaching Specific Skills**

- **Motivators and Incentives**

- **How will it be monitored?**

Example – putting hand up to answer questions

1. Identify the problem behaviour you want to work on.

To put up her hand when 'X' wants to answer or ask a question in class.

2. Set a goal or target including interim goals

To put hand up on every occasion when answering questions in class.

Interim goal

For X to put her hand up 50% of the time when answering questions in class. The baseline measure completed by _____ will give us an average at the moment.

3. Outline the steps the child needs to follow to reach the goal

A. Put hand up when you want to answer or ask a question in class

B. Not to make a noise when doing so

C. To wait until the teacher asks you to answer before speaking

4. Turn the steps into a list, a checklist, or a short list of rules to be followed

A tally chart could be kept for each maths lesson to monitor progress.

## 5. Supervise the child following the procedures

Practice with X beforehand, prompt her to raise his hand or to look at the visual reminder. Class teacher to reinforce X's appropriate behaviour using praise and by noticing him with his hand up.

6. Fade the supervision (gradually)

Start by being adult directed ('X put your hand-up')

Then fade to ('X what do you need to do? Or check your prompt picture- on table reminder)

1. **Identify the problem behaviour you want to work on.**

2. **Set a goal or target including interim goals**

3. **Outline the steps the child needs to follow to reach the goal**

4. **Turn the steps into a list, a checklist, or a short list of rules to be followed**

5. **Supervise the child following the procedures**

6. **Fade the supervision (gradually)**
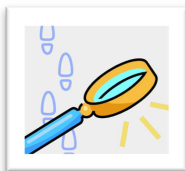
 How do we monitor how the plan is going?
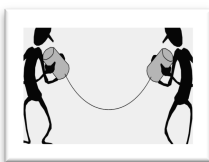
 How do we keep the lines of communication open?

 Decide when the group can meet together next to review?

Phone number to call with questions: Email addresses:

Meeting 3

Checking and Reconnecting

At this meeting we will be looking back at the last number of weeks since meeting 2 to review what worked, what didn't and what we would like to do next.

How did it work/ what happened - review information collected at home and school.

Did _____ make improvements in the areas we prioritised?
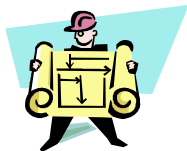
What worked and didn't work about the plan?

What knowledge have we gained to help support - _____ in future? What further knowledge might we need?

How can carers and school continue to keep in touch?

My cooling- down plan

Triggers: What makes me get mad?
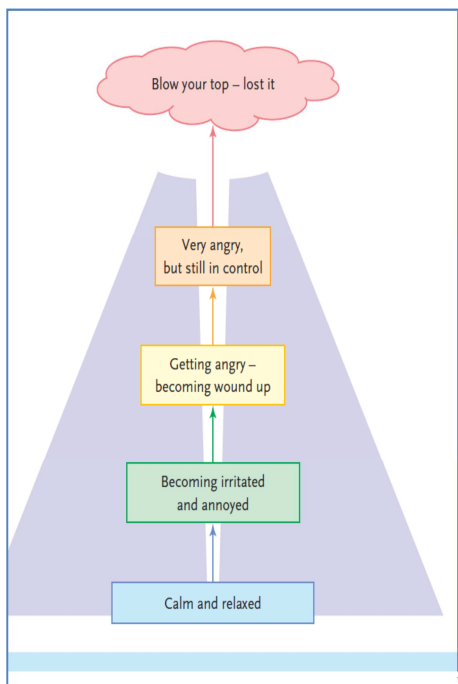
What are the things you sometimes do when angry (but shouldn't)

Think about how your body feels when you are calm and how it feels when you are angry or upset. Plot the changes you notice on your anger volcano.

My relaxing activities

Fill in the thought bubbles by writing or drawing the things that help you to relax and feel calm.

From Think Good –Feel Good (Stallard, 2002)

What can I do to calm myself down?

