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'...before I was probably thinking, you know, because you get told, he's bad, he's bad, he's bad. But now I see him as different'.

An exploration of group process consultation and experiences of working with a child presenting with challenging behaviour in Key Stage 1.

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DEDICATIONS

This research is dedicated to my loving parents Steve and Pam who instilled my belief that you if you set your mind to it you can be anything you want to be!

To my sister Rachel whose unwavering support and encouragement has got me through this process.

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ABSTRACT

Staff that manage students presenting with challenging behaviour are thought to experience higher levels of burnout and difficulties regulating negative reactions to students (Fiorilli, Albanese, Gabola and Pepe, 2017). The ability to regulate emotions in a professional capacity and portray emotions contrary to what is felt has been theorised by Hochschild (1983) as emotional labour, and is thought to be prevalent within the teaching profession (Kinman, Wray and Strange, 2011; Edwards, 2013). In order to counter the negative impact of emotional labour, researchers have suggested a reference group be created, to provide a reflective space for teachers to better understand how pupil behaviour impacts on their own emotions (Miller, 2003, Hargreaves, 2000).

Group process consultation research has identified it as useful for staff to reflect upon their practice, the emotional impact of their role and develop additional behaviour strategies (Nolan and Moreland, 2014; Stringer and Hayes, 2016; Davison and Duffy, 2017). This research explored group process consultation sessions as guided by Farouk (2004). Weekly consultation sessions were held during school hours for a group of staff that worked with a child presenting with challenging behaviour in Key Stage (KS1), consisting of the class teacher, teaching assistant, lunchtime teaching assistant and school SENCo. Semi structured interviews were undertaken to establish staff members' experiences of working with a child presenting with challenging behaviour and of their participation in group process consultation.

Transcripts were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) resulting in two master themes for each research question. The group's experiences of working with the focus student reflected an importance in taking a professional approach that was in harmony with participants' morals and values, as summarised by the themes 'guided by values, pressured by systems' and 'responsibility of advocacy'. Participants' experiences of group consultation incorporated two master themes of 'space for reflection' and 'empowered team'. The implications for further research and practice are discussed.

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1 INTRODUCTION TO THESIS

1.1 Research focus

There are two areas of focus for this research. The first centres around school staff experiences of working with a child presenting with challenging behaviour who is looked after in Key Stage One (KS1). Although a number of LAC demonstrate remarkable resilience, a number of factors make LAC vulnerable in schools, as adverse life experiences can impact upon behaviour. LAC are identified as a target group for government due to disproportionately poor outcomes in education (James, 2004). A proposed protective factor for this group is secure relationships with key adults at school. Literature advocates that key adults provide a safe environment through demonstrating empathy, whilst maintaining clear and consistent boundaries (Bombèr, 2012; Geddes, 2006). Research conducted thus far has indicated that some staff working with this group can experience feelings of inadequacy, anxiety and incompetence, countered by rewarding experiences of acting as an advocate and 'secondary parent' (Edwards, 2016).

The second focus for the research explores staff experiences of group process consultation following a model outlined by Farouk (2004). Research has suggested that school staff seek peer support and supervision to build their resilience in working with students that display challenging behaviour. Studies implementing a similar consultation model have indicated that staff experience more unified team support, reflection on their current teaching practice and further strategies to manage incidents of challenging behaviour (Davison and Duffy, 2017; Hayes and Stringer, 2016). The systemic complexities involved in the process have lead researchers to predominantly rely on mixed method approaches to determine the impact upon consultees. This research respectfully recognises the associated limitations and attempts an inductive, exploratory approach.

1.2 Methodological orientation

Semi structured interviews were employed to capture the participants experiences (n=4), following their engagement with group process consultation. To examine participants' lived experiences, an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

approach is taken. This has proven a popular methodology in previous research within health psychology due to the approach allowing for an examination of lived experiences not captured within alternative methodologies (Smith & Osborn, 2007). There is a developing evidence base in its application to other areas of psychology, including educational (Smith, 2011).

1.3 Personal and professional interest in the research

This research is grounded in the researcher's professional interests, as prior to enrolment on the educational psychology doctorate she was employed within mainstream, specialist and international settings. Throughout their career, the researcher supported students with challenging behaviour[1] and adverse life experiences. The application of this to educational psychology became apparent during placement experiences with a specialist LAC supervisor who introduced theoretical concepts that were supportive within casework. Through this experience and engagement with the literature, theories of emotional labour, attachment theory and containment appeared relevant.

This research is further influenced by a research paper by Edwards (2016) focusing on the experiences of teachers supporting looked after children specifically. Edwards study explored KS2 teachers' experiences of emotional labour in teaching a LAC. Within interviews, teachers described a range of emotions experienced in their work with the student. Negative feelings: anger, sadness and anxiety, were depicted when describing their view of the student's home situation and balancing their needs against other responsibilities. Shock and frustration were described in dealing with disclosures and managing referral pathways. Feelings of inadequacy and incompetence were expressed by some teachers in managing the student's behaviour. Positive emotions were portrayed when interventions had been successful and improvements had been made in their work. Teachers described the benefits of team effort and support in enabling them to pursue their role. The

[1] For the purposes of this study the following definition of challenging behaviour will be used: Challenging behaviour can be defined as "…culturally abnormal behaviour(s) of such intensity, frequency or duration that the physical safety of the person or others is placed in serious jeopardy, or behaviour which is likely to seriously limit or deny access to the use of ordinary community facilities" (Emerson, 1995, pg 4-5).

theory of emotional labour, discussed within this review, was applied to teachers' accounts of their experiences by the author. Within the theory, examples of surface acting were expressed by teachers in relation to maintaining control of situations and deliberately expressing emotion that wasn't felt. Some teachers described experiences of deep acting in that they tried to develop more sympathy for students by reflecting on their circumstances. Teachers described supressing their emotions in order to switch off at the end of the school day, which was reported as being easier with experience. The author felt that emotional detachment was evident in order to maintain boundaries and cope with stress, however questions remained around the impact for the LAC-teacher relationship. One limitation of the study was that the association of emotional labour was made through deductive thematic analysis, leading the interpretation of the account to be narrowed to this theory and methodology. Also, no member checks were conducted with participants and the sample included class teachers only. Noting the limitations, the author highlighted the need for further research in this area, specifically with regards to support that can be offered for teachers that support LAC. The author proposed that peer support may influence experiences of emotional labour, as teachers may feel more able to engage in deep acting. Enhanced peer support and supervision were identified as a viable intervention, both within this study and by other researchers (Bombèr, 2011; Kinman, Wray and Strange, 2011).

1.4 Local authority interest

Whilst conducting this study, the researcher was on placement in an East Midlands local authority. The Educational Psychology Service (EPS) identified LAC as a priority group and developed initiatives in collaboration with the virtual school team and school Special Educational Need Co-ordinators (SENCo). A related area of focus for the EPS is to reduce the significantly high rate of exclusions, particularly for students in primary school as there have been growing concerns, nationally and within the authority, of the increased rates of exclusion for this age group (DfE, 2016). A scheme is currently in development with support from local primary SENCos to foster preventative measures aimed at addressing challenges faced by school staff. This research is in-line with these ongoing initiatives within the EPS and sought to

provide insight into school staff experiences of working with a child displaying challenging behaviour who is looked after. Consultation is an approach used extensively in the EPS and is applicable as a preventative intervention to support staff. The experiences of staff engaged in this research will be disseminated to the EPS to support their exploration of how to provide a unique contribution to staff wellbeing to improve the attainment of vulnerable students and reduce school exclusions.

1.5 Current context and rationale for research

There has been a recent focus within government initiatives on the mental health of young people, with support being offered to teachers through training and information sharing (DH, 2015). LAC are thought to have a higher prevalence of mental health needs, compared to non-LAC (Meltzer et al, 2003). It has been suggested that a high percentage of children in care are perceived to have mental health needs with small number being referred to specialist services and then fewer accessing the service (Bonfield, Collins, Guishard-Pine and Langdon, 2010). There are a number of factors relating to this discrepancy, alongside placement breakdown and limitations within mental health services, researchers also investigated the influence of foster carer help-seeking attitudes (ibid). A resolution to the barriers LAC face in accessing mental health services could be the introduction of support within school settings.

The role of the EP in working with LAC, and all children, is to support their educational attainment and wellbeing. For LAC, and other vulnerable students, the outcomes in these areas need improving. Therefore, EPs need to be informed of what is effective support for LAC and those that work with them (Jackson and McParlan, 2006). The impact of positive teacher-pupil relationships is thought to be positive for a child's development overall.

For these positive outcomes to be seen, ideally teachers need to display caring, empathetic and nurturing qualities, in the face of what could be challenging and distrusting behaviour (Bergin and Bergin, 2009). The challenges within this are

evident within a recent National Union Teaching (NUT) survey suggesting teachers leave the profession due to stress and difficulties managing challenging behaviour (NUT, 2013). In supporting teachers to meet the needs of children who display challenging behaviour, it is important for EPs to consider how teachers' experience this, what is the perceived emotional impact and what support can be offered.

1.6 Overview of thesis

1.6.1 Literature review

The subsequent chapter outlines the literature review for this research, first outlining a definition of LAC, legislation and current academic attainment at a national level. Attachment theory is discussed due to its relevance to understanding the importance of relationships in building a foundation for wellbeing and resilience. The impact of relationships for staff is explored through research and emotional labour theory, indicative of the identification and management of feelings experienced by school staff. Consultation is reviewed as an approach to support staff in working with students that challenge them. A systematic review of the consultation literature is offered followed by a rationale for and consideration of the unique contribution of the current research.

1.6.2 Methodology section

This chapter outlines the alternative methodologies considered for this research before providing a rationale for using IPA, whilst acknowledging its limitations. The procedure for the group process consultation and interviews is detailed, followed by a thorough account of the analysis process. A critical appraisal of the study is offered as well as a consideration of ethics.

1.6.3 Results section

The analysis of the participants' interviews is offered individually, followed by a group assimilation of themes. The themes are extrapolated with a narrative account of the interpretation and quotes from the interviews. Reflections are given by the researcher to demonstrate the process involved in analysis.

1.6.4 Discussion and conclusions

The research closes with a discussion of the findings and how they relate to the research addressed within the literature review. The strengths and limitations of

the research are offered with consideration of how the research relates to current EP practise and local authority policy. The account concludes with the reflections of the researcher as a process consultant and as the author of this research.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This review will consider the literature relating to the outcomes for LAC in the UK and highlight the importance of supporting staff to provide the best quality educational provision for this population. These outcomes are various, and this review does not label all LAC as experiencing difficulties within education. The author explores the experiences of professionals supporting young people in educational settings, some of whom experience difficulty, and others who demonstrate remarkable resilience under the same conditions.

2.1 Looked After Children

Looked after children (LAC) are legally defined as children placed under the care of the local authority for a continuous period of over 24 hours, subject to a care order or placement order (Children Act, 1989). Following a young person's 18th birthday they are subsequently defined as a 'young person eligible for help from the local authority'. As of March 2015, there were 70,440 LAC in the UK, 74% of whom were cared for in foster placements. 60% of those children were placed into care due to abuse and neglect (DfE, 2015).

2.2 Outcomes for Looked After Children

Government statistics in 2016 revealed that at each key stage level reviewed, the academic attainment for LAC is much lower than non-LAC. By the end of Key Stage 2, 57% of LAC have an identified Special Educational Need (SEN), compared to 17% of non-LAC. The most common primary need is social, emotional and mental health (44.8%). In 2015, 0.14% of LAC were permanently excluded from school, compared to 0.07% of non-LAC. In 2016, 40% of care leavers aged 19- 21 years old were not in employment, education or training (NEET), compared to 14% of all 19-21-year olds (DfE, 2017). It could be argued that outcomes for LAC are reflective of the lack of social mobility within the UK, as educational attainment continues to be correlated with socioeconomic status (Berridge, 2017).

Adverse factors are life events and circumstances that threaten the healthy development of a child, such as experiences of abuse, neglect, separation, domestic violence and economic deprivation (Dent and Cameron, 2003). A longitudinal study

involving children 30 years after they were placed into the care system in 1970, revealed higher levels of problems within socio-economic, educational, legal and health, compared to what would be expected for the general population (Viner and Taylor, 2005). Disruptions in placement breakdowns and frequent school changes are thought to contribute to poorer school attainment (James, 2004).

2.3 School as a protective factor

A number of protective factors also positively influence a child's development, creating a more hopeful picture of a child's resilience to adverse circumstances (Dent and Cameron, 2003). Gilligan (1997) described resilience as 'those qualities which cushion a vulnerable child from the worst effects of adversity in whatsoever form it takes and which may help a child or young person to cope, survive and even thrive in the face of great hurt and disadvantage' (p. 12). A number of protective factors can contribute to building resilience including school attainment. Martin and Jackson (2002) asked successful care leavers, defined by high educational attainment, what had supported their achievement in school. Support from sensitive and encouraging teachers was highlighted as being important. A special relationship with at least one adult was thought to be a significant protective factor. Harker, Dobel- Ober, Berridge and Sinclair's (2004) study presented Looked After young peoples' views on 'what works' in building their school attainment. The class teacher was found to have a significant impact, identified as the person that noticed and promoted their educational achievements. In a small-scale study obtaining LAC in KS1 views of education, a relationship with school staff emerged as a theme, alongside sense of belonging in school (Sugden, 2013). Previous research has indicated that teachers that display emotional warmth and care promote higher attainment and a relaxed class atmosphere, which is particularly beneficial for looked after students (Jerome, Hamre and Pianta, 2009). The role of the 'key adult' has been advocated in research as supporting LAC to regulate their emotions and cope with social and academic demands. In fulfilling this role, staff are required to display a level of self-awareness and regulation of their own emotions (Bombèr, 2011).

2.4 Experiences working with LAC in school

There are limited studies exploring the experiences of working with LAC within education. One unpublished thesis by Underdown (2016) interviewed 'key adults' supporting LAC in school. Overarching themes included adult's difficulty maintaining a 'professional perspective' on their work and dealing with the emotional connection between them and the LAC. They described worrying about them, given their adverse life experiences. Emotional support was identified as a theme and varied in quality between participants. The majority of those interviewed relied upon peer support and advice to enable them to be successful in the role. A published study by Webber (2017) interviewed staff within a primary school academy to investigate their approach to supporting LAC. Staff implemented the PACE model (Hughes, 2009) which aims to develop an emotional relationship with LAC through the adult adopting the following characteristics: Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy (PACE). The teachers discussed the positive impact of the programme on their approach to supporting LAC and building a more positive relationship.

2.5 Influence of Educational Psychology Services

Educational Psychology Services are required to prioritise LAC and dedicate a specialist role to oversee this population (Dent and Cameron, 2003). The current contribution made by EPs can be variable across local authorities. Where EP involvement is provided, it is considered to be supportive in maintaining school placements (Norwich, Richards and Nash, 2010). EP skills could be utilised to adhere to National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) guidelines (2010) on supporting LAC as it recommends teachers receive training to support children with loss, separation and trauma, and reflect on how this impacts child development, attachment and cognitive functioning. EPs can address the significant need for training on the psychological impact of attachment difficulties, trauma and loss, to schools, foster carers and designated teachers (Gore-Langton, 2017). At an individual level, EPs can provide mental health support within an educational context, reducing the stigma of access and the burden of long waiting lists. Within statutory work, EPs ensure that psychology is incorporated into the child's

Education Health Care (EHC) plan and evidence-based interventions are placed to support academic attainment. As early reading ability has been identified as a significant protective factor for LAC (Osborne, Alfano and Winn, 2010), EPs can promote teachers to support this. EPs can also offer practical strategies to support group problem solving and relationship building, as this may be particularly pertinent with LAC (Sugden, 2013).

2.6 Summary

LAC are vulnerable within our society. In spite of increased central government attention and initiatives, the outcomes for this population remain relatively poor. Adverse early life experiences are thought to have a significant impact upon social and emotional mental health, leading to difficulties in emotional regulation and relationship forming. This may contribute to challenges maintaining foster care and school placements. Frequent disruption in placements further exacerbates difficulties for this population, highlighting the need for support services to work collaboratively to ensure placements are suitable and stable. EPs can support adults working with and caring for this population through training, problem-solving opportunities and advocating for the LAC. EPs are well placed to support 'key adults' in fulfilling their role in building a secure relationship with LAC (Geddes, 2006). Some researchers state that where the relationship is positive it may have an 'attachment-like' quality (Bergin and Bergin, 2009), suggesting that a positive teacher relationship can be a protective factor for students that are vulnerable or have adverse home circumstances (McGrath and Van Bergen, 2015).

Attachment theory is outlined within the next section as it offers an understanding of social relationships and the potential impact upon emotional and behavioural development. Relationships are integral to this research and complex in nature. Emotional labour theory is offered to further explore the feelings experienced in working with young people and how these are potentially managed, particularly within a professional basis.

2.7 The contribution of Attachment theory

Attachment theory, first introduced by Bowlby (1969) in his volume Attachment and Loss, offers an insight into the impact of early parental relationships upon later development. Within his theory Bowlby proposed that infants develop an 'internal working model' from their early relationships, which determines their perception of what the purpose of relationships are, how to form them and what can be gained from them. Important components of internal working models include the following: a model of others as trustworthy, a model of the self as valuable, and a model of the self as effective when interacting with others. Researchers have suggested that children interact with school staff according to their internal working model (DeMulder et al, 2000). Fortunately, it is possible for children to adapt their internal working model with the support of secure and stable relationships (Riley, 2011). This highlights the importance of subsequent relationships, such as those provided within school (Bergin and Bergin, 2009).

Some researchers have questioned the relevance of the theory in supporting educational psychologists and criticised it for being deterministic and leading to within-child labels for children (Meins, 2017). Whilst acknowledging this perspective, the theory has also helped staff in understanding challenging and often confusing behaviour (Bombèr, 2011). Understanding the role of attachment in the classroom is thought to enable educators to become more reflective on their own emotions and their students. Kennedy and Kennedy (2004) reflected that staff's internal working models influence their approach and relationships with children indicating the reciprocal nature of interactions. Teachers with a dismissing (avoidant) attachment style may experience difficulty recognizing their own lack of warmth, trust, and sensitivity in their relationships with their students. They may have unrealistic expectations for their students' maturity and independence as they themselves may have learned to be overly self-reliant and distant in their own interpersonal relationships. Teachers with a dismissing status may respond to students generally by distancing themselves, demonstrating a lack of warmth and understanding which may have a negative impact on LAC students.

In Bowlby's early studies, he observed infants within the care of their mothers and other adults. He challenged the dominant theorists at the time by suggesting that infants do not develop relationships with their mothers just from having their physiological needs met, the emotional aspect of the relationship was important too. Bion (1970) offered an explanation for this by introducing the concept of containment. Infants are thought to experience emotions, such as hunger and discomfort, with a high level of intensity. The role of the caregiver is to absorb those feelings for the child and present them back in a more tolerable manner. The caregiver supports the child by containing the negative feelings until the child learns how to regulate themselves. Without effective containment, the child may perceive negative feelings as intolerable and escalate to a heightened state of arousal relatively quickly. In a neurodevelopmental sense, frequent exposure to stress in early life may distort the brain to be highly responsive to danger and engage in an overuse of survival functions, as the hypothalamic pituitary adrenal axis can produce elevated cortisol levels which can be detrimental to health (McCrory, DeBrito and Viding, 2011).

This concept appears relevant in education as school staff have a secondary role in providing containment for children. Depending on their internal working model, children can have varying levels of need in terms of containment. Bergin and Bergin (2009) proposed that as the attributed attachment to their teacher appears to remain stable in young children, perhaps they form an internal working model of 'teacher', as either positive or negative, and with each new teacher behave in a way that is consistent with this model. This is likely to elicit similar patterns of interactions with teachers, which can be similar to parent–child attachments, which also tend to be stable across childhood. Beyond infancy, however, children with insecure parent–child attachment are more likely to develop insecure relationships with teachers (DeMulder et al. 2000). A possible reason why this pattern is not seen in much younger children is that their internal models are still 'in the making'. However, Riley (2011) emphasises that constructs within the 'internal working model' are not fixed, therefore through positive relationships a cognitive re-evaluation can take place, adapting expectations of future relationships.

Given the common reasons for LAC being placed into care, it is inferred that their experiences of containment within infancy may not have been adequate, creating a risk of insecure attachment and dysfunctional internal working model (Geddes, 2006).

Consequently, some LAC can have difficulty forming relationships and regulating their emotions. This can be challenging for school staff as they can be subject to a 'projection' of emotions (Bombèr, 2011). This term is described as the child 'giving the negative feelings to the adult' as they are unable to tolerate them. In order to contain these feelings for the child, staff must account for their own emotions to be effective in the role (Edwards, 2016). The impact of challenging behaviour and engagement with emotional labour is explored within the next sections.

2.8 Staff stress and challenging behaviour

As previously stated, this research does not relate incidents of challenging behaviour as being isolated to or narrowly applied to LAC. Behaviour as explored thus far through attachment theory is complex and layered in psychosocial elements. This section explores challenging behaviour experienced by some school staff working with some vulnerable students, such as LAC. Where staff do encounter behaviour that challenges them, it is thought to correlate with their wellbeing and emotional reactions (Hastings, 2002). Studies related to teachers' emotional competence have suggested that teachers with the highest levels of burnout have the greatest difficulty in moderating their displays of negative emotion to students: there is a link between intensity of negative emotions and burnout (Fiorilli, Albanese, Gabola and Pepe, 2017). Intensity of emotions following an event that threatens the teacher's sense of efficacy is positively associated with emotional exhaustion and negatively associated with personal accomplishment (ibid). An understanding of how staff safeguard their wellbeing through managing their emotions is explored through emotional labour theory.

2.9 The contribution of Emotional labour theory

The role of emotional labour theory will be discussed in relation to school staff as Kinman et al. (2011) correspondingly suggest that "…the teaching role is likely to

involve a considerable degree of emotional labour…" (p. 844). The theory of emotional labour was first conceptualised by Hochschild (1983) through her research observing and interviewing flight attendants. It identifies the requirement of individuals to suppress or induce certain emotions, depending on the expectations of their workplace or role. This may involve an internal conflict due to the dissonance between the emotion felt and the expectation of society or role (Mann, 1999). The workplace can issue 'feeling rules' that inform members on how to express emotion in given situations; the more this is incongruent to the genuine feelings the higher the degree of emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983). Brotheridge and Lee (2011) described the components involved in emotional labour as 'deep acting', 'surface acting' and 'suppression'. Deep acting involves the individual trying to feel the expected emotion. Surface acting occurs when the individual displays the expected emotion outwardly, despite feeling differently. Suppression involves hiding and not acknowledging the emotions. The experience of emotional labour can be positive or negative, depending on the individual's perceptions of how the experience benefits them (Hargreaves, 2000). It has been linked to burnout in professionals due to the impact on wellbeing and sense of identity (Hochschild, 1983). In relation to an example within teaching, deep acting could be developing empathy for a child with anger issues by accounting for their home experiences. Surface acting could be outwardly maintaining calm when a child is disruptive in order to continue teaching the class. Surface acting may be particularly draining as the individual must use energy to realign feelings. Surface acting is thought to be detrimental to health, causing exhaustion and low job satisfaction whereas with deep acting the emotion can be genuinely felt therefore requiring less emotional labour. For example, feeling empathy after understanding the reasons behind a person's behaviour may enable the feeling to be felt genuinely, supporting the relationship with the child (Davis, 2003).

Emotional labour could be considered an expected and necessary skill to function as a teacher (Sutton, 2004). However, Grandey (2000) warns that consistent emotional labour can erode feelings of personal accomplishment and create negative feelings towards self and job. Within this warning, it is acknowledged that instances can

arise in which it is beneficial to utilise the suppression of emotion, such as to reduce anger or maintain working relationships, however it is important to be wary of potentially damaging long term effects. Given the negative associations between emotional labour and experiences of burnout, it is expected to impact upon teacher relationships with students (Kinman, Wray and Strange, 2011). A superficial expression of an emotion that is not actually felt (surface acting) is associated with reduced levels of rewarding relationships and results in feeling inauthentic and alienated from self (Brotheridge and Lee, 2002). Deep acting is thought to promote pupil-teacher relationships and create a relaxed classroom atmosphere, as teachers can then reveal their 'true self' (Davis, 2003). A longitudinal study administered questionnaires to 100 German teachers concluding that deep acting reduced long term emotional exhaustion. The study suggested that deep acting is likely to improve teacher-child interactions, as the child sees them as more authentic. Consequently, the authors recommended a project to develop a peer-support intervention to facilitate deep acting (Phillip and Schüpbach 2010). Hochschild (1983) also suggested peer support as an avenue to "…separate the company's meaning of anger from their own meaning, the company rules of feeling from their own…" (p. 197).

2.9.1 Emotional labour within teaching younger children

Emotional labour is particularly prevalent within the teaching profession as part of the commitment to continually support, motivate and inspire young children (Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006). Hargreaves (2000) interviewed primary and secondary school teachers regarding their emotional experiences. Primary teachers reportedly felt rewarded by student's affections towards them and enjoyment of learning. Consequently, primary teachers reported stronger emotional reactions to their students than secondary school teachers, who were rewarded by academic achievement and respect. Staff perceived younger children as showing their emotions more. A two year case study conducted by Boyer, Reimer and Irvine (2013) detailed the experiences of an early years teacher supporting a child displaying challenging behaviour. She described her experiences of emotional labour within the following examples: the need to maintain patience in repeating instructions and the need to suppress anger and frustration elicited by a poor

behaviour to maintain control and authority. In an organisational context, emotional labour was necessary to manage the pressure and potential anxiety involved prior to or during an Ofsted inspection. The authors concluded that in comparison to other jobs nursery teachers experience significant emotional labour as they need to convince children of their emotional state. The children can be vulnerable and boundaryless, making their projection of emotion more intense.

The concept of emotional labour has been questioned and critiqued by Bolton (2005), particularly for its application to caring professions. Bolton claims the theory overemphasises the distinction between private and professional emotional management, leading to a perception of emotional labour being deterministic and potentially undervaluing the unique outlook that workers bring to an organisation and maintain a sense of self.

The theory is considered relevant to this research as it conceptualises the experiences school staff may have in portraying emotions that are not felt, in order to fulfil their role in working in challenging circumstances. As the profession is reportedly pressurised within the current political climate (NUT, 2013), it could be that school staff experience emotional labour to maintain their professional role. Consequently, they may suppress negative feelings to fit with the reason that they joined the profession and to defend against feeling incompetent (Bombèr, 2011). The impact of systemic issues and staff dynamics also has an impact on emotional labour. Staff were found to induce or suppress emotions when interacting with colleagues in order to engage in productive collaboration within a stressful environment (Elfer, 2012). As Osgood (2010) states, the negative consequences of emotional labour may be mitigated by opportunities for teachers to reflect upon the presence and nature of the emotional strain involved in their work. A proposed method of allowing teachers space for reflection through consultation is explored further.

2.10 Supporting staff manage challenging behaviour

It has been acknowledged that staff need support in managing challenging behaviour in terms of professional training and emotional supervision. Training is commonly delivered through external services and in isolated sessions, with staff being expected to then transfer those skills into their teaching practice. Some literature has questioned the impact of isolated training stating that 'one stop trainings' are ineffective without ongoing support (Barton et al, 2013). Time invested in training and implementing interventions needs to be perceived by staff as being able to outweigh the costs in time investment, which may be influenced by staff stress levels and self-efficacy (Ware and Kitsantis, 2007). Similarly, perceptions of professional and emotional support are thought to be influenced by staff stress levels and perceived competency (Fiorelli et al, 2017).

Peer support has been identified as important for teaching staff to share expertise and feel emotionally supported. It is argued that support from colleagues changes attitudes and behaviour in working with challenging students (Boyle et al, 2011). Teacher support networks are thought to have a significant role in protecting teacher wellbeing, particularly against feelings of exhaustion and oppression in the role (Betoret, 2006). Although peer support within schools can be developed without the influence of external agencies, the British Psychological Society (BPS) has recommended that EPs work with staff to problem solve complex situations and develop a support network. A further BPS document recommended that staff receive ongoing access to consultation, support and supervision, emphasising that the wellbeing of staff and students should be a priority for all (Faulconbridge et al, 2017). Consultation will now be explored as a conceptual grounding to the processes involved in supporting and facilitating peer support in schools.

2.11 Consultation

The concept of consultation itself has varying definitions in the literature; Conoley and Conoley (1991), describe consultation as an interaction between two professionals, with the intention to raise the problem- solving capacity of the consultee. This description hints at consultation being a collaborative process as the

consultee is identified as a fellow professional. Wagner (2000, pg 4) included collaboration as part of her definition of consultation, adding that it is 'voluntary' and 'non-supervisory'. What constitutes consultation could arguably be described as unclear, as according to Sheridan and Kratochwill (1992) the literature does not provide clear enough definitions of collaborative consultation. It could be argued that no single model of consultation is adequate in its purposes for educational psychologists (Wagner, 2000). It therefore may be important to bear in mind that the models need to be adapted to fit the complexity of each individual case. It can be argued that whichever consultation model is used, the goals remain the same: to solve the presenting problem of the client and enable them to solve problems in the future (Gutkin and Curtis, 1990).

2.12 Consultation models

Consultation frameworks have been adapted from different psychological and theoretical underpinnings. The consultation approaches used in the UK have influences from mental health consultation or behavioural approaches adapted from America (Larney, 2003). There are a number of different consultation approaches available to practitioners: behavioural, mental health consultation, organisational and process consultation. The latter will be discussed in more detail as this is the approach used within this research.

2.12.1 Mental health consultation

The medical model (Caplan, 1970) derived from cases involving mental health difficulties, focused on building the client's self-esteem and ownership of their problems. The role of the consultant is to assist them with building capacity to objectively view their problem. The aim of the approach is to enable the consultee to overcome the problem independently. This model highlights a need for a collaborative approach, in that the consultant 'supplements' the expertise of the consultee to create joint problem solving (Hanko 1999). The model has been criticised for lacking empirical evidence regarding its use and effectiveness within school settings (Larney, 2003).

2.12.2 Behavioural Consultation

The behaviour model (Bergan and Tombari, 1976) is rooted in social learning theory and aims to assess the antecedents, consequences and environmental aspects that may be perpetuating behaviour. The approach requires more direction from the consultant as the process involves goal setting and planning. Bergan and Tombari adapted this model to develop intervention plans and measure outcomes. Gutkin and Curtis (1999) later adapted the model to include wider environmental influences and systemic pressures. Still, the model has been criticised for the apparent lack of appreciation for the consultant-consultee relationship and the influence upon effecting change .

2.12.3 Organisational consultation

Schein (1969) offered a process of consultation based on systems theory, to consider the social and emotional influence of the work environment. The consultant works with the consultee to objectively determine any events or processes within the system that could hinder their work. Process and organisational psychology are used in business and management consultancy to improve the efficiency of working groups (Larney, 2003).

2.12.4 Process consultation

Schein (1969) defines process consultation as a 'set of activities on the part of the consultant that helps the client to perceive, understand and act upon process events which occur within the client's environment'. Particular attention is paid to the client-consultant relationship and the inter-relations of group members. The approach has been adapted to suit educational settings, most prominently by Hanko (1999).

Hanko's model of process consultation aims to enhance teacher's problem-solving abilities through a framework enabling structured group discussion. It is hoped that teachers will then be able to recognise, understand and meet the needs of students in their class. The approach adopts a psychodynamic theoretical basis encouraging consultees to reflect upon their feelings and behaviour in reaction to challenging behaviour. Hanko (2002) advocates sharing psychodynamic insights with teachers to support their understanding of where behaviour may originate from, what the underlying meaning might be and to depersonalise it. Hanko suggests the following

should be incorporated into group consultation: exploring questions, developing hypotheses, and discovering and building on strengths to improve practice. Farouk's (2004) model of process consultation incorporates the work of Hanko (1999) and Schein (1988), arguing that the theoretical basis for both approaches is embedded in psychodynamic theory, meaning the features of both can be amalgamated. Farouk's model draws on Hanko's model for sequence and structure, with Schein's influence in managing group dynamics. This model will be described further within the methodology section.

2.13 Consultation Skills

Some EPs claim that any discussion that follows a process of listening, analysing, reflecting back and summarising could be considered as consultation (Dickinson, 2000). Research has investigated the extent to which EPs adhere to the models and theories selected when conducting consultation. Kennedy, Frederickson and Monson (2008) asked EPs to state the theories and models that influence their practice during consultation and compared this to what was observed in recorded consultations with teachers. Interestingly, participants did not mention psychodynamic, behavioural or cognitive-behavioural theories, which underpin most consultation models. Following analysis of the consultation transcript, EPs engaged in at least one cycle of problem solving, with problem identification being the most coded phase. Within this phase, EPs gathered information on the current problem, elicited client's strengths, previous actions and summarised their accounts. This phase may have been more prominent as this was the initial consultation meeting for all participants. Lewis and Miller (2011) analysed an initial consultation with a parent. Within the first phase of the consultation, the EP was initially dominant in terms of the amount of words spoken and relaying facts and opinions. The parent was later more dominant when relaying stories to explain her son's behaviour. The authors reflected on the EPs' process and content control throughout the consultation.

Consultation could be seen as a craft involving wisdom, tolerance of ambiguity, self-knowledge, the understanding of people's thinking and feeling and the ability to

care but also to challenge and develop others (Egan, 2002). Doing consultation well relies on a great deal of tacit knowledge gained from experience, mediation and reflection. Successful consultant characteristics are considered as being cooperative, emotionally stable, able to inspire confidence, facilitate empathy, flexibility, warmth, and understanding (West and Idol, 1987). This was echoed in research by Nolan and Moreland (2014) who applied discourse analysis to explore the strategies used by EPs within consultation. EPs were observed as being collaborative by diminishing any perceptions of power through the use of 'us', 'we'. EPs engaged in active listening, displayed empathy whilst questioning, wondering and challenging through being inquisitive. EPs guided the conversation by focusing the consultee on the primary aim and pulling the story together. The use of these strategies relied on the skills of the EP, in being reflective and reactive. The necessary skill set was attributed to having wisdom in terms of knowledge of self and knowledge of others. EPs displayed skills in collaboration by demonstrating empathy, using collaborative language and verbal and non- verbal active listening skills. In reflection, EPs stated that they maintained the child's interests at the forefront of their mind, while remaining non-judgemental and empathetic towards the consultee.

Miller (2003) interviewed 24 teachers who had worked with EPs on strategies that they perceived to be successful. Teachers described student's challenging behaviour and difficult relationships with parents. When asked to describe the perceived skills of the consultant, active listening and careful questioning were seen to be effective. Teachers appreciated a joint problem-solving approach which involved collaborative decision making. The personal aspects of the consultation were highlighted as the consultant demonstrating empathy, being positive and encouraging. Teachers perceived the involvement of an external consultant as being able to view the situation objectively and act as arbiter in emotive meetings with parents.