My Playground Self-Control Plan

The things I do without thinking include
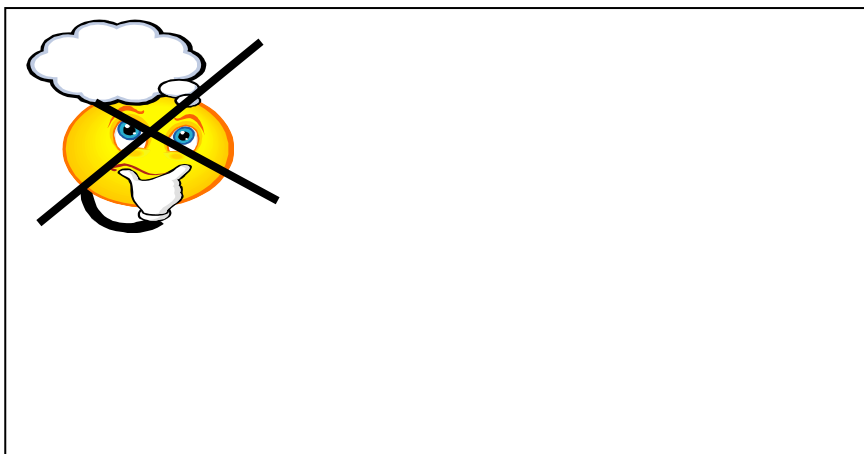
Common situations where I act without thinking

What I will do to stay in control
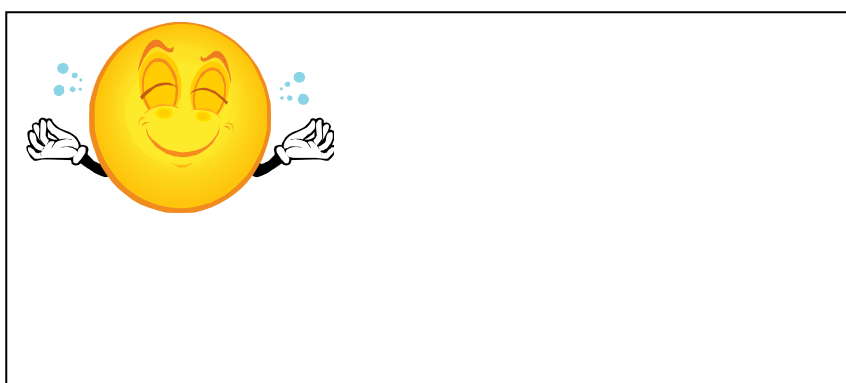
The Feelings Thermometer

Sometimes when we are upset or angry or even excited or happy it is difficult to measure how we are feeling. The feeling thermometer can be used to help you to understand and explain how you are feeling. As the feeling gets stronger the number gets higher and when the feeling becomes less strong the number becomes lower.
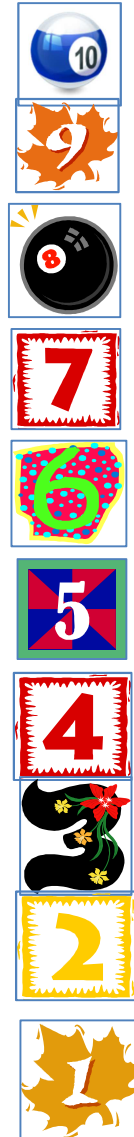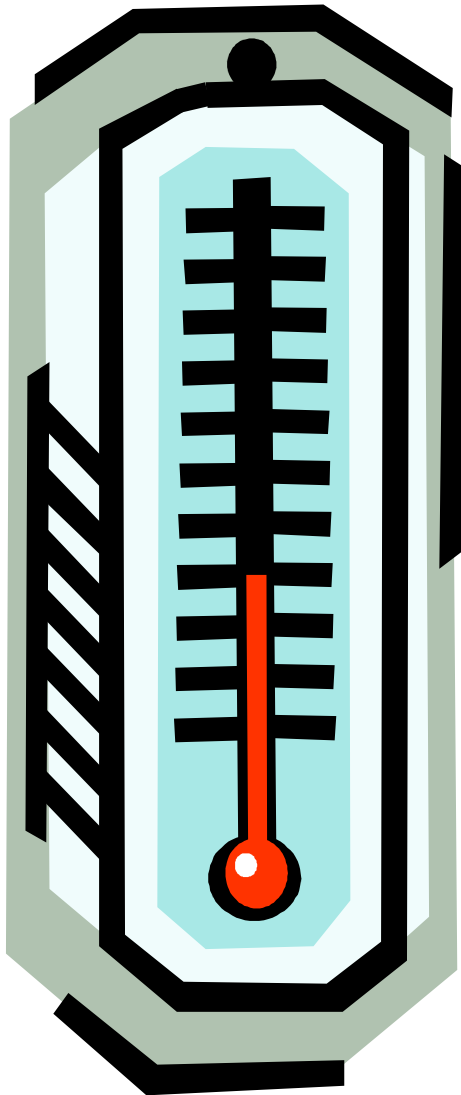
Think about different situations - how do they make you feel and how strong is the feeling?