2.14 Group consultation research

As indicated by Bennett and Monson (2011), group consultation research is predominantly case study based and the models used within the process can vary. Consequently, a range of terms can be found within the research (teacher support

teams, staff support groups, group consultation) with a common aim in supporting problem solving and sharing of effective practice. There are a number of problem solving approaches used by EPs to support adult reflection and collaboration. The table below illustrates a comparison between approaches.

Table 1. A table to illustrate the similarities and differences between problem-solving approaches.

Approach	Psychological underpinnings	Detail of process	Aims
Circle of Adults (CoA) (Wilson and Newton, 2006)	Psychodynamic theory	One EP facilitates the 10 step process: firstly outlining the current situation, relationships, organisational factors and the child's voice before developing theories, strategies and actions. The second EP graphics the process.	To reframe attributions around challenging behaviour through encouraging school staff and other professionals to reflect on the student's life experiences.
Solution circles (SC)	Positive psychology, solution focused.	EP guides adults through four step process of one member outlines concern, the group brainstorms solutions, discuss feasibility and finally create actions to be taken.	To provide a focused structure for solution development and sharing of good practice.
Staff sharing scheme (Gill and Monsen, 1995)	Behavioural psychology, organisational psychology	EP conducts a needs analysis of school and contracts focus of training. Skill development training sessions are provided for staff to engage in group consultation.	Aims to skill staff and schools in developing an approach to support staff reflection and problem solving.
Hanko's (1999) model of group consultation	Psychodynamic theory	EP facilitates staff group to increase awareness of processes impacting on problem through problem analysis, theory development and problem solving.	To provide staff with an avenue to emotionally offload, reframe attributions of behaviour and share good practice.
Farouk's (2004) model of	Psychodynamic, solution focused,	Developed Hanko's (1999) model through additional focus on group dynamics	Provide an avenue for emotional and professional

process consultation	organisational psychology.	and solution focused questioning.	support, accounting for staff culture and group dynamics.

Circle of Adults (CoA) and Solution Circle (SC) approaches are delivered on a singular basis with potential for a follow-up review. SCs focus primarily on generating strategies and ideas that may resolve the problem, therefore the approach may not offer opportunity for deeper reflection. The CoA process predominantly adopts a psychodynamic approach in encouraging staff to reflect on their interactions with the focus student, with the intention of reframing any within-child attributions made by staff. The impact on staff attributions has been inconsistently shown in research (Turner, 2014; Hussain, 2016) and changes may not be maintained following the CoA session. Group process consultation aims to provide prolonged support for staff in managing challenging situations. The Staff Sharing Scheme (SSS) provides training for staff to continue independently with group support sessions focusing on a behavioural analysis of problem behaviour. Group process consultation, developed by Hanko (1999) and Farouk (2004), focuses on the emotional aspect of working in schools, encouraging staff to reflect on their emotions and the impact of staff culture, consequently advocating that an external consultant is a necessary component of the process (Hanko, 1999).

Creese, Norwich and Daniels (1998) administered a questionnaire to 1000 SENCos across England to ask them about collaborative teacher groups. Within the 25% returned questionnaires, 90% of those schools implemented some teacher groups. This may suggest that predominantly schools that implemented support groups replied to the researchers. Within those schools, the most commonly implemented support group was ad hoc teacher groups that met to discuss specific pupils; 40% of schools had groups facilitated by an external professional. SENCos reported that all types of groups were useful. Qualitative comments stated that successful groups relied upon senior management support and competent external facilitation. Authors recommend groups to reduce teacher isolation and burnout.

Rubinson (2002) implemented staff group consultation in America to reduce staff isolation and improve pupil outcomes. The groups consisted of school staff, external professionals and sometimes parents. The group problem solved cases that were volunteered by staff and parents. The groups were flexible in how they wanted to operate and provide services. Some chose to provide or signpost students to interventions. Two groups conducted systematic problem solving, implementing and evaluating new programmes across the school. Two groups did not evolve due to lack of participation from teachers, in terms of attendance and referrals. The facilitator of one group reflected on the 'within child' approach to problem solving, which was difficult to reframe. Mistrust between group members and lack of support from senior management were considered as being factors leading to unsuccessful groups. Those that were implemented were considered beneficial in raising student outcomes and staff wellbeing.

Further American research on 54 class teachers compared impact of stress inoculation training and group consultation against a control group (Cecil and Forman, 1990). The training group was reported to be more impactful in reducing experiences of stress. However, the consultation group was not facilitated by an external professional and was not guided by psychological theory, which may have impacted the findings as Hanko (2002) advocates for the input of external professionals that can encourage reflective questioning and provide psychological theory to group hypotheses.

Within the UK, Jackson (2002) implemented staff consultation groups following a model supported by Tavistock University that incorporates a psychodynamic approach. In the author's reflective account of group case studies, she felt that staff involved explored their feelings of anxiety and frustration, their own attachments to students and view of behaviour being a form of communication. Boyle, Topping, Jindal-Snape and Norwich (2011) interviewed 43 secondary school teachers regarding their ability to meet expectations around inclusion. The most dominant theme was the importance of peer support within staff groups. Participants talked about a sharing culture within school meaning that problems can be shared. Sharing good practice was indicated as being helpful.

Davison and Duffy (2017) conducted Farouk's process consultation model to nurture group staff across 11 primary settings to investigate the impact upon personal and professional support. Monthly consultation sessions were implemented across six months. The researchers measured participants' level of concern, confidence, self-efficacy and views of consultation process. The repeated measure confidence and self-efficacy demonstrated statistically positive increases. Level of concern was found to reduce following consultation sessions. Within the interview data, themes of relationship building, stress reduction, support, problem solving, training and united working were revealed. The authors noted two additional key features in that staff reported consultation supported the teacher-teaching assistant (TA) relationship and the staff valued the facilitation skills of the EP. The role of the EP as the process consultant is explored further in the following section.

2.15 Role of the process consultant

In addition to the structured support of consultation models, the role of the consultant is now considered. Soni (2013) conducted a realistic evaluation of the components of group supervision, concluding that facilitation of the process was a significant mechanism that could determine the effectiveness of the process. Schein (1988) stated that a key role for the process consultant is to observe the communication styles and patterns between the group members. The consultant must determine whether this pattern accurately reflects the individual's ability to contribute or is occurring due to patterns and stereotypes developed within the group. If the latter, the consultant can support the group to develop new norms within their communication patterns that more accurately enable members to participate. Schein also states that the role that people occupy will determine how they behave. In this case, the members of the support groups have different roles within the school. When entering a new group, a person is faced with emotional issues which need to be resolved before they can feel comfortable within the group, common anxieties being concerned with fulfilling a role in the group and being liked by other members. Control, power and influence are important in balancing individual needs and group goals. The process consultant can help the group to

resolve emotional issues through supporting the group to reflect on their emotions. Explicit norms (ground rules) are powerful controls on the group's behaviour, as violation of the rules have consequences. The consultant can help construct new norms and determine whether they are helpful or not. Throughout the consultation it is important to consider that the consultant has an expertise in the processes involved in interpersonal relationships and the staff have expertise in knowledge of the school wide processes.

Schein (1988) describes 'task' and 'maintenance' functions which are useful in ensuring a group functions adequately. A person observing the group can use this list to reflect on the group and individual members' behaviour. Task functions include initiating discussion, information seeking, giving, clarifying, elaborating, summarising and consensus testing. These are typical of consultation skills used by EPs in the initial information gathering stages of a consultation cycle. Maintenance functions can be thought of as preventative measures in that they support harmony in the group. Gatekeeping ensures that all members have the opportunity to contribute by reducing the activity of overactive members and increasing the activity of more passive members. Harmonising and compromising are necessary for the group however it may not be useful to be harmonious at all times as the group may need to work through and communicate their disagreements. Diagnosing, standard-setting and testing involves reflecting on how the group is operating and how individuals are feeling within the group.

The group is affected by its environment and how it interacts with those that are not members of the group but are part of the wider system. The important relevance for the process consultant is the recognition that every group must manage their interactions internally and externally. Careful observation of this can inform the consultant about where the group may be supported. It is important to support the group in reflecting on each meeting to determine how they feel the process is going and offer feedback to each other.

Therefore, contracting the initial setup of the consultation groups is considered an important aspect, in terms of gaining trust from participants and ensuring their

engagement (McFadzean, 2002). Within the consultation, the facilitator's job is to ensure the group processes as effectively as possible. According to McFadzean (2002), the most important quality of a facilitator is skills in human relations and communications. Competencies within group dynamics include encouraging positive regard between members, establishing safety and trust, equality, respect and managing conflict. This suggests a more collaborative than 'expert' role in offering strategies to consultees. As Schein (1999) stated, "unless clients learn to see problems for themselves and think through their own remedies, they will be less likely to implement the solution and less likely to learn how to fix such problems should they recur. The process consultation can provide alternatives, but decision making about such alternatives must remain in the hands of the client because it is the client, not the consultant that owns the problem" (pg.18). The importance of gaining an understanding of a problem through the wider context of the system is explored in relation to the consultant role.

2.16 Understanding the system

A system can be defined as a collection of parts that are joined together in an organised way. Each part within the system is affected by being within the system, therefore cannot be analysed in isolation and without taking account of this wider context. Clarke (1985) compared this to an analogy regarding the human heart, as this could not function when removed from the body, neither would the body remain to function as it did before. This can be true when taking individuals from their systems (families, schools). Staff culture can be described as the 'way things are' in terms of the written and unwritten rules that regulate and determine the behaviour of the staff within an organisation. A school like any other group of individuals or organisation has its internalised norms, beliefs and values that make up a school's culture (Prosner, 1999). In addition, Prosner (1999) maintains that the culture of a school can be influenced by the subgroups and subcultures that exist within a school whose harmonious or conflicting interactions can have a constructive or undermining influence on the organisation.

Miller (2003) identified how some teaching staff felt they could not share concerns and difficulties with other staff members due to fears of being perceived as incompetent or negative. Miller (2003) inferred this as staff exposing the discrepancy between the school's espoused theory and theory in use. An organisation can build up 'well practiced defences' against exposing this (Argyris and Schon, 1978). The involvement of the EP creates a temporary system that can develop its own norms and rules rather than those imposed by the organisation (Miller, 2003). Hastings (2005) argued that both formal aspects of an organisation's culture (policies, procedures) and informal aspects (working relationships and support) will affect staff wellbeing, stress and their approach to managing challenging behaviour. The author suggested that staff value non-judgmental support from each other, as external consultants can be viewed negatively. The complexities involved in developing relationships with external consultants are explored through a psychodynamic perspective in the next section.

2.17 The psychodynamics of the helping relationship

Some researchers have suggested that the consultant-consultee relationship is the vital component of successful consultations (Green, Everhart, Gordon and Gettman, 2006). Mutual trust, respect and acceptance are needed before a helping relationship can work. Commonly, the consultant can be overly 'directive' as they may feel this is what the client is seeking. The philosophy behind process consultation states that this would not address the 'real' problem and underlying feelings of frustration, vulnerability and insecurity in having to seek help. For a consultant to be helpful, they must establish a relationship that reduces the power imbalance and boosts the client's self-esteem (Schein, 1999). The consultant needs to be aware of transference and countertransference by reflecting on their own stereotypes. When there is a mutual acceptance of each person's roles, a trusting relationship can develop. As the client exposes their narrative and feelings, they will be mindful of the consultant's behaviour. As the consultant engages in more active listening, summarising and clarifying behaviour, the client may gradually expose more of the problem. The consultant should be responsive to how the client answers questions and whether the conversation escalates to a deeper level.

Henning-Stout and Conoley (1988) argued that the success of a consultant working with a school depends on characteristics of both the consultant and the organisation. The organisation's previous experiences with consultants, organisation stressors and the ideology of the organisation will impact upon the helping relationship.

Rogers (1975) claims that the unconditional positive regard, empathy and genuineness qualities of the helper are integral to the therapeutic process. “We should neither underestimate or overestimate the importance of the helping relationship and stay in touch with what the relationship means to the client” (Egan, 2002, pg 44). Empathy is thought of as the skilled helper’s commitment to understanding their client and then communicating this to them. Helpers need to understand their own cultural biases and values to understand the worldview of their clients. Egan (2002) discussed the ‘second channel’ of internal conversation within the helper’s mind which, if attuned to, can support the helper in understanding their verbal and nonverbal responses to the client. The consultant can support the group to contain their feelings by focusing on the thought processes rather than the emotions. If emotions are expressed within the group, a knee-jerk reaction may not be helpful. The group can be supported to understand where the feelings come from and the impact of them, leading to them being contained.

In consideration of the components involved in consultation that have been identified thus far (the systemic context, facilitator role, impact of group dynamics and model in use), the researcher sought to explore the experiences of consultees within these complexities, particularly where problem solving has been facilitated for school staff that work with LAC. To gain an overview of the existing literature in this area a systematic literature search was conducted.

2.18 Systematic review

Systematic reviews involve a structured and rigorous search for research literature in order to gain an overview of the evidence base. Research synthesis is the process of accumulating and integrating a body of research in a systematic manner to gain a

coherent and holistic understanding of a topic. The stages involved in the process as outlined by Gough (2007) state that first an initial review question is formulated, with the criteria needed within the research to best answer the question. A strategy for searching the literature is implemented and studies are reviewed against the inclusion criteria. The studies relevant to the review question are amalgamated into themes and then evaluated collectively.

2.19 Objective of systematic review:

This systematic review aims to explore the existing consensus regarding staff experiences of group problem solving to develop an understanding of where this research could be developed further. The following is asked of the literature: what is known about the experiences of staff involved in group problem solving facilitated by a psychologist?

2.20 Inclusion Criteria

This section outlines the inclusion criteria that was applied when conducting the literature search.

Types of studies

Published and unpublished studies were included in this review, due to the limited amount of research conducted in this area. The research must contain some qualitative data and element of participants' views of their experiences, gathered through open ended questioning. Only studies published after 1997 and available in English are included in this review.

Types of participants

Research from countries other than the UK are included in this study. Participants within the group consultation must include school-based staff and the focus of the group must be around improving student outcomes. Within the group consultation, participants of 4-10 people should be involved as recommended in research (Hanko, 1999).

Types of intervention

To be relevant to this review, the group consultation must be facilitated by a psychologist or equivalent trained person and follow a model guided by psychological theory.

2.21 Search strategy:

The following search terms were applied: 'group consultation' or 'support groups' and 'collaborative', 'problem solving', 'school staff' or 'teachers', 'looked after children'. Combinations of these terms were combined using the following Boolean operatives: "AND", "OR". Where no results were gained, the terms were searched individually using 'OR' Boolean operative. When 'AND' 'looked after children' was used, limited results were gained. The following databases were used: Web of Science, Scopus, PsychINFO and Google Scholar. Grey literature was obtained through www.ethos.bl.uk

2.22 Search outcomes

The titles and abstracts of studies generated from the search were read and assessed against the inclusion criteria stated above (see Figure 1 and Appendix 8.1). 22 studies were selected to be reviewed and the entire article was then assessed. Following this, 10 studies were excluded due to not meeting the specific criteria. This was due to the model of consultation being unclear, not involving school staff or not being facilitated by a psychologist (see Appendix 8.2). A summary of the 12 included studies is provided in Table 1.

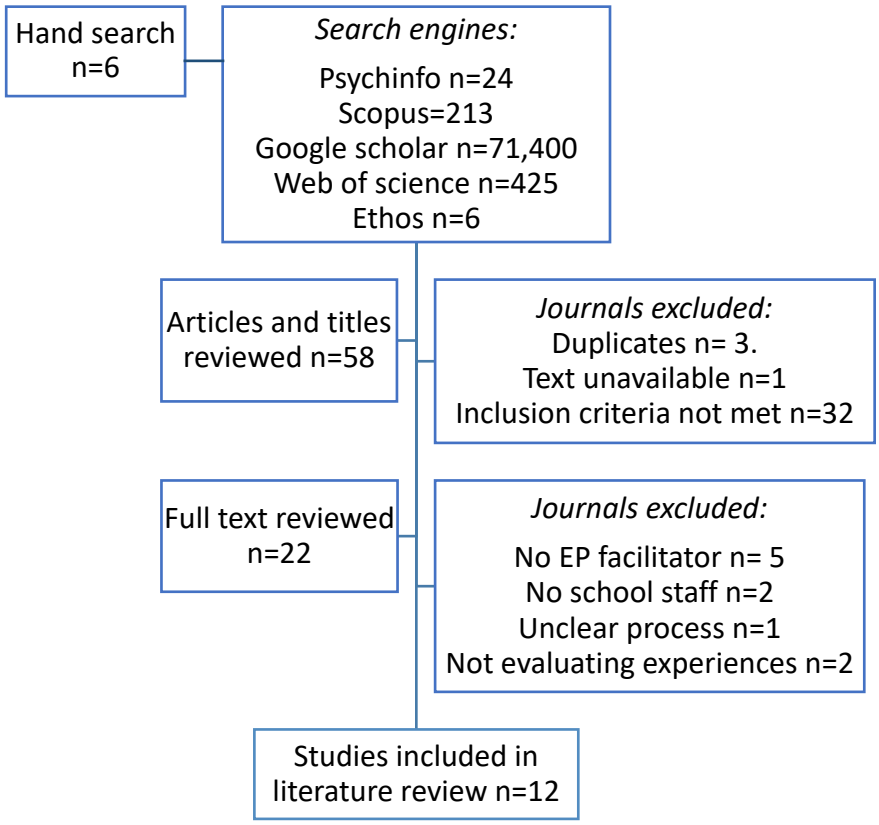

Figure 1. A flow diagram to illustrate the search outcomes of the systematic review.

2.23 Method of review

A qualitative review was implemented given the nature of the inclusion criteria and search question in seeking to gain insight into experiences. A method adopted by some researchers embarking on qualitative systematic reviews is 'qualitative meta synthesis', an approach that combines the outcomes of qualitative studies and derives themes from the collective literature. Newman, McKenny, Silva, Clare, Salmon and Jackson (2017) conducted a metasysthesis of consultation process research, including individual and selective group processing research, developing themes within the challenges and potential benefits. This review aims to synthesise the research holistically to gain a sense of the types of group problem-solving approaches available and an overview of participants' experiences. This approach was guided by a paper reviewing narrative synthesis in systematic reviews (Popay et al, 2006) and the review by Newman et al (2017).

The synthesis process initially involved extracting relevant data from studies that met the specified inclusion criteria, which included the problem solving approach,

participants, methodology and findings. The developed themes and quotations constructed within the included studies were laid out and viewed holistically. Once all the themes were collated an analysis of any similarities and differences were conducted. The researcher grouped the data and amalgamated themes as appropriate. An overarching theme was then given to encapsulate the grouped themes (see table 3).

A reflection on the quality of the methodology used within the studies will be provided followed by an overall summary, leading to the presentation of the rationale for the current study.

Table 2. Summary of studies included in systematic review.

Search engine	Study details	Methodology	Outcomes	Relevance
Web of science	Supporting new teachers through consultee centred group consultation (Babinski and Rogers 1998)	5 elementary school teachers, within their first two years of teaching. Fortnightly meetings for 1.5 hours. Teachers were rewarded for participation with 'education credits'. Caplan group consultation model: issue – define it – solution finding – actions. Transcribed group sessions. Post questionnaire and interviews.	Throughout process of consultation groups staff engaged in self-reflection, with some questioning the impact of their personality upon their teaching style. Common discussion points were working with other staff members, curriculum, class climate, self-evaluation, staff politics, student behaviour and family. Overall teachers said in interview that they valued the emotional and social support, problem solving and time for reflection on their teaching.	Delivered by psychologically trained professionals. Similar model of delivery as research. Explored experiences of participation and emotional aspects. Participation was voluntary however rewarded creating bias in self reporting and attendance.
	Solving problems through circles (Grahamslaw and Henson, 2015)	62 participants took park in 10 solution circles (SC)– (during supervision, meeting and SENCo meeting) 31 took part in Circle of Adults (CoA) then both groups issued a semi-structured questionnaire.	Thematic analysis of questionnaires given immediately following each intervention. SC – strategies generated, sharing, confidence, view of problem, team building, relationships, working together, resources and skills. Framework and structure and safe environment. CoA-commented on powerful process, impact on participants and group as a whole, gain more understanding of child and reframed views. Feelings of empowerment, new way of considering students, deeper understanding. CoA group commented on the need for an external facilitator.	Experience in group problem solving approaches, qualitative data and developing themes. CoA shares psychodynamic underpinning. Isolated incidence of group problem solving – in depth and shorter solution focused approach.
Psych-info	Consulting with groups of teachers. Nugent, Jones, McElroy, Peelo, Thornton and Tierney (2014).	Two-year programme of implementing group consultation in Ireland. 12 groups in first year and 10 in second year. Groups met 3 times a year. Questionnaires, consultation records and likert	Participants gave high likert scale answers to questions regarding the benefits of the group, skill building and action planning. In open ended questions participants said they highly valued the input from other teachers, sharing experiences and ideas and liked EP input and structure of process.	Mostly quantitative data, groups are mixed staff teams from a variety of schools. Similar process of consultation and asked participants regarding experiences.

		evaluations and end of year evaluations as data.		
	Impact of school consulting programme aimed at helping teachers. (Massé, Couture, Levesque, Bégin, 2013)	Teaching staff with behavioural difficulty referrals divided into three groups: individual consultation, group and control. Interviewed following each intervention. Caplan model of group consultation with behavioural psychology focus.	Group consultation participants reported valuing others experiences and advice. A minority from the group intervention remarked on the affective aspect. Outcomes changed attitudes, approaches, relationships with students and classroom climate, self-confidence, relying on others for help. Quantitative results showed more reflection and self-confidence from group consultation. 65% of individual consultation said they wanted to be in group consultation.	Interviewed to gain views – similar group consultation approach, focus on challenging behaviour, delivered by Eps. Canadian study.
Scopus	Introducing Farouk's problem-solving approach in Irish primary schools (Hayes and Stringer, 2016)	3 primary schools across 10 months. Mixed methods, however low return rate of quantitative data. Interviews of core group member from each school. Monthly sessions.	Groups stated that EP was needed to manage process and group dynamics. Still perception of EP as expert and giving advice. Teachers valued information sharing, deep reflection, strategies.	Same process consultation. Interviewed teachers and demonstrates themes. Highlights 'task' and 'maintenance' functions of facilitator.
	Promoting staff support in schools: solution circles (Brown and Henderson, 2012)	Solution circles implemented in school to discuss dyslexia referral. Asked for final reflection of words, questionnaire and SWOT analysis with participating teachers.	Formal yet supportive, sharing ideas, aware of teacher's difficulties, raise systemic issues and consider new strategies. Time pressures, fear of conflict and exposure.	Isolated problem solving, facilitated by TEPs.
Google scholar	Consultation groups: participant views (Bozic and Carter, 2002)	Four consultation groups from a collection of schools in a county shire. EP facilitated and a questionnaire was given following the last session and asked to be returned, 84% did. Used likert scales to give answers.	Most participants felt that the groups were a good use of their time. Most teachers felt it made them think more deeply about the way they worked with individual children (92%), to raise awareness of new strategies (80%), and to try something new as a result of being in the group (64%) and feel more confident working with SEN. Additional qualitative data revealed emotional support and less isolated.	Used Hanko approach to consultation groups. Asked for experiences and facilitated by EP. Limited qualitative data.

Grey liter-ature	Turner, (2014). Evaluating the outcomes of the 'Circles of Adults' intervention on adults supporting LAC.	Mixed method, quasi-experimental design compared CoA to PEP meetings. Used attribution inventory, teacher efficacy and Targeted Monitoring Evaluation (TME) measures.	No statistical difference in self efficacy or causal attribution. Participants in CoA perceived higher rate of success on the TME. Focus groups revealed that participants valued the CoA process, information sharing, different perspective, support from others, useful, emotional frustration at the constant change surrounding LAC.	TEP and EP facilitating process, clear structure. Focus of LAC student. Details of experiences are given.
	Evaluation of group consultation (Wood, 2016)	Group consultation in 5 primary schools. Mixed method, pre/post non-equivalent quasi-experiment design (control group) with focus group. Measuring staff wellbeing, confidence and attributions. Pupil measures of self as learner, belonging and school satisfaction.	Quantitative finding showed no statistical effect on wellbeing, however in focus groups teachers stated they felt better. During intervention time, there were changes in leadership and an Ofsted visit. Quantitative measures showed increase in confidence in consultation group. Teachers felt there had been positive impact for the student due to new strategies and more positive feelings about self and child. Pupils from the consultation group showed statistically sig increases in sense of belonging, self as a learner and school satisfaction.	Six sessions of Consultation over two terms with Farouk model used. Facilitated by TEP and EP. Detailed review of staff experiences through focus groups.
	Impact of video feedback upon group consultation (Hussain, 2016)	Impact of video-data within CoA via a mixed method, pre-post test experimental, cluster randomisation design where staff reviewed video-data or written-data. Attribution questionnaire and SDQ.	Video group donated more school based theories. Staff within the video were able to reflect on own practice. All participants valued the CoA process, video group slightly more. Both groups rated the group discussion as the most helpful element of CoA.	Focused on student displaying challenging behaviour. Clear process delivered by EP and TEP. Review of experiences, using content analysis.
	Experiences of CoA for teachers and LAC Dawson (2013)	Pre / post interviews followed CoA, with staff and Young Person (YP).	Shared themes of frustration for YP and staff prior to CoA. YP discussed their need for staff to be accepting, motivating, providing safety. They felt a lack of control. Post themes highlighted more self-reflection. Key adults shared loss of control, annoyance, reputation of students within school and ignorance of other staff. More reflection and awareness following CoA. One key adult stated that the impact was short lived as staff were not accountable for implementing actions.	Author recommends problem solving groups as a useful tool to support school staff. Focus of LAC, uses IPA, asks for experiences.

Table 3 Summary of presenting themes from the systematic review studies and overarching themes developed by the researcher.

Study/ evidence	**Themes:**						
	Working together	**Deeper reflection**	**New strategies and ideas**	**Structure of process**	**Impact on YP**	**Facilitator**	Other themes
Babinski and Rogers (1998)	Social and emotional support, give and receive assistance	Reflection and, constructing own professional identity	Problem solving				
Grahamslaw and Henson (2015)	All views and opinions are listened to and treated equally, working together, relationships	Altered view of situation, confidence	Resources and skills, strategies and solutions	Framework and structure, safe environment	Altered view of YP	Trained facilitator, content of process	
Nugent, Jones, McElroy, Peelo, Thornton and Tierney (2014).	Supportive colleagues, similar experiences	Increased confidence	Experience and insight of others	Value of process, liked structure of process		Psychologists input valuable	More time and more formal training element
Massé, Couture, Levesque, Bégin, (2013)	Affective support, collaboration	Better understanding, reflective practice, self-confidence	New or renewed strategies, proactive		Changed attitude toward YP, relationships with student/class		
Hayes and Stringer (2016)	Give support to colleagues	Time for discussion, deeper reflection	Information sharing, generate strategies	Timed element positive, structure		Management of process, offering advice – viewed as expert.	
Brown and Henderson (2012)	Talk and listen, aware of colleague's difficulties, increased teamwork	Identify patterns at a systemic level	Platform for sharing ideas and practical solutions	Supportive, yet informal structure			
Bozic and Carter (2002)	Feel less isolated	Think more deeply about child	New ideas and shared good practice			Necessary to run the sessions	

Turner (2014).		Holistic view of YP, highlighted gaps in knowledge, thought provoking		Clear stages, visual, includes organisational factors	Staff change view of young person, mixed indirect impact on YP		Time and gathering relevant people as barriers
Wood (2016)	Support of colleagues	Reframed thinking, positive outlook, confidence	New strategies implemented		Teacher perceived positive impact for YP- due to new approach		
Hussain (2016)	Group discussion – was considered the most useful aspect	Wider range of hypotheses development		Process helped to formulate strategies, gain overview of student		EP facilitation as being useful – graphic/visual record	
Dawson (2013)	Containment and shared thinking	Increased empowerment, optimism and confidence, reflection	Awareness and understanding		Improvement in practice for YP, developed relationships and awareness		

2.24 Research Settings

All the research was conducted in mainstream school settings, the majority within primary schools and some secondary. The research was conducted within the UK, Ireland, Canada and America.

2.25 Research design

A mixed method quasi-experimental design was used by Grahamslaw and Henson (2015) comparing Circle of Adults (CoA) to Solution Circles (SC), and Turner (2014) comparing CoA to Person Centred Review meeting. Wood (2016) and Massé et al (2013) included a control group within their design. Dawson (2013) used a single group case study. All other studies involved multiple case studies and collated the findings.

Most of the research contained a quantitative measure of evaluation in the form of a questionnaire. The grey literature (Hussain, 2016; Wood, 2016 and Turner, 2014) used measures to assess specific elements of attribution, wellbeing, self-efficacy and confidence. Dawson (2013) and Massé et al (2013) collected qualitative data through interviews with participants. Wood (2016) and Dawson (2013) collected data from students directly with the intention to measure the indirect impact of staff problem solving groups.

2.26 Types of intervention

Circle of Adults was implemented by 4 of the studies (Hussain, 2016; Turner, 2014; Dawson, 2013 and Grahamslaw and Henson, 2015) and Solution Circles by 2 (Grahamslaw and Henson, 2015; Brown and Henderson, 2012). Process consultation was implemented within the other studies using the Caplan (1970) model (Babinski and Rogers, 1998; Masse et al 2013), Hanko model (Nugent et al 2014; Bozic and Carter, 2002) and Farouk's model (Hayes and Stringer, 2016; Wood, 2016).

2.27 Reported outcomes

Working together

All studies reported a theme related to group cohesion, support and peer collaboration. Babinski and Rogers (1998) found emotional and social support to be the most important factor for participants in the group. Teachers particularly valued

sharing experiences with others that can relate to their feelings. One teacher stated, “it’s support that could not come from anywhere else except people in the same boat” (pg. 301). Participants valued the insight from different experiences within the group, felt supported and included by working as a team (Grahamslaw and Henson, 2015; Nugent et al, 2014; Masse et al, 2013). Since participation, teachers were thought to work more collaboratively and be open to share difficulties. Staff reported a sense of increased collaboration following the group consultation sessions (Masse et al, 2013; Hayes and Stringer, 2016). Previously teachers had felt isolated and since the groups recognise that other teachers have similar experiences (Bozic and Carter, 2002). Group discussion was considered the most helpful element of CoA (Hussain, 2016) and group consultation: “the best moments were the interactions with colleagues” (Masse et al, 2013, pg. 339).

Deeper reflection

Babinski and Rogers (1998) stated that teachers were able to reflect upon their practice, through having the opportunity to say their issues aloud: “whenever you have to verbalise something, it puts a new perspective on it” (pg. 302). Teachers valued that the group listened, asked thoughtful questions and made sensitive suggestions. The process enabled them to reflect on themselves as teachers and form a stronger sense of identity. Participants within SC felt it gave them a new perspective and more positive outlook (Grahamslaw and Henson, 2015).

CoA group felt it provided more insight and deeper understanding of students’ needs which changed their attribution of behaviour functions (Grahamslaw and Henson, 2015). Within Massé et al (2013), participants within the group consultation valued the opportunity to stop and reflect on their practice. Groups enabled them to change their attitudes and approaches in working with children. Dawson (2013) reported that participants gained confidence, felt more empowered and reflected holistically about the LAC. Some studies highlighted the influence of the group problem solving upon the wider system. Participants in SC recognised recurring issues at a systemic level (Brown and Henderson, 2012) and within Turner

(2014) participants valued the opportunity to reflect on systemic issues within a CoA.

New strategies and ideas

Participants that took part in SC valued the strategies and suggestions from other group members (Grahamslaw and Henson, 2015). Participants in Nugent et al (2014) valued sharing ideas as the most useful aspect of group consultation. Sharing ideas was also noted in Dawson (2013).

Structure of the process

Having a structure within the process was valued by participants as safeguarding against a session of 'complaining' and there was an expectation of follow through with actions as they would be asked within the next session (Bakinski and Rogers, 1998). Qualities within the process structure, timing, pace, process were mentioned by participants (Grahamslaw and Henson, 2015; Nugent et al, 2014).

Impact on focus young person

Some studies referenced the indirect impact upon the students, "I would say that the changes come from me, more than from the youngsters" (Masse et al, 2013, pg. 336) and some teachers noticed an improved relationship with focus YP and class in general (Masse et al, 2013). Teachers felt there had been positive impact for the student due to new strategies and more positive feelings about self and child. When a direct assessment of the pupil was undertaken, the consultation group appeared to result in an increased sense of belonging, self as a learner and school satisfaction (Wood, 2016). Following a CoA, three teachers made reference to the impact on the student, one stating, "it hasn't changed very much so far" and another that a lesson was successful and the third said, "they are making extra effort with the pupil" (Turner, 2014, pg.127-129). A teacher in Dawson's (2013) study stated that following CoA a new behaviour plan and reward system had been implemented, which had resulted in reduced incidents of challenging behaviour.

External facilitator

Although the facilitator was not mentioned directly, Grahamslaw and Henson (2015) inferred that the facilitator enabled participants within SC group to feel safe, not judged and allowed the opportunity for everyone to speak. 'Expert' facilitation was mentioned by CoA group, valuing the graphics and management of process. The contribution of the facilitator was mentioned in Nugent et al (2014), "it's good to have expert advice from psychologists" (pg. 264) and the 'expert role' was also highlighted in Hayes and Stringer (2016). The most highly rated sessions within Hayes and Stringer's (2016) study were sessions that were kept to time, where everyone contributed and the atmosphere felt relaxed. Teachers did not feel confident in running groups without the support of EP (Bozic and Carter, 2002).

2.28 Limitations within methodology

As Bennett & Monsen (2011) state, "all of the existing research could be significantly improved by the inclusion of validated pre- and post-intervention measures, with some statistical analysis of the data presented and the use of control groups" (p.32). This review details studies that have acknowledged this gap by including control groups and pre-post data. When researchers did attempt to link the intervention to conclusions by using data triangulation, there was a low return rate of quantitative measures (Hayes and Stringer, 2016). The majority of the research uses a small sample size, utilising a single group (Dawson, 2013) or a small selection of schools within one geographical area (Hayes and Stringer, 2016). Within all of the research, there is a lack of follow up in determining whether the positive effects of the intervention were apparent following the conclusion of the program. A general criticism of consultation research is the indirect nature of the approach which creates a difficulty in determining a link between the intervention and dependant variables (Wood, 2016), leading some researchers to adopt a more exploratory approach (Dawson, 2013). This review was primarily concerned with the details of participant experiences and will now focus on the quality of the qualitative data.

Within the studies included, all of the researchers were involved in the facilitation of the problem-solving groups, resulting in a potential bias in the self-reporting of participants. Few researchers commented on the individual skills of the facilitator,

their training and experience of implementing consultation. The group dynamics and relationships between staff members were not considered within the majority of studies, despite the acknowledgment of this being an influential factor. As suggested previously, facilitator characteristics is identified as an important aspect of consultation, as is group dynamics and school culture. Only the grey literature discussed the epistemological position of the researcher and how this shaped the research. Some studies gave limited details regarding the themes that were coded and whether credibility checks were conducted (Wood, 2016; Bozic and Carter, 2002).