Mad As A Volcano!

RAGE — 10

ANGRY — 9

— 8

UPSET — 7

— 6

SAD — 5

— 4

HAPPY — 3

— 2

VERY HAPPY — 1

— 0

I'm getting into trouble.

I'm doing inappropriate things.

I'm getting silly.

I'm getting hyper.
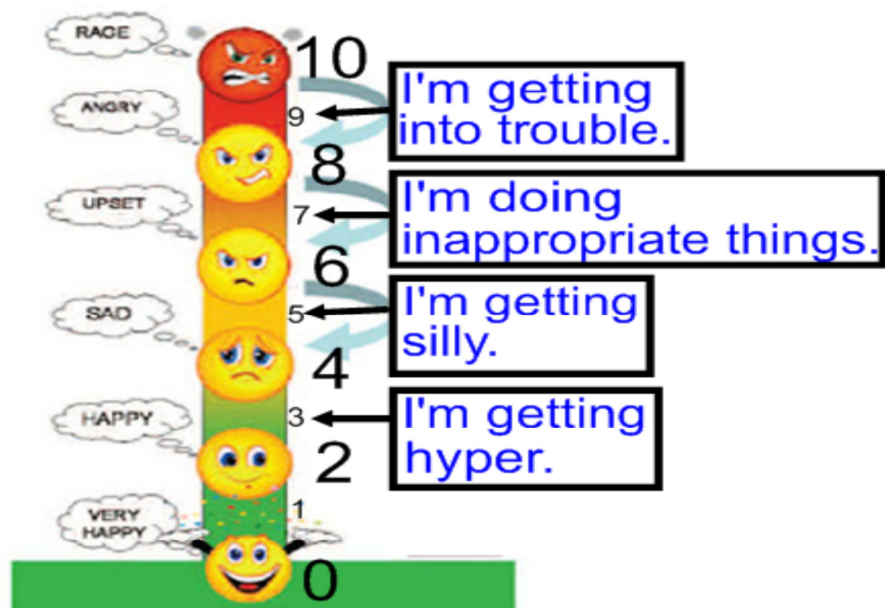
Cool As An Iceberg!

Appendix J: Case Study 2 Home Intervention Material

My morning routine checklist

Task	Mon Reminders Tally marks (////)	Mon Done	Tues Reminders (////)	Tues Done	Wed Reminders (////)	Wed Done	Thurs Reminders (////)	Thurs Done	Fri Reminders (////)	Fri Done
Get out of bed										
Put covers on neatly										
Get dressed										
Eat Breakfast										
Brush teeth										
Brush hair										
Get bag ready for school										

Appendix K: University of Manchester Ethical Confirmation Email

Fw: Ethics Approval Application - CONFIRMATION after Panel   from patrick mcardle to you   24 May

----- Forwarded Message -----
From: Ethics Education <ethics.education@manchester.ac.uk>
To: "patrickffmcardle@yahoo.co.uk" <patrickffmcardle@yahoo.co.uk>
Cc: Caroline Bond <Caroline.Bond@manchester.ac.uk>; Shelley Darlington <Shelley.Darlington@manchester.ac.uk>
Sent: Wednesday, 25 July 2012, 17:03
Subject: Ethics Approval Application - CONFIRMATION after Panel

Dear Patrick

Ref: PGR-7004267-A1

I am pleased to confirm that your ethics application has now been approved by the School Research Integrity Committee (RIC) against a pre-approved UREC template.

If anything untoward happens during your research then please ensure you make your supervisor aware who can then raise it with the RIC on your behalf

Regards

Gail Divall
PGT & Quality Assurance Administrator
School of Education

Tel: +44(0)161 275 3390
Working Week: Tues - Fri 9am - 5pm
http://www.education.manchester.ac.uk/
http://www.education.manchester.ac.uk/intranet/

Appendix L: Informed Consent Forms for Carers

Consent for intervention phase of the programme

MANCHESTER
1824

The University
of Manchester

Evaluating the effectiveness of an executive function intervention for children who have been fostered.

Participant Information Sheet

You are being invited to take part in a study that will evaluate an intervention that aims to support your child's executive skills (Thinking Skills and Doing Skills) at home and at school. The study is being carried out as part of a Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the study is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

Who will conduct the study?

The evaluation will be carried out by Patrick McArdle, School of Education, Ellen Wilkinson Building, The University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL

Title of the study

Evaluating the effectiveness of an intervention that aims to promote executive skills (thinking skills and doing skills) of children who have been fostered or adopted following early poor quality parental care.

What is the aim of the study?

The study aims to explore the impact of a joint home-school intervention that aims to support the thinking and doing skills (executive skills) of children who have been adopted or fostered as a result of poor quality parental care in their early lives. The study will also explore how the intervention was implemented.

From infancy up to early adulthood we all develop thinking skills and doing skills. Thinking skills help us to plan ahead (like a mental roadmap), organise, manage our time, remember important bits of information and think about how we are getting on in a task (taking a bird's eye view of oneself).

Doing skills help us to resist urges by thinking things through before acting, managing emotions, get started on activities, keep going until the end of a task, change plans if things aren't going the way we thought or if we get new information.

Thinking and doing skills develop throughout childhood but lots of children can struggle with these skills. I would like to investigate how a trainee educational psychologist can support families and schools to work together to support children who been fostered or adopted by teaching and encouraging thinking and doing skills at home and at school. The study will also tell other families and professional working with children about what impact the plan had on the child's thinking and doing skills.

The intervention is related to thinking and doing skills (executive skills) and while there may be overlap with other concerns, if there are other issues that of greater concern for your child then it would not be appropriate for them to be included in the intervention. In this case I would refer your concerns on to the educational psychologist for your child's school for them to address.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen to take part in this programme because at the moment your child may have difficulty with some thinking and doing skills and they have been fostered and adopted. I am interested in how this intervention programme can support children who have been fostered or adopted and their families (not all children with these difficulties have been fostered or adopted).

What would I be asked to do if I took part?

You will be asked to meet with me and your child's class teacher on three occasions to work in partnership and develop strategies to support your child with their thinking and doing skills at

home and at school. I will ask to interview you to get your views on the programme when the programme ends. Each meeting will take 45-60 minutes and the interview will take 45 minutes.

What happens to the data collected?

I intend to interview parents/carers and teachers to get their views on programme. The data will be kept for no longer than 5 years after completion of the course. The data will then be shredded.

How is confidentiality maintained?

The identity of individual children, teachers and the school will be carefully anonymised and protected in the reporting of the research. All data that I personally collect will be stored in a secure manner and will be viewed by myself and my supervisor who will give guidance but only when all links that could identify individual participants have been removed. Recordings and transcripts of interviews will be destroyed by shredding and deletion one year after completion of the doctorate course.

What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?

It is up to you to decide whether you wish to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

Will I be paid for participating in the study?

Participants involved in the study will not be paid.

What is the duration of the study?

The study will take place over a half term (6-8 weeks).

Where will the study be conducted?

The information meeting, the planning meeting and the review meeting will take place at school. Some of the strategies will be implemented at home and some at school. Some of the strategies will be implemented at home and some at school. The interviews at the end of the programme can take place at school or at home depending on your preference.

Will the outcomes of the study be published?

The study will be submitted to the University of Manchester as my Doctoral thesis and may be subsequently published in a journal or review. I again stress that confidentiality will be maintained by using pseudonyms for all participants, schools and institutions.

Criminal Records Check (if applicable)

I have a full CRB issued within the last 3 years.

Contact for further information

If you would like to discuss any other details of the study. Please contact me at the University address as given above or you can email me: or call

What if something goes wrong?

If a participant wants to make a formal complaint about the conduct of the study they should contact the Head of the Research Office, Christie Building, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL.

The University of Manchester

CONSENT FORM

If you are happy to participate please complete and sign the consent form below

Please Initial Box

1. I confirm that I have read the attached information sheet on the above study and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

3. I understand that the interviews and meetings will be audio recorded

4. I agree to the use of anonymous quotes

5. I agree that any data collected may be passed to other researchers

7. **I agree that any data collected may be published in anonymous form in academic books or journals.**

I agree to take part in the above intervention

| Name of participant | Date | Signature |

| Name child's social worker | Date | Signature |

Appendix M: Consent form for Teachers/TA

MANCHEStER
1824

The University of Manchester

Teacher/teaching assistant consent for intervention phase of the programme

Evaluating the effectiveness of an executive skills intervention for children who have been fostered or adopted.

Participant Information Sheet

You are being invited to take part in a study that will evaluate an intervention that aims to support executive skills (Thinking Skills and Doing Skills) at home and at school. The parent(s)/carer(s) of your pupil are being asked to give informed consent but I would also like to give you an opportunity to give or decline to give your own informed consent. The study is being carried out as part of a Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology. Before you decide whether or not to participate, it is important for you to understand why the study is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

Who will conduct the study?