2.29 Review summary

The recurring themes within all studies included experiences of group cohesion and peer collaboration. The introduction of a group problem-solving approach appeared to provide a sense of belonging and reduced feelings of isolation. School staff seemed to value insight from each other's experiences and expertise, perhaps due to the shared level of empathy and understanding for their role. Another reflection could be the realisation that there are other people experiencing similar things to them. The findings of this review suggest that the introduction of a group problem solving session can allow challenging experiences and feelings to be shared and normalised. The studies concluded that group problem solving enabled staff to gain a new perspective on a situation, through deeper reflection and through obtaining new ideas.

The role of the external consultant was mentioned in some studies explicitly, with the role being inferred in others. Participants valued the structure of the approaches, particularly with SC and CoA, where this is more apparent than process consultation (Grahamslaw and Henson, 2015; Turner, 2014). A possible advantage of process consultation is that there is more time for reflection and the process can be tailored to the group's needs. Within Masse et al's (2013) study, 65% of participants that were placed in the individual consultation group stated they would have preferred the group consultation to exchange ideas with other teachers with a range of experience to discuss a variety of behaviour cases and interventions. Aspects of the consultation that were valued, such as time for reflection, group

cohesion, structure and timing, are likely to have been influenced by the facilitator. Group harmonising and careful questioning are arguably skills utilised by psychologists (Egan, 2002; Schein, 1999), which could be the reason staff may not feel confident in running the sessions independently (Bozic and Carter, 2002).
The studies outline the importance of negotiating the group problem solving with the school staff and leadership. Even within isolated sessions (CoA and SC), the planning and contracting was considered essential for staff engagement and overall success (Brown and Henderson, 2015; Turner, 2014). Engagement in group problem solving involves investment from staff in terms of their time, commitment and engagement in the session. This needs to be prioritised by management in permitting time being spent on the problem-solving process.

All of the research papers within the review advocated that group problem solving should be conducted within schools. It was suggested that group consultation sessions may be the most influential process model, due to the experience of sharing and reflecting together. This was found to be the most helpful aspect of the CoA process within two studies: (Dawson, 2013 and Hussain, 2016); and the dominant theme in all studies. Group problem solving over time may enable further reflection and changes in practice. Using the same data set as Babinski and Rogers (1998), further analysis focused on the impact of group consultation upon teacher's professional development (Knotek, Babinski and Rogers, 2002). The study found that over time the teachers' constructs of themselves and their students changed to become more positive. The teachers became more empathetic towards their students and spoke with a stronger sense of efficacy and power.

2.30 Limitations of systematic review

The search was conducted by one author, supported by a supervisor, and therefore subject to bias in the searching, selection and interpretation of studies. Reliability checks were not conducted in the selection of themes derived from the studies, which could potentially reduce the reliability of the conclusions made. The researcher conducted this type of review for the first time with a developing knowledge base of qualitative research.

2.31 Rationale for research question

Despite government initiatives, the outcomes for LAC remain poor and this group are vulnerable within society. At a time of increased pressure upon services this group can come up against a number of barriers in accessing support (Bonfield, et al 2010). Long referral processes and waiting list systems are peculiarly ill-suited to the needs of LAC who usually need urgent help if they are to avoid school exclusion or placement breakdown (Vostanis, 2005). Access to mental health services and clinical psychologists is often unavailable due to 'unstable' placements, meaning the mental health needs of LAC can be left untreated by trained professionals (ibid). The consequence of all these factors can be challenging and undesirable school behaviour, making this group particularly vulnerable within the school system. Studies investigating the experiences of teachers supporting LAC have suggested a need to manage feelings of worry, sadness, inadequacy and maintaining professional boundaries (Edwards, 2016; Underdown, 2016). In relation to attachment theory, it has been suggested that children form attachments to teachers as a 'secondary attachment figure', making this relationship particularly vital. Consequently "…it is important that educational professionals are equipped with the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding to help looked-after children and young people get the most out of their time in education…" (NICE, 2010, p. 56). For LAC this can be a protective factor in overcoming adverse life experiences (Martin and Jackson, 2002). Attachment theory training is growing across schools, however, as Ubha and Cahill (2014) stated, "despite the wide implications of attachment theory there remains a lack of research exploring interventions which encapsulate the principles of an attachment- based framework in the school context" (p. 272).

Given the barriers in accessing mental health services, schools are well placed to intervene at this level, provided that adequate training and support is given (Jackson and McParlin, 2006). In determining the type of support needed, researchers have suggested a reference group providing a reflective space for teachers to better understand how pupil behaviour impacts on their own emotions (Hargreaves, 2000; Miller, 2003). Group problem solving has been suggested as

providing an opportunity for reflection, accessing peer support, new strategies and perspectives enabling development in practise. It is implied that the benefits experienced by staff engaged in group problem solving will transfer to their work and interactions with young people (Dawson, 2013; Wood, 2016). This may be particularly beneficial to staff working with a child presenting with challenging behaviour who is looked after as primary school teachers are thought to experience a higher degree of emotional labour (Hargreaves, 2000). When managing students' challenging behaviour, staff may experience emotional labour in maintaining a presentation of calm in order to de-escalate difficult situations. This research will focus on school staff experiences of working with a child presenting with challenging behaviour in order to gain further insight into the emotional aspect of their role.

2.32 Unique contribution

It is recommended that schools provide nurture, support and training to staff working with LAC students (Nash, Schlösser and Scar, 2016). One study has suggested that teachers supporting LAC in KS2 experienced emotional labour within their role, recommending support groups as a method to diminish the negative impact of this (Edwards, 2016). Consultation has been recognised as a supportive tool in enabling teaching staff to reflect upon their practice, the emotional impact of their role and develop additional behaviour strategies. This research will gain a detailed account of staff experiences of Farouk's process consultation model centred around a child presenting with challenging behaviour in KS1. Through adopting an exploratory methodology, the current research can provide weighted detail to the role of group dynamics, school culture and the role of the facilitator, as this was a recognised limitation of literature within the systematic review. This study hopes to further extend the research literature as to the author's knowledge there is no published research addressing the experiences of group process consultation for staff that work with a child presenting with challenging behaviour who is looked after.

2.33 Research questions

This research focused on staff that support a child presenting with challenging behaviour who is looked after and in Key Stage 1, and their experiences of being involved in group consultation. It is anticipated that the research will address the following questions:

1. How do staff experience working with a child presenting with challenging behaviour in KS1?
2. How do staff experience group process consultation?

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), addressing the theoretical underpinnings and suitability to the current research. The epistemological underpinnings are outlined and detailed, noting the consideration of alternative research methods before arriving at the current research design. The chapter concludes with details of the data analysis process, the consideration of ethics and an assessment of the quality of the research.

3.1.1 Restating the research questions

The research aims to explore the following questions:

1. How do staff experience working with a child presenting with challenging behaviour in KS1?
2. How do staff experience group process consultation?

3.2 Methodological orientation

3.2.1 Overview

This research aims to capture the experiences of staff working with a child presenting with challenging behaviour in KS1 alongside engagement in group process consultation conducted by the researcher. In total nine weekly sessions of group process consultation were implemented across a summer term. Participants were then interviewed to gain an understanding of their experiences. The interviews were transcribed and analysed by the researcher using IPA. A debrief session was arranged for the following academic year. The following sections will describe the research design in more detail, initially justifying the use of a qualitative approach in addressing the research topic.

3.2.2 Quantitative and qualitative research

Over the past 20 years there has been increasing scepticism over traditional psychology's commitment to positivist methodology (MacKay, Boyle and Cole, 2016). The positivist paradigm applies the belief that there is a linear relationship between a phenomenon in the world and how it is understood, therefore favouring

research outcomes that are objective (Willig, 2013). Alternatively, the interpretivist paradigm promotes the belief that a phenomenon is socially constructed and each individual will view the world according to their own experiences and constructs. Consequently, research in this paradigm presents a detailed account of individual views and experience. Applied psychologists have been cautioned in prescribing solely to one paradigm and encouraged to be guided by the most appropriate method to answer the given research questions (Willig, 2013). Qualitative methodology has been selected in this case to explore an in-depth account of participant experiences.

3.2.3 Ontology

Ontology refers to 'what is there to know?' and 'what is the nature of reality?'. These questions concern whether the phenomenon exists independently of subjective interpretation. The realist ontology is the belief that there is one objective truth, which is measurable and quantifiable. Relativist ontology states individual's experiences are shaped by a number of factors including their own belief system, thoughts, expectations and judgements (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). In the context of the current research, the ontological position adopts a relativist stance as participants' experiences of group consultation are dependent on their individual constructs and no objective reality can be obtained. The goal of the researcher is to gain an understanding of the multiple social constructions of meaning that can be attributed to an experience (Mertens, 2010).

3.2.4 Epistemology

A researcher's epistemological position is fundamental in addressing the decision-making process involved in research methodology and data collection. When considering an epistemological stance, the researcher contemplates 'what is the nature of knowledge?' and 'how is knowledge produced?' (Willig, 2013). The three different epistemological positions could be thought of as placed on a continuum ranging from belief in concrete measurable reality to reality being socially constructed (see Figure 2 for summary). A realist position states that information about an objective existence outside of human perception can be gained. A relativist position states that there is no such thing as reality, therefore data collection should explore the different perspectives of the same experience within a

range of contexts (Willig, 2007). Social constructivism suggests that meaning does not exist in its own right and is developed through individual experiences, context and ideas. Through adopting a constructivist epistemological position, a researcher does not seek an objective, singular, generalizable truth. It suggests that there can be multiple truths that are relative to interpretation.

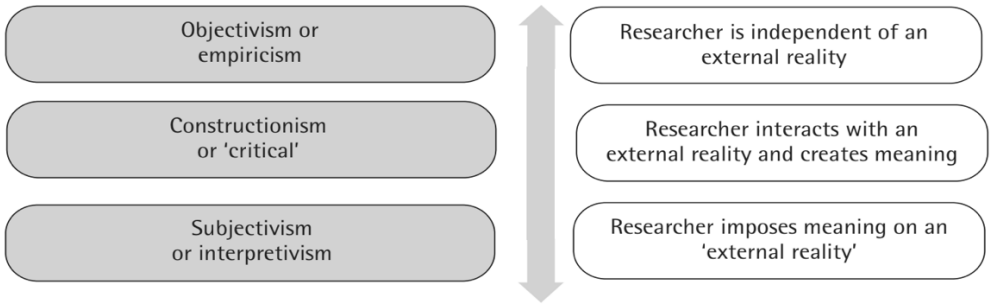

Figure 2. Figure illustrating epistemological views and the associated role of the researcher (Kennedy and Monsen, 2016, pg. 16).

A distinction between quantitative and qualitative research is not explicit and many researchers adopt a pragmatist perspective which aligns epistemology with the research question in hand. Within IPA there have been tensions surrounding the varying epistemological stances taken by researchers, which could be viewed as a strength for the method (Smith, 2009). It could be claimed that IPA falls on the continuum between critical realism and contextual constructivism. From a critical realist perspective, the participants reflect their experiences according to their reality, recognising that this will be individual. The contextual constructivist perspective adds that the reality of the participants account relies upon the perceptions of the listener (Oxley, 2016).

The current research aligns with a phenomenological epistemological position with the acknowledgement that experience is interpreted and constructed by individuals, but that experience remains true for the individual at the centre of it (Willig, 2007). Epistemologically, IPA can be seen as an early, personalised variant of social constructionism as it is concerned with the individual's own experiences and the meaning for them. IPA assumes an understanding of the world requires an understanding of experience.

3.3 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

IPA is primarily interested in 'what it is like' to experience and manage certain situations. There is no attempt to explain the development of the situation or determine a causal relationship. The purpose is to describe and possibly relate theory to certain experiences. IPA is committed to understanding the 'first person perspective' from the third person position (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). Any human experience can be subjected to phenomenological analysis as the participant's account becomes the phenomenon with which the researcher engages. IPA analysis takes account of the researcher's own view of the world as well as the nature of the interaction between researcher and participant. As a result, the phenomenological analysis produced by the researcher is always an interpretation of the participant's experience with a critical take on questions such as 'what is this person trying to achieve here? Do I have a sense of something going on here that the author himself is not aware of?'. Arguably, this creates a richer and comprehensive analysis of the meaning behind the data (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2014). The aim of IPA is to include an element of 'giving voice' and 'making sense' of the meaning of the experiences of *that voice,* potentially with psychological insight and theory (Larkin, Watts and Clifton, 2006). Phenomenological studies describe the common meaning for individual participants of a shared experience, in this case working with a child presenting with challenging behaviour in KS1 and process consultation groups.

3.3.1 Phenomenology

Phenomenology is interested in eliciting both that which appears and the manner in which it appears. 'It studies the subjects' perspectives of their world; attempts to describe in detail the content and structure of the subjects' consciousness, to grasp the qualitative diversity of their experiences and to explicate their essential meanings' (Kvale, 1996b, pg 53). Phenomenologists are interested in what the experience of being human is like. Arguably the most influential phenomenological philosopher is Edmund Husserl (1983) due to his development of the notion 'lifeworld', labelled as the experience of the world and social experiences. Husserl's approach to knowledge, his epistemology, involves interpreting a phenomenon as experienced by a person in consciousness as an event or process (Creely, 2018). For

Husserl a detailed and thorough account of the experience of the phenomenon should be a precursor to any further scientific account (Smith, Larkin and Flowers, 2009). Husserl stated that the researcher must put aside theories, hypotheses and possible explanations about the topic under investigation to understand the experiences described fully. For Husserl (2001), the eager tendency to categorise new phenomenon into existing knowledge distracts us from the 'thing itself'. He encouraged 'bracketing' pre-existing conceptions about a phenomenon in order to focus on the conscious experience of that phenomenon. Husserl's pursuit of a pure examination of experience is potentially too abstract for use in educational research, leading IPA to draw upon Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Sartre (Smith et al, 2009). Heidegger (1962) argued that meaning-making and interpretation is at the core of human experience. It is impossible to detach assumptions and presuppositions from the understanding of an experience. A researcher cannot separate their own perceptions and experiences, therefore can only interpret the experience. Merleau-Ponty (1962) adds the importance of the physical body in relation to the experience of the world suggesting that whilst it cannot be fully captured it cannot be overlooked. Through the work of philosophers, the understanding of lived experience unravels a complex process of perspectives, preconceptions, senses and meaning-making. The interpretation of these experiences is influenced by another significant theoretical underpinning in IPA – hermeneutics.

3.3.2 Hermeneutics

Theory of hermeneutics originates as a foundation for the interpretation of biblical texts and subsequent historical documents. It is concerned with the purpose and method of interpretation. Schleiermacher (1998) suggested that text can be interpreted through the meaning and intentionality of the author, taken within the context of the text. This idea translates as an attempt to understand the writer as well as the text through our own world view and preconceptions. Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) drew upon hermeneutics to understand the meaning of experience for participants and introduced the double hermeneutic in acknowledging the researcher's position in making sense of the participants' sense making of their experience.

In relation to this research context, the experiences of participants working with a LAC and engaging in group process consultation will follow this cycle; viewing the parts of the experience in the context of the whole experience, to see the whole experience in the context of the parts. The double hermeneutic is demonstrated in the researcher making sense of the participants' experiences, which is particularly relevant to this research as the researcher was directly involved in the phenomenon in question.

3.3.3 Idiography

Idiography refers to the in-depth analysis of a single case, taking that case as a particular focus before making generalisations or exploring another case. This case by case analysis is unique even in qualitative methodologies but is integral to IPA. Where multiple cases and perspectives are gained, each are explored individually before moving onto the next account (Rostill-Brookes et al, 2011). Each account is conceptualised through the person in context and the meaning-making of that particular person. The commitment to idiography is demonstrated through a detailed account of individual experiences before illustrating the convergence and divergence across the group. The findings are accepted as specific to the participants and dependant on their particular context. While the research does not strive towards generalisability, it is hoped that a theoretical link can be made to further understand group process consultation and working with LAC.

3.3.4 Limitations of IPA

IPA aims to gain a detailed account of experience through the use and analysis of language. It therefore relies upon participants being articulate and fluent in describing their experience, with the premise that they can describe the complex thoughts and feelings that accompany it. This is recognised as a great challenge, particularly when participants are not accustomed to communicating in this way. In this study it is hoped that discussing their experiences of working with the focus student within the group process consultation sessions may prepare them to some extent for the detailed description of experience needed for the approach.
An additional consideration is the role that is assigned to language, raising questions such as whether the language has a descriptive or constructive function.

Willig (2013) argues that participants' use of language provides an analysis of how they talk about, rather than understand their experiences. Language never simply gives expression to experience, it adds meanings which reside in the words themselves and therefore makes direct access to someone else's experience impossible. The researcher acknowledges that the interpretation given reflects the participants' offered perceptions, and not a direct analysis of their experience.

IPA describes and documents the lived experience of participants but does not attempt to explain it or determine how the phenomena came to be. Willig (2013) argues that this places increased onus on the researcher to demonstrate competence in interpreting the data. There is increasing criticism of researchers demonstrating that IPA is 'a misunderstood and misapplied methodology' (Hefferon and Gil-Rodriguez, 2011 p.759). In an attempt to address this assertion, the researcher made use of IPA guidelines during data analysis and took steps to evaluate the quality.

A final note of criticism acknowledges that this research offers an interpretation of lived experience from a small-scale sample, without claim of wider generalisation. The research is representative of a perspective as opposed to a population. A justification for this as stated by Smith et al (2009 pg.4) is that the research could have 'theoretical generalisability, where the reader of the report is able to assess the evidence in relation to their existing professional and experiential knowledge'.

3.4 Other approaches considered

IPA was chosen as being the most suited methodology to the proposed research questions. Along the research journey, a number of alternative methods were considered. Examples are presented and discussed in more detail below.

Table 4. Methodology approaches considered in developing the current study.

Possible approaches to methodology	Epistemology	Reasons for rejection

Use of control group to address whether changes in emotional labour are evident as a result of group process consultation (Turner, 2014).	Positivist	Time restraints in enabling a waiting list group to complete intervention. Does not account for group dynamics and systemic factors.
A single case experimental design could measure the behavioural changes in the target student before, during and following the group process consultation intervention (Cooke, 2014).	Positivist	This method would rely upon a clear definition of the target behaviour and a reliable repeated measure. May be difficult to identify specific behaviour that is likely to be affected indirectly by group consultation, therefore a more exploratory method may be appropriate.
Conduct interviews with the target students to gain their views on their experiences of school and their relationships with teachers (Dawson, 2013).	Social constructivist	The information gained in the interview may be difficult to attribute to changes in teacher behaviour. There may be ethical considerations with interviewing the student population.
IPA method to evaluate the impact of group process consultation, using focus group interviews before, during and after intervention (Dawson, 2013).	Potentially conflicting	IPA may be more suited to an exploratory study that explores the meaning behind the experience of group consultation, rather than impact.

3.4.1 Rejection of the positivist paradigm

Previous research conducted on group process consultation has typically involved a quantitative element through the analysis of a pre-post measure. With many studies adopting a mixed methods approach (Hayes and Stringer, 2016; Davison and Duffy, 2017) some have relied heavily upon the qualitative data as a result of low questionnaire return rates. Additionally, it has been questioned whether a socially constructed phenomenon can be narrowed to a single measure. It could be argued that the complexity involved in group consultation as a result of group dynamics, systemic context and flexible processes warrants a methodology that permits that complexity. Consequently, the researcher rejected the positivist paradigm and sought to capture the detailed experiences of process consultation and working with LAC.

3.4.2 Consideration of qualitative methods

A range of qualitative methods are available to address the research questions. Grounded theory was explored as a possibility. In this approach the aim is to develop inductive theories through the data analysis to explain the social processes within the phenomenon (Sutcliffe, 2016). The researcher was concerned with the lived experiences of the participants and consequently rejected this method. Thematic analysis has been utilised in previous consultation research typically alongside quantitative measures. Thematic analysis is similar to IPA in terms of the development of themes, however the approach has been criticised for lacking depth as a singular approach. Warwick, Joseph, Cordle and Ashworth (2004) analysed interviews with women with chronic pelvic pain using both thematic analysis and IPA and argued that the latter proved 'the more informative in terms of clinical implications' and was therefore expanded upon within the report (pg. 132). Thematic analysis was rejected as an in-depth analysis of the participants' experiences was sought from the researcher.

3.5 Rationale for choosing IPA

'IPA was deemed an appropriate method of analysis as the authors consider it 'particularly suitable where one is interested in complexity or process or where an issue is personal' (Kay and Kingston, 2002, pg.171)

IPA was adopted as the methodology for this research as it permitted the in-depth exploration of staff experiences working with a child presenting with challenging behaviour in KS1 and of group process consultation. As discussed, alternative methods may lack the depth needed to capture the complexity of the participants' experiences. The approach enables the systemic context within the account to be considered, meaning that the phenomena of working with a LAC and group consultation can be explored holistically within the specific context of the school system. Though typically used in health research, IPA has a developing foundation in education studies (Smith, 2011). IPA has been used previously to highlight the experiences of teachers. In Farouk's (2014) study he explored teachers' experiences of transitioning to a pupil referral unit, describing IPA as particularly suitable to capture significant events. Rawlings and Cowell (2015) chose IPA to explore the experiences of EPs engaged in group supervision as it permitted a detailed account of the lived experience. The current research is particularly interested in the unique experiences of the staff group, within their individual roles and constructed accounts of how they experience working with the focus student and discussing this in group process consultation.

Using IPA provides an opportunity for the researcher to be explicit in reflecting on their own participation in the groups as a facilitator. The active interpretative role of the researcher enables reflection on their experience without it overwhelming the account of the participants' experiences. Potentially the facilitator role of the researcher could be beneficial in developing a sound construction of cultural and contextual awareness of the phenomenon in question. This may mean that information shared in the interview is familiar to the researcher's existing knowledge in being part of the experience themselves. IPA permits the acknowledgement of the researcher's position whilst supporting the 'bracketing' of this to develop an account of the participants' experience.

In terms of the analysis process, the approach offers a comprehensive guide that is reassuring and not too restrictive. The cyclical and interactive process enables a deep immersion in the data, which was necessary to separate the participants' experiences from the researcher's.

3.6 Design

3.6.1 Sample

3.6.1.1 Context of sample population

This research took place in a large city within the East Midlands. The city is one of the most deprived local authorities within the country as measured by the most recent Index of Deprivation (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2015). The population of the city is 65.4% White British, and 34.7% Black and Minority Ethnicity.

The school population has a much higher than average intake of students with a minority ethnic background (90%), eligible for free school meals and listed on the special educational needs register. The school is a larger than average sized primary school located in an inner-city area of low socio-economic status.

3.6.1.2 Recruitment of participants

At the time of completing the study the researcher was a Trainee Educational Psychologist working with a team of EPs within a local authority service. The EPs supported the recruitment of the sample through approaching schools they worked with by sharing the purpose of the research and inclusion criteria with school SENCo's (see Appendix 8.3). The inclusion criteria required schools to provide a group of at least four school staff that work with a LAC in KS1, as well as a willingness to commit to group process consultation sessions for nine weeks. For the purposes of the research, the focus student was identified as looked after, being placed within their current foster placement for at least one year, and as having social, emotional and mental health needs. To further aid recruitment the researcher presented the research design and purpose to a Designated Teachers Conference organised through the virtual school team (see Appendix 8.25). Following this, two schools approached the researcher to express their interest in participating. One school was rejected as the focus student was not in KS1 therefore, they did not meet inclusion criteria.

The Headteacher and SENCo of the participating school chose the sample of staff who work with the looked after child to participate in the study. Staff were required

to support a looked after child on a regular basis and be active in managing the student's behaviour. Voluntary participation from school and group consultation members was highlighted as being essential, as recommended by Hanko (1999) and Farouk (2004). The established participants were met individually by the researcher to ensure that they were fully informed regarding their involvement in the study and to reiterate that participation was voluntary (see Appendix 8.4).

3.6.1.3 Selection of participants

Participants were selected purposefully in relation to their experiences working with a LAC in KS1 and availability to engage in process consultation sessions. The group were homogenous in that they worked with the same pupil and engaged in the same intervention, therefore they could share and offer insight into a particular experience (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). The participants were the school SENCo, class teacher, class teaching assistant and a lunchtime teaching assistant. Details of participant profiles and their relationship to the focus student are given in the results section (see Section 4).

3.6.1.4 Focus student

Tom[2] is a looked after child living with long term foster carers. Tom was taken into care at 3 years old as a result of an emergency protection order. At the time of this research Tom lived with long term foster carers under a placement order. The local authority held parental responsibility and the designated social worker gave consent for the research to be conducted.

At the time of the research, Tom was 7 years and 5 months old, he has mixed ethnicity of black African and white British. Tom was enrolled in a mainstream KS1 class. Tom's primary area of need is considered to be social, emotional and mental health difficulties. At the time of this research he presented with challenging behaviour described by staff as physical and verbal aggression towards staff and peers, emotional dysregulation and difficulties building and maintaining relationships.

[2] A pseudonym is used to protect identity.

3.7 Group process consultation

3.7.1.1 Rationale for choosing Farouk's model

A review of existing group process consultation models was conducted prior to choosing Farouk's model. Consideration was given to Hanko's (1999) model of group consultation due to its application to working with staff managing challenging behaviour. A feature of Hanko's model encourages staff to reflect on the emotional element of their role, which feels pertinent to this study. The model adheres to psychodynamic theory in its approach making it applicable to supporting staff working with LAC. A recognised area of development for the model is to take further account of group dynamics and the impact of the wider system (Hayes and Stringer, 2017).

Schein (1988) advocates the use of organisational psychology in recognising the impact of group dynamics and school culture. Schein provides detailed analysis of behaviour that can be observed during group problem solving situations with some implications for the process consultant. The model detailed by Schein is potentially less accessible and prescriptive than Hanko, making an amalgamation of the two desirable for a developing practitioner.

Farouk's (2004) model of consultation places the notion of emotional and professional support at the centre of his approach, whilst maintaining an appreciation of school culture and group behaviour. Farouk provides detailed and clear stages for the consultation model which are accessible for practitioners and school staff. Though detailed, there is flexibility within the stages and a dynamic approach is suggested. Farouk's model was designed primarily for a group of staff from various school settings, however this research is utilising the approach within one school. The approach will be applied similarly, in that the initial problem presentation provides the opportunity for staff to share an event from their own perspective and how they perceived it. It is hoped that through sharing the same 'problem situation', participants will interpret it based on their own constructs and assumptions. Similarly, the shared reflection of each staff members is likely to support 'solution generating' in a similar way. Within this research the staff team all

share the same focus student, therefore problem presentation phase was often shared if more than one staff member was present or involved. A second research-based advantage is that the approach allows for fidelity checks to be conducted. Farouk's model aims to provide a safe, containing place for staff to discuss uncomfortable and emotionally charged problem situations. The aim of the group process consultation was to allow staff to reflect upon their feelings, clarify their thoughts and share their experiences of working with LAC. Participants had the opportunity to collaboratively problem-solve and develop helpful strategies, with the recognition that the process of sharing their experience may be a sufficient outcome in itself (Hanko, 1999).

3.7.1.2 Farouk's model of group consultation

Group process consultation sessions will follow the model outlined by Farouk (2004) as it incorporates the structures used by Hanko's (1999) approach and the consideration of the group interactions in Schien's (1988) approach. Farouk's (2004) group process consultation model consists of four phases: description and clarification, reflection, personal theory generating and strategy generating. These stages are cyclical and can often overlap. In each phase the group members have different roles and functions. The expectation is that over time the group members will become able to follow the consultation process more independently, leading to a reduction in modelling and the role of the consultant progressing towards that of a facilitator. The table below provides a description of the phases, the application in this research and the group members' roles.

Table 5. Description of the phases, application and roles involved in Farouk's (2004) process consultation.

Phase of consultation	Description	Role of group	Purpose
Description and Clarification phase	One staff member at a time presents a concern or reflection and is given the opportunity to speak freely.	The group listen and engage in active listening.	This phase is particularly important to this research as it allows the participant to express their emotions and reflect on their practice.
Reflection phase	Group members ask questions to gather more	The presenting staff member	Allows presenting participant to further

	information and encourage further reflection. Can ask solution focused questions, although discouraged from giving advice at this stage.	answers the group questions.	reflect on concern. Enables the group to reflect further and reframe the concern.
Personal theory development	The group as a whole develop hypotheses in relation to the presented issue.	Group to develop hypotheses sensitively and openly.	Opportunity to share experiences and explore beliefs, feelings and assumptions about the concern.
Strategy generating	Group members can brainstorm possible 'solutions' or actions from the presented concern, if necessary.	Presenting member can take ownership of actions if they wish or group can create joint actions.	The group may feel that having opportunity to express and reflect upon their emotions has been an adequate outcome. The group may want to explore solutions to the presented issue which can be done in this phase.

3.7.1.3 Facilitators role

The stages and process of the consultation model were shared with participants in detail before the initial consultation session and in each subsequent session. The participants were given a copy of the consultation stages and space to write reflections (see Appendix 8.7). The role of the researcher was twofold: facilitating the process and ensuring fidelity; managing and promoting the group dynamics. Schein (1988) labels these as 'task and maintenance functions'; task functions being closely linked to the consultation skills expected within the EP role, namely information seeking and giving, clarifying, elaborating, summarising and consensus testing (Schein, 1988). The maintenance functions are necessary to ensure a supportive working relationship is established within the group. Schein describes the facilitator role in overcoming conflict by harmonising, standard setting and testing, in addition to gatekeeping to ensure that overactive group members do not dominate the discussion and equal participation is encouraged. Farouk (2004) added an additional role for the facilitator in modelling solution focused questioning

and active listening. Details of the questions used by the researcher are stated in Appendix 8.8.

3.7.1.4 Fidelity checks

The task and maintenance functions of the facilitator were used to construct a fidelity checklist with a view to demonstrate that the consultation groups were delivered as planned (see Appendix 8.9). The consultation process was observed by two EPs from the local authority. Each independent observer was given a checklist of the process steps and requirements of the facilitator role. The observers were required to indicate whether the necessary stages of Farouk's model had been adhered to and if the facilitator skills were enacted. Both observers stated that all of the stages of process consultation were evident and facilitator's skills utilised.

3.7.1.5 Location and Timings

The group consultation sessions were held in the SENCo's office or in a learning support outhouse. The wider school were aware of the group and a sign was placed on the door to indicate privacy. The location and time of the process consultation groups was negotiated with the school to enable engagement with the process. A teaching assistant supported the cover for the KS1 class allowing group consultation sessions to be held each Friday morning (8:40-9:40). As per Farouk's model, sessions lasted for 50 minutes with an additional 10 minutes for private discussion. The researcher remained in the school if participants wanted to speak privately.

3.7.1.6 Negotiation of expectations and ground rules

The research aims and purposes were explained to the participants (see script in Appendix 8.10), detailing support available within the school and the withdrawal procedure from the research. The group agreed the procedures in the eventuality of staff or researcher absence. The structure and aims of group process consultation were explained and shared. The researcher was explicit in describing their role as a facilitator, this being to enable the process rather than offer solutions or advice. Ground rules were established to support the functioning of the group. The constructed ground rules were: be on time, non-judgemental, practice confidentiality, the Law of Two Feet, value each other's opinion and listen to each other. The ground rules were created collaboratively and then presented each week

on the wall. The group followed the ground rules which were referred to when necessary.

Data collection

The researcher intended to analyse two forms of data to gain an understanding of the participants' experiences. Throughout the process consultation sessions participants were asked to complete diaries detailing their reflections of working with the student and noting specific incidents (see Appendix 8.11). The purpose of this was to gain further insight into participants' experiences and gain some additional data for triangulation (Burnard, 2008). The participants did not complete diary entries as intended, therefore experiences were gained through semi-structured interviews.

3.7.1.7 Semi structured interviews

The researcher developed an interview schedule (see Appendix 8.12) which compliments previous research in this area (Hayes and Stringer, 2016). The questions intended to gain insight into the experiences of working with LAC and group process consultation. The questions were open-ended to fit with the method of analysis. The questions started broad and progressed more analytically as the interview developed. When conducting interviews using this method, it is recommended that the researcher 'comes at the research question sideways' in order to capture the participants account of their experience (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009).

Participants spoke retrospectively of their experiences of the group process consultation and their experiences working with Tom as he left school the day of the interviews. The timings of the process consultation sessions and interviews were determined by the availability of the school staff. In line with working in a real-world context, the researcher needed to be pragmatic and make arrangements with the school. The interviews were conducted on the last day of the summer term 2017 immediately following the final process consultation session.

3.7.1.8 Transcribing the interviews

Interviews were recorded using a tablet and iPod device, in case of failure of one or the other. Interviews were then transcribed verbatim with the support of free downloadable software. The transcripts were checked repeatedly through replaying of the audio data and using supportive software to slow down speech. Attention was paid to silences, utterances and behaviour (laughing, crying), although the prosodic aspects of the data were not recorded in detail as the intention was to decipher the data to interpret the meaning. Any identifying information was removed or replaced with a pseudonym. It is recommended with IPA that the researcher conducts the transcription as part of the analysis process.

3.8 Data analysis

In presenting IPA analysis, the aim is to provide an organised, detailed and transparent account of the meaning of the data. Though IPA does not offer a prescriptive approach to conducting the analysis, the researcher has adhered to the steps outlined in Smith, Larkin and Flowers (2009). The process of IPA involves iterative and inductive, repetition and cyclical movement between the stages before arriving at a plausible summary of the participant's account. Throughout the process it is important for the research to reflect upon the participants' own perceptions, conceptions and constructs as they emerge (Larkin and Thompson, 2014). This will be captured in this study through a series of reflexive boxes presented in the results section and below. This felt particularly pertinent in this study as the researcher features in the participants' experiences and is an element of the phenomenon in question. The stages involved in the analysis are detailed with a reflection on the process as a researcher.

3.8.1 Steps in analysis

1. **Reading and re-reading**

This initial stage is supplementary to transcribing the interview data. Through repeated exposure to the data the researcher is encouraged to immerse themselves into it. A 'phenomenal attitude' is encouraged in that the researcher addresses the data with fresh naivety (Finley, 2012). An open-minded approach is recommended with permission to note initial reactions and curiosities within the data.

Reflections:

At this stage the transcriptions were repeatedly listened to and read, allowing a freedom of interpretation for the researcher. There was a focus on placing the participant at the centre of the analysis through bracketing initial reactions and recollections from the process consultation sessions. This was supported by noting these and discarding them following this stage. As the cycle of analysis moved across participants, each case was approached afresh, although this was challenging. This phase was important in bracketing previous interpretations made with other participants.

2. Initial noting

This stage involved an exploratory examination of the semantic content and language use within the transcript. The transcript was placed in the middle column and initial coding was made on the right hand column. This took a free flow form noting particular language use and statements of interest. Aligned to steps detailed in IPA analysis research the codes focused on descriptive, linguistic and conceptual comments. Descriptive comments focused on key objects, relationships, events and processes of the experience. This involved highlighting words, phrases and explanations given by the participant to explain their experience. Linguistic comments focused on the specific use of language such as metaphors, repetition and hesitation. The specific language use by the participant indicates the meaning behind it. Conceptual comments look at how the participant understands the matters they are discussing at a more interpretative level by unpicking implicit meaning within the text.