The evaluation will be carried out by Patrick McArdle, School of Education, Ellen Wilkinson Building, The University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL

Title of the study

Evaluating the effectiveness of an intervention that aims to promote the executive skills (thinking skills and doing skills) of children who have been fostered or adopted.

What is the aim of the study?

The study aims to explore the impact of a joint home-school intervention that aims to support the thinking and doing skills (executive skills) of children who have been adopted or fostered as a result of poor quality parental care in their early lives. The study will also explore how the intervention was implemented.

From infancy up to early adulthood we all develop thinking skills and doing skills. Thinking skills help us to plan ahead (like a mental roadmap), organise, manage our time, remember important bits of information and think about how we are getting on in a task (taking a bird's eye view of oneself).

Doing skills help us to resist urges by thinking things through before acting, managing emotions, get started on activities, keep going until the end of a task, change plans if things aren't going the way we thought or if we get new information, remembering instructions.

Thinking and doing skills develop throughout childhood but lots of children can struggle with these skills. Research suggests that these skills have an impact on pupils' achievements in school. I would like to investigate how a trainee educational psychologist can support families and schools to work together to support children who been fostered or adopted by teaching and encouraging thinking and doing skills at home and at school. The study will also tell other families and professional working with children about what impact the plan had on the child's thinking and doing skills.

The intervention is related to thinking and doing skills (executive skills) and while there may be overlap with other concerns, if there are other issues that of greater concern for your pupil then it would not be appropriate for them to be included in the intervention. In this case I would refer your concerns on to the educational psychologist for your school.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen to take part in this programme because at the moment a pupil in your class may have difficulty with some thinking and doing skills and they have been fostered and adopted. I am interested in how this intervention can support children who have been fostered or adopted,

their families (not all children with these difficulties have been fostered or adopted) and their teachers.

What would I be asked to do if I took part?

If you decide to take part in the study your pupil I will ask you to fill out a questionnaire called the BRIEF which will help to identify a profile of executive skills strengths and weaknesses.

You will be asked to meet with me and the parent(s)/carer(s) of your pupil on three occasions to work in partnership and develop strategies to support your pupil at school and at home. I will ask to interview you to get your views on the programme when the programme ends. Each meeting will take 45-60 minutes and the interview will take 45 minutes.

What happens to the data collected?

I will measure the children's thinking skills and doing skills (executive function) before and after the programme. I also intend to interview parents/carers and teachers to get their views on programme. The data will be kept for no longer than five years after completion of the doctorate course. The data will then be shredded.

How is confidentiality maintained?

The identity of individual children, teachers and the school will be carefully anonymised and protected in the reporting of the research by using pseudonyms. All data that I personally collect will be stored in a secure manner and will be viewed by myself and my supervisor who will give guidance but only when all links that could identify individual participants have been removed. Recordings and transcripts of interviews will be destroyed by shredding and deletion 5 years after completion of the doctorate course.

What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?

Participation is voluntary and you are also free to withdraw from the research at any time without giving an explanation. If you decide to participate you will be given this information sheet to keep and you will be asked to sign the consent form on the next sheet.

Will I be paid for participating in the study?

Participants involved in the study will not be paid.

What is the duration of the study?

The study will take place over a half term (6-8 weeks).

Where will the study be conducted?

The information meeting, the planning meeting and the review meeting will take place at school. Some of the strategies will be implemented at home and some at school. The interviews at the end of the programme will take place at school.

Will the outcomes of the study be published?

The study will be submitted to the University of Manchester as my Doctoral thesis and may be subsequently published in a journal or review. I again stress that confidentiality will be maintained by anonymising the names of all participants, schools and institutions by using pseudonyms.

Criminal Records Check (if applicable)

I have a full CRB issued within the last 3 years.

Contact for further information

If you would like to discuss any other details of the study. Please contact me at the University address as given above or you can email me: or call

What if something goes wrong?

If a participant wants to make a formal complaint about the conduct of the study they should contact the Head of the Research Office, Christie Building, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL.

CONSENT FORM

If you are happy to participate please complete and sign the consent form below

5. I confirm that I have read the attached information sheet on the above study and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had these answered satisfactorily.

6. I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

7. I understand that the interviews will be audio recorded

8. I agree to the use of anonymous quotes

5. I agree that any data collected may be passed to other researchers

7. **I agree that any data collected may be published in anonymous form in academic books or journals.**

I agree to take part in the above intervention

Name of participant	Date	Signature