Reflections:

The transcripts were noted for initial areas of interest and the rich data sections were identified. Close attention was paid to guidance offered by Smith et al (2009) in extracting the descriptive, linguistic and conceptual comments. Numerous comments were made initially and supervision was sought to ensure that the focus was maintained on what mattered for the participants, as opposed to primarily the researcher.

3. Developing emerging themes

The original transcript and initial noting developed in stage 2 were examined to create themes within sections of the data. Discrete sections of text were labelled with concise statements that aimed to capture the researcher's interpretation and the participant's experience.

Reflections:

Emerging themes were detailed in the left hand column of the transcript with the initial noting on the right. Initially there was frequent cross referencing of the transcript and noting to develop the emerging themes. Numerous themes were developed in the beginning, becoming more refined throughout participant analysis. The fluency of the analysis increased following each participant, particularly within this stage.

4. Finding connections amongst emerging themes

The emerging themes were laid out to identify connections and similarities. There were themes that naturally clustered and an overarching theme could be identified to become the subordinate theme. Some emergent themes were amalgamated to developed themes or eliminated if the experience of the participant was not captured. The superordinate theme was identified as encompassing the overall interpretation of that particular experience.

Reflections:

All emerging themes were entered into Nvivo software to create an electronic representation of the whole data set. This enabled the connections between the themes to be identified and clusters could be developed seamlessly with the software. The processes of abstraction (putting similar themes together), subsumption (using an emerging theme as the overall subordinate theme) and contextualisation (capturing events) were useful in developing an order within the themes (Smith et al, 2009). Tables were created to detail the associated text for each theme. There were variations in the length and depth of data collected, which was reflected in the number of themes generated. The super-ordinate themes were reflected on for quality and appropriateness with the support of supervisor and peers.

5. Moving to the next case

The stages detailed above were completed for each participant in turn. It was integral to align with ideography and treat each case as individual. Any previous analysis was bracketed to allow a fresh and open perspective on the individual experience.

Reflections:
The challenge at this stage was to remain idiographic as the learning from previous cases was apparent. It is acknowledged that whilst efforts were made to bracket off themes developed through other participants the previous analysis may have had an impact.

6. Looking for patterns across cases

The themes from each participant were collected and viewed as a whole using Nvivo software. The software allowed the researcher to review all of the subordinate and superordinate themes across the participants to be compared, looking for the potent and prominent themes. Similar themes were amalgamated and anomalies were disregarded. Following reconfiguring and labelling, master themes were identified to represent the group as a whole. Master themes were influenced by the prevalence of themes within the data and the richness of particular passages within individual accounts. Each participants' transcripts were then reviewed under the developed master theme to ensure it represented their individual account.

In all stages of the analysis the researcher aims to arrive at a point of saturation, defined by some as a point where no new themes emerge (Turner et al, 2002). The complexity of saturation in IPA is acknowledged by Smith due to the cyclical or iterative nature of the analysis. In this study the analysis felt complete as a persuasive story emerged that offered an insight to the research questions.

Reflections:

It was important to demonstrate prominent concepts in the participants' experiences whilst maintaining an individual representation of each participant. Similarities in the participant's accounts were apparent early on and the researcher reflected on their engagement in the consultation sessions in making sense of their accounts.

3.7 3. Rationale for using computer assisted qualitative data analysis software

Presentation of data was supported through the use of Nvivo software. A number of benefits in using computerised software have been highlighted by Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014) as an advantageous means of storing, retrieving, managing and displaying data. Nvivo enabled the presentation of emerging, subordinate and superordinate themes with the associated links in the data. The initial noting and development of emerging themes (stages 1-3) were supported though Microsoft Word, subsequent stages were supported by Nvivo as opposed to traditional paper methods.

3.9 Reflexivity and the role of the researcher

'The upshot is that no genuine inquiry can be a blind or clueless seeking that merely processes data that are present at hand; rather, one is always guided beforehand by pre-reflective as well as reflective insights into the nature of what is to be formally interrogated' (Churchill, 2006, pg 85)

A unique feature of this study is that the researcher is immersed in the phenomenon in question (though this is also evident to some extent in Burnard (2008) as an active role was adopted in her phenomenological study of teachers engaging disaffected students in music lessons). There is a recognition that whilst this may be beneficial in building rapport with the participants and preparing them for the interview, there is an increased risk of response bias and researcher bias. IPA acknowledges the active role of the researcher in bringing their interpretation of the participants' experiences. IPA explicitly recognises the interpretative facet of the approach in its theoretical grounding, therefore it can be argued that

'researchers who choose to utilise this method are thus under a certain obligation to address this issue' (Brocki and Wearden, 2006, pg. 92).

3.9.1 Overcoming the role of the researcher

IPA is inevitably subjective, leading to the prediction that two analysts are unlikely to arrive at the same interpretation. Whilst interrater checks have been used in research (Clare, 2002) it is advocated by others that a strength of IPA is the researcher's individual interpretation. In this study the decision was made to enlist the support of a fellow academic to validate the interpretation derived from the researcher. The emerging themes and superordinate themes were shared and discussed, in order to validate the plausibility of the claims being made and credibility of the final account. Supervision was also utilised for this purpose. The hope was to balance the researcher's own experiences, conceptions and assumptions with those of the individual participant and to ensure the themes were predominantly based on the content of the interview data, as opposed to the content of the group process consultation. In fitting with the epistemology, it is acknowledged here that 'inter-rater reliability' measures the interpretation between two parties rather than a check of an objective true account. The group themes were reviewed by participants during the debrief session as an opportunity for reflection on the researcher's interpretation (see Appendix 8.24). In line with the epistemological stance taken, it is noted that reality is subjective and differs from person to person, research participants cannot be expected to arrive at exactly the same interpretations as researchers (Rolfe, 2006).

Further effort to show transparency of the researcher's position was made through providing a clear account of research interests, theoretical groundings and the motivation behind conducting this particular study (see section 1). The aim of the researcher was to bring a "critical self-awareness of their own subjectivity, vested interests, predilections and assumptions and to be conscious of how these might impact on the research process and findings" (Finlay, 2012, p. 17). It is important to be aware of becoming overly explicit about researcher assumptions in a way that distracts from the experiences of the participants. A challenging balance is needed and this is demonstrated here by reflections given in the analysis and results section

only, with a more detailed research journal extract presented in the appendix (see Appendix 8.23).

3.10 Stakeholders

The study will involve the following stakeholders: The University of Nottingham, the Local Authority Educational Psychology Service, a participating primary school, participating staff, social worker and foster carers. All stakeholders will be required to sign a form that states they understand the purpose and intentions of the research, their role in the research and that they agree to the confidentiality agreement (see Appendices 8.4 and 8.5).

3.11 Ethical considerations

The research required careful ethical consideration to maintain a responsibility to the stakeholder, represented local authority and academic institution. This research adhered to the guidance of a wide range of ethical codes of practice, including the Health and Care Professions Council (2016), the British Psychological Society Code of Ethics and Conduct (2009) and the British Psychological Society Professional Practice Guidelines (2017). The research received ethical approval by the Ethics Committee at Nottingham University on 27th April 2017 (see Appendix 8.6). The focal areas of ethical consideration are detailed below.

3.11.1 Informed consent

During the recruitment process of participants an information sheet (see Appendix 8.3) was shared detailing all aspects of the study. The researcher then met with all participants to provide further information (see Appendix 8.4) and an opportunity for questions. The consent of the student's social worker was obtained prior to the group process consultation. Initial referral of the focus student was discussed anonymously until consent from the social worker was gained. Group process consultation sessions ran within standard teaching practice and consent from the focus student was not considered necessary. Participants and social workers received a signed copy of the consent form which contained details of the researcher, university supervisor and chair of the ethics committee (see Appendix 8.4 and 8.5).

3.11.2 Reducing harm to participants

The researcher remained mindful that, although the risk of psychological harm was minimal, participation in the study may invoke an emotional response from participants. The reflective diaries required participants to describe emotional experiences, which may have caused a change in participant's mood. The group process consultation sessions were designed to be supportive, consequently rules were created and agreed upon in the first session, to ensure an open and safe environment for the participants. A procedure was agreed upon to ensure that participants who felt negatively affected by the sessions would speak to the researcher to gain further emotional support. Participants were encouraged to contact the school EP, or any other professional working closely with the study for any further support. A designated person within the school was available to discuss the study with participants if the researcher was unavailable, this was agreed with the senior leadership team in the initial planning stages. At the end of every group consultation session, there was opportunity for extended discussion and reflection on any feeling or emotions felt as a result. Additional time was protected at the end of each session and a space within the school was made available. Effective communication with the participants was maintained throughout the study by providing opportunity for individual discussion and regular encouragement for participants to contact the researcher if needed.

During the interviews the researcher drew upon their skills as a practitioner in responding sensitively and empathically to the needs of the participants. If the researcher felt that the interview evoked a negative emotional reaction the participants were given the opportunity to terminate the interview. The researcher remained in the school following the interviews to provide an opportunity for participants to discuss any negative experiences of the data gathering process. The nature of IPA required participants to divulge details of their personal experience with the focus student. Effort was made by the researcher to protect the participants from revealing details that would expose them or potentially negatively impact upon their relationships within school. Quotations were chosen carefully in ensuring an account of their experience was provided whilst not revealing details

that would highlight them in a negative way. The researcher was mindful to present the data in a manner that would not comprise the autonomy and privacy of the participants.

3.11.3 Right to withdraw

Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study without consequence or reason, and at any point during the research. Upon this request their data, information and interview transcripts would be destroyed. When negotiating the terms for the group process consultation a representative from the school, in this case the head teacher, was assigned the role of supporting the participants which included supporting withdrawal from the research. Withdrawal rights were reiterated at debrief and participants were informed that they could withdraw any part of their data from the research. In an attempt to minimise the possibility of such exploitation, the issue of consent was continually discussed with participants, and professional boundaries maintained by the cultivation of an approachable, non-critical, unthreatening attitude during the data collection process.

3.11.4 Anonymity

No information, through audio recording or written content, was collected from the group process consultation sessions. Any written information contained in the research journal was recorded anonymously. Aside from safeguarding instances, which were dealt with in accordance with school safeguarding processes, information discussed within the group was kept confidential. Anything written during group consultation sessions or in diaries did not contain staff or student details, including names, and this was confirmed within the confidentiality agreements.

Individual interviews were audio-recorded and stored via password-protected files on password-protected devices. Interviews were transcribed verbatim with pseudonyms used for participants and for the focus student. Participant data was stored in a locked cabinet with only the researcher able to gain access. Any references that participants made to other people's real names or other potentially identifying details were adapted. Every effort was made to ensure that participants

or LAC could not be identified. All data created will be destroyed after seven years of the research being published in compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA).

3.12 Quality within qualitative research

Psychology research was previously dominated by the quantitative paradigm leading to this methodology carrying a higher value or weight. The immerging credibility of qualitative research presents a remaining challenge of whether it should be held to the same validity and reliability criteria as quantitative research. Yardley (2011) has suggested that the two are originated in opposing paradigms with different objectives, therefore cannot be measured under the same criteria. Sample sizes, generalisability and replicability judged by quantitative standards would neglect the interactive role of the researcher in the analysis in qualitative research. Interpretive research rejects a foundational base to knowledge, bringing into question its validity. Interpretive research cannot be judged using the same criteria as the scientific paradigm as legitimacy and trustworthiness needs to be achieved without claiming uncontested certainty. However, reaching a consensus is problematic. Creswell (2013) recommended some criteria to assess the quality of phenomenology research: demonstrate an understanding of phenomenology, have a clear phenomenon to investigate, clear data analysis that is transparent and convincing, whilst demonstrating reflexivity. This criteria bears close resemblance to Yardley's recommendations and is outlined in more detail below.

3.12.1 Yardley's evaluative criteria

The aim of this evaluation is to be comprehensive and meaningful for the engaged audiences, including stakeholders. Smith et al (2009) recommend that Yardley's evaluation criteria are suitable for IPA research. Yardley's (2011) core principles for evaluating the validity of qualitative research are: sensitivity to context, commitment and rigour, coherence and transparency, impact and importance. These guidelines are intended to highlight quality issues rather than restrict the freedom of the researcher. The guidelines are discussed below with consideration of the current study.

3.12.1.1 Sensitivity to context

In assessing the research against this criteria, the researcher reflected on the following questions: is the analysis and interpretation sensitive to the data, social context and relationships from which it emerged? What was the nature of the researcher's involvement; how did they influence participants' actions and is there consideration of the balance of power in the situation?

The researcher demonstrates a knowledge base of the current theory and research relevant to the study topic and participants' experiences. A grounding in the philosophy and aims of IPA is demonstrated in providing a rationale for choosing the methodology. An appreciation of the wider school context is taken in enabling facilitation of the group process consultation.

The issue of the researcher's involvement is discussed in detail in section 3.8. Whilst it is acknowledged that the researcher arrived at the data with a pre-existing interpretation of their own experience of the group process consultation, a number of steps were taken to 'bracket' those experiences and recognise the experience of the participant as paramount. A research diary was kept throughout the process and reflections were shared in supervision and with fellow academics. Sensitivity was maintained throughout the analysis, ensuring the findings were evident in the participants' accounts, demonstrated by verbatim quotes used to illustrate the themes developed.

The successful facilitation of the group process consultation relied upon a sensitivity to the participants and their needs. Steps were taken to promote their engagement and emotional wellbeing. The impact of power imbalance was considered in the initial set up of the groups and it was hoped that the continued exposure of the researcher reduced any hierarchical assumptions made by the participants.

3.12.1.2 Commitment and rigour

These criteria refer to the completeness and transparency of data collection, analysis and interpretation. In accordance with the idiographic nature of IPA, and to address the research question, a purposeful sample was selected. Interviews were recorded and fully transcribed by the researcher, the full data set is available to the reader and extracts provided in the results section. The analysis followed the

guidance from Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) with additional measures taken in demonstrating reflexivity in the results section. The researcher kept to the idiographic focus of the research through presenting each participants' analysis in addition to their shared experience.

3.12.1.3 Coherence and transparency

The researcher has described in detail aspects of decision making that lead to the development of the research questions and choice of methodology. A research journal was kept during the study to track decision making and supply an audit trail of analysis. The findings were discussed with others to support the researcher in clarifying the credibility of the interpretation. The stages and scripts of the group process consultation are provided to inform the reader of the content.

3.12.1.4 Impact and importance

The current research aims to explore the experiences of staff in working with a child presenting with challenging behaviour in KS1 and participating in group process consultation. Supporting the wellbeing of school staff has been highlighted as vitally important in enabling children to thrive in education. This research offers recommendations at the EP service level, school policy and implications for personal and general EP practice. Implications of the research are discussed in more detail in section 5. The debrief session was an opportunity to explore the impact of the research for the participants involved and is further outlined in section 5.7.

4 FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The aim of this section is to offer an interpretative phenomenological analysis of the interviews conducted to answer the research questions 'how do staff experience working with a child presenting with challenging behaviour in KS1?' and 'how do staff experience group process consultation?'. The first half of this section will present the analysis of each individual interview detailing the participant's profile, a reflective account of the interview and the themes generated from the data. This is to keep in line with the idiographic nature of IPA research, as aspects of individual experiences could be overlooked within a group analysis. Initially each staff member was regarded as an individual case specific to their pedagogical role with a depth of understanding chosen over breadth.

The second half of the section offers an interpretation of the group as a whole, looking across the subordinate and superordinate themes in their entirety. Reflections of the group as a whole are presented along with an interpretation of the shared and distinctive experiences of the participants.

Yardley's (2011) criterion of transparency and coherence was adhered to through key reflections from each interview, supervision discussions and reflection during debrief with the participants. The reader should refer to the appendix for extracts of raw data with initial noting and the development of emergent themes (see Appendix 8.13-22). Nvivo software was used to store, organise and present the data. The process of emerging themes being categorised from subordinate themes to superordinate themes is presented for each participant in the appendix.

4.2 Participant one: School Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo)

Pam (pseudonym) has worked at the school for over twenty years, first as a community teacher before taking the role as school SENCo over ten years ago. In her longstanding commitment to the school, Pam has developed relationships with numerous families in the catchment area. Pam described her various roles in the

school: safeguarding lead, managing support staff, leading action research projects and intervention work. Pam is a member of the leadership team overseen by the two deputy heads and head teacher.

4.2.1 Reflective account of interview

Pam's interview was emotive at times as she described her perception of herself as an advocate and protector for vulnerable children in her school. She described her interest in attachment theory and the impact of this upon her practise and world view. Pam became involved with Tom at two years old following a Common Assessment Framework (CAF) meeting for his brother. The school were involved in the process that lead Tom to be taken into care. It could be that this experience shaped Pam's relationship with Tom, as she is fully informed of his adverse upbringing and how this may have impacted upon him. Pam presented as very passionate throughout the interview and was articulate in providing examples to explain her thinking.

4.3 Interpretation of Pam's experiences working with a a child presenting with challenging behaviour in KS1.

Figure 3. Superordinate and subordinate themes of Pam's experiences working with a child presenting with challenging behaviour in KS1.

4.3.1 Systemic barriers to role

Pam began the interview by explaining her prolonged involvement with Tom, his mother and grandmother. Her interactions with his biological family may have given her a unique insight into his upbringing and how this shaped him as a person. Pam was involved in the safeguarding procedures that ultimately placed Tom and his brother into care. She became emotional when describing this experience and, what was interpreted as, the burden of holding that knowledge and being alone with the knowledge due to restrictions imposed on her through confidentiality.

"I was the one that was attending the meeting and you can't come out of the meeting and shout at staff and say this is what happened, you can't do that, you want them to know but you can't, you know, you can't do that."

In describing her position and role within school Pam referred to herself as an advocate for vulnerable people as she stated, 'they can't do it themselves'. It could be that her experiences in safeguarding enabled this empathetic stance. Pam described a frequent conversation between herself and teachers within the school where there appeared to be a contradiction in her focus on emotional wellbeing and their focus on academic results.

"..but my thing is I think they'll get that and be able to do that more easily if they know their children and they know where they are coming from."

She perceived that others also viewed her role as one of advocacy, particularly in response to punitive measures set within the school system. Her perception of her role seemed to be something she felt others shared as she frequently inferred how others perceived her reactions to punitive measures placed in school.

"I know there's conversations, I know people come to me and say 'we had this conversation but we knew you wouldn't be happy about it'. So, I know that I am kind of, people do things and then think well what will I do or say about it!"

It may be important for Pam that she is perceived in this way and that her behaviour within school aligns to her morals, values and worldview. The congruence between her professional identity and moral values may support her resilience. Working with Tom, she encountered the difficulty others faced in managing his behaviour and resisting the systemic pressures to enforce punitive sanctions in response to his challenging behaviour.

"…he wants a lot of attention and it's finding ways to give him enough attention, but not all the attention to the detriment of the other children and to try and be giving it positively, not negatively, because he'll take it any way he can really."

Pam spoke very passionately about her hopes and aspirations for Tom and the school more widely. She acknowledged the barriers in being able to support vulnerable children in the way that she hoped. She appeared to carry a sense of responsibility in ensuring positive outcomes for Tom. She felt that others perceived her as openly challenging systems that did not support this agenda.

4.4 Interpretation of Pam's experiences of group consultation

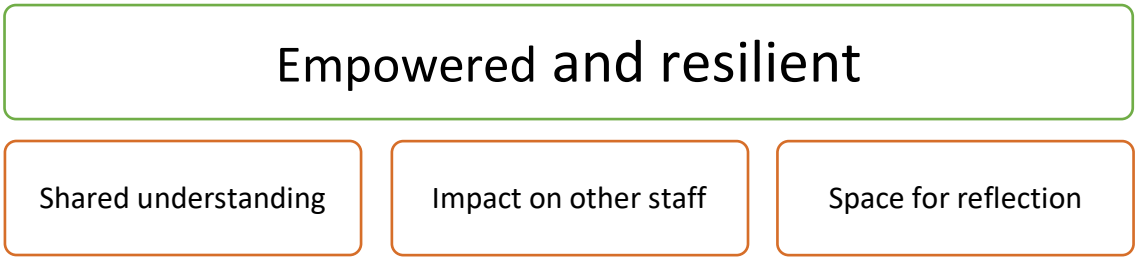

Figure 4. Superordinate and subordinate themes of Pam's experiences of group consultation.

4.4.1 Empowered and resilient

Pam described her experiences of the group as being supportive in managing Tom's behaviour, his transition to a new school and her emotional investment in working with him. Throughout the interview she discussed the shared perceptions, values and understanding generated between group members. Pam perceived this to be represented in the shared and consistent approach to managing his behaviour. As Pam initially approached the participants to join the group, it could be that she selected staff that may have already supported her values, although she did express her surprise in discovering the joint thinking. It seemed as though the expression of a shared understanding empowered Pam to pursue her approach to supporting Tom, as it validated her opinions of how the school should best support him.

> *"I think it's really, really been supportive to know there is a group of us, thinking the same thing or wanting to do the same thing for him".*

Pam reflected on how she felt the group were perceived by other staff members and whether they were aware of the developing agenda of the subgroup. She described the 'filtering' of the groups approach to managing his behaviour impacting upon other staff members. The data suggests that Pam sought to influence others through her established role in the school as the advocate for child

voice. Her experience of the group appears to have developed her influence and confidence in knowing that there are other staff members that share her position. Within her interview she described an 'unspoken agenda' within the group that was demonstrated in other staff members' behaviour. This almost appeared like a covert rebellion against leadership decisions that did not conform to the group's agenda. An example of this was Pam's description of observing staff members giving up their free time to ensure Tom was supported during lunch and break times.

> *"I think because other people see us, kind of, handling him in a different way. Yea, so I think for (another class teacher) being involved in the meeting with the parent and the promise to never let this child see the light of day again, sort of thing. Although he'd been involved in that meeting he also knew there was a different agenda going on amongst us."*

Pam spoke of relying on the groups to reflect upon times where decisions had been made that were difficult. It could have been that a group consensus was sought to validate difficult feelings of frustration, inadequacy and doubt associated with the role. Pam spoke of using the group to regulate her own emotions in working with Tom, she acknowledged that managing his behaviour was difficult and supported by reflecting on it in the group.

> *"...I am very emotionally involved, but everybody else is, you do put a bit of yourself and actually having the time to, kind of, think through that as well. It's been quite important because you have to separate, that's the thing, you have to separate when you're actually dealing with him. Trying to separate some of those emotions sometimes because he will want to drag you in to being cross with him."*

Further presentation of Pam's theme development is presented in Appendix 8.15.

Reflective box:
Pam was the main school contact in setting up the groups. Arguably she was highly invested in the groups, as was the researcher. This was indicated by her attendance in the groups even on her days off work. She had selected the staff members that she wanted to volunteer for the groups. Her investment and commitment to the groups and her need to justify its implementation could have influenced her experiences of it and perceptions of its success. In a similar capacity to the research bias that should be considered in the position of the researcher.

4.1 Participant two: Class teacher

Steve (pseudonym) is the class teacher of Tom, the KS1 co-ordinator, PE co-ordinator for the school and positioned within middle management. He had joined the school as a trainee teacher seven years ago.

4.4.2 Reflective account of interview

Steve was very open and comfortable during the interview. He appeared to welcome the opportunity to talk and reflect upon the year teaching and support group experience. He revealed personal aspects of his life that were not shared within the groups. His interview presented as honest and raw. Perhaps because it was the end of term, or because he knew the interview was approaching, it seemed as though Steve had been reflecting on his year of teaching prior to being prompted to by the researcher. As this was the end of term, it felt as though this was a time of reflection for Steve and he had been reviewing his year of teaching. Some of his interview data may have been shared with others and was prominent in his mind at the time.

4.5 Interpretation of Steve's experiences working with a child presenting with challenging behaviour in KS1.

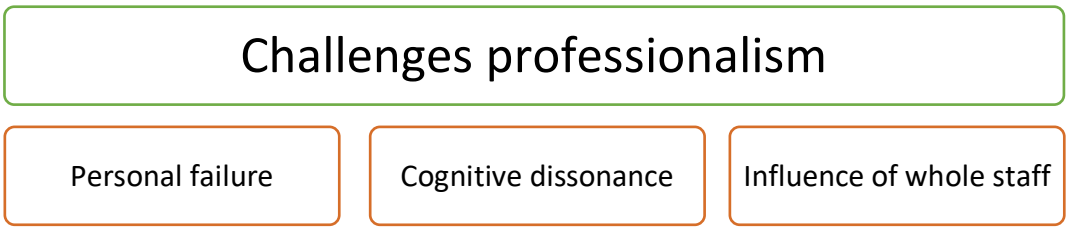

Figure 5. Superordinate and subordinate themes of Steve's experiences working with a child presenting with challenging behaviour in KS1.

4.5.1 Challenges professionalism

Steve reflected throughout his interview on the reputation of his class within the school and the range of needs that he supported. The experiences he chose to discuss seemed to illustrate the various professional challenges he has faced: challenging his view of himself as a teacher, how this conflicts with his promotion to senior leadership and the challenge of how he is perceived by others. Steve conveyed a strong sense of responsibility for Tom's experiences and achievements at school.

'...but I feel like we have failed him. And he's not the only one, there's a lot of them in there. I think we have failed a lot of them this year. But he is one of the main ones.'

Steve appeared conflicted in how he attributed Tom's behaviour and how it should be managed. His experiences seemed to be viewed from both the perspective of a senior leader, concerned about the wider school population, and as a KS1 teacher managing a class of children. His instinctive reaction to Tom's behaviour challenged his view of himself and moral judgement. He described himself as a 'pantomime villain' and worried about the impact this had on his relationship with Tom.

'and it is draining that he does things, that you think, in the heat of the moment you think, why have you done that? And, you know, you can't understand it, and then when you take a step back and you think about it, there is a reason why he has done that and you know why he's done it'.

Steve's management of Tom's behaviour seemed pressured by the expectations and perceptions of others. The reputation of the class and of Tom meant that wider staff were often involved in behaviour management.

'You know, she deals with it and then someone else deals with it and then someone else deals with it and someone else, and then it comes back to me. On some days its gets to the point where I go I don't actually know what is going on. I know he's sat upstairs for an hour, I've got no idea why. And that's frustrating for me because people then go 'what was he doing' and then I have to go 'I don't know', which makes me look even more like I don't know what I am doing'.

Steve had recently been promoted to senior leadership and there was a sense that Steve formed his professional identity across the two roles. His experiences of teaching Tom offered a level of challenge informing his position on what kind of teacher he wanted to be and how he wanted to be perceived.

4.6 Interpretation of Steve's experiences of group consultation

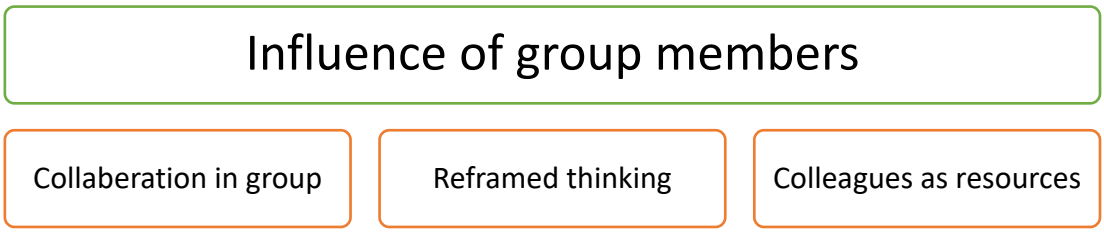

Figure 6. Superordinate and subordinate themes of Steve's experiences of group consultation.

Steve shared his experiences of the groups in reference to 'us' and 'we', indicating a collective and shared identity within the group. Steve's school experience suggests that he felt pressured to conform to the wider school culture and norms, which was also illustrated within Pam's account. Within the consultation groups he may have experienced a segregated group of norms and values that connected the group, building trust and unity. The group then developed their own approach to managing Tom within the wider school.

> *'But we are the lead people on him, you know, if he has done something, between us we have to find a way to put it right.'*

Steve reflected on the resources of the colleagues within the group and the range of experiences and insights that fostered their discussions, indicating that he viewed the group consultation colleagues as knowledgeable and valuable in terms of developing his practice.

> *'The attachment work that Pam's done over the last year and a half is excellent and, you know, they've got her speaking at conferences and things like that, and it's a really good thing to have someone on the team who is that good at what they do'.*

Steve made reference to how the support groups had reframed his thinking in terms of the attributions of Tom's behaviour and the appropriate management.

> *'I think that it's helpful to have this more positive, let's look at what he has done and this is why. Because I think, as I said previously, I think a lot of people, and people in general, are more reactionary than pro-actionary because they would rather react to something going wrong than say well let's put this in place'.*

Throughout Steve's account he seemed to question his approach to managing Tom's behaviour. The groups may have affirmed that his judgements were approved by other members of staff that worked with Tom. The reader can refer to appendix 8.17 for further presentation of Steve's theme analysis.

Reflective box
Steve was initially reserved within the support group sessions. During the third session the discussion opened up to reflect on his experiences in working with Tom. He was conscious of being judged by Pam and repeatedly stated this. Gaining reassurance from Pam and the group seemed to be a turning point for him to be comfortable within the group and trust that his feelings and opinions will be validated. He was subsequently open and dominant within the groups. It could have been that Steve's participation in the groups developed as he began to value the groups influence and professional insight.

4.7 Participant three: Class teaching assistant

Rachel (pseudonym) is the class teaching assistant supporting Steve within KS1. She works fulltime and across the whole key stage. Rachel is one of two teaching assistants supporting the class and was selected specifically by Steve to work with him. Rachel has worked at the school for six years, completing her training to become a teaching assistant within the first two years.

4.7.1 Reflective account of interview

Rachel appeared quite reserved during the interview and prompting questions were used to support her to elaborate on her answers. The researcher was conscious of asking repetitive questions and enforcing their own agenda. It could have been that Rachel was wary of the interview being recorded and this made her more self-conscious and reserved. She appeared to be particularly reluctant to discuss negative or unsupportive aspects of her role or experiences.

4.8 Interpretation of Rachel's experiences working with a child presenting with challenging behaviour in KS1.

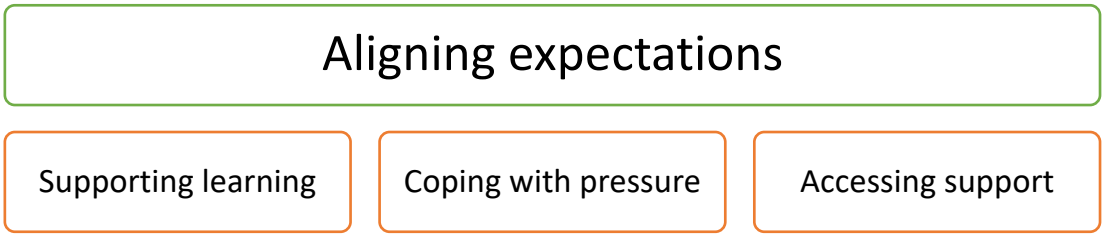

Figure 7. Superordinate and subordinate themes of Rachel's experience working with a child presenting with challenging behaviour in KS1.

4.8.1 Aligning expectations

Rachel spoke of her experience working across the school in various key stages. She reflected on how initially her expectations of the students' behaviour, learning and emotional maturity was misinformed. Rachel discussed her adjustment to the school routine, needs of the class and additional pressures of SATS.

> *"At first I expected them to write a full page and they actually write three or four sentences. So, it's been a big change".*

Rachel's high expectations were presented to Tom with a firm but fair approach, with a focus of boosting his academic achievement as a protective factor. Rachel seemed proud of her role in supporting interventions and working collaboratively with colleagues to enable this. She acknowledged that Tom was working significantly below expectations and described the effort of teaching him 'like pulling teeth'.

The pressure of exams, parental expectations and perceptions of other staff members appeared to be a primary source of stress. Rachel felt that she was expected to undertake more responsibilities than previously and may have lacked confidence in doing this.

> *"I just think it's the stress of everything, the demands of the job and the class. I think from when I was training to now, I think the job role has changed a lot".*

Rachel's account presented as quite pragmatic in that her experiences of working with Tom centred around her expectations of him and herself in developing his academic attainment. Expectations seems to represent a theme across her

experience in relation to those she has of herself, Tom and her colleagues as well as those that they have of her.

Rachel spoke of feeling supported by colleagues in the school and relying upon them to support her emotionally and professionally.

'(another TA) has listened if I've needed to just offload a little bit'.

Rachel made reference to the school hierarchy in her interview, which appeared to impact on how she felt her opinions and contributions were viewed. Rachel may have sought support from staff with a similar role to hers, as perhaps they understood her position better and she felt more confident to confide in them.

'And obviously, the people that you work with relate to you and they understand. You don't feel like you're on your own. Yea'.

When asked to highlight any barriers and hindrances within her role Rachel stated that she did not know. This could be indicative of her balanced, objective approach to her role, supported by other staff. Alternatively, she could have been hesitant to reveal criticisms of the school. As stated in the reflection of the interview Rachel appeared reserved and the power imbalance within the interview may have had an adverse effect on her openness in sharing her account.

4.9 Interpretation of Rachel's experiences of group consultation

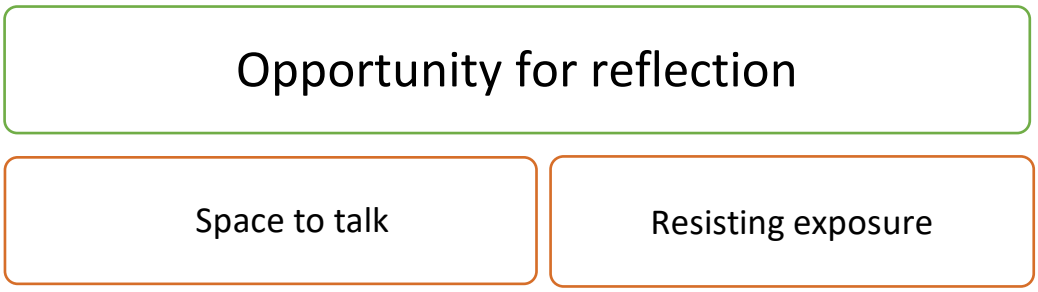

Figure 8. Superordinate and subordinate themes of Rachel's experiences of group consultation.

Rachel's experiences of the consultation groups indicated that she already utilised support across the school and developed strategies in safeguarding her wellbeing. In describing Tom's behaviour, she presented hypotheses that were depersonalised

and empathetic of his upbringing. Her experiences of the groups appeared to be centred around the opportunity to talk, with protected and uninterrupted time.

> *'I just think it's good to have time to talk. The day's just so busy and you just don't get a moment to just sit and talk and reflect'.*

Rachel valued the opportunity to reflect upon the school week and what she described as a challenging year 1 class. She stated the external group member may have enabled reflection, however may not have been necessary to facilitate the group structure and timing. Rachel felt that Pam could have adopted this role, indicating a perception of hierarchy within the group. Rachel seemed unsure of the sessions at the beginning and made reference to the script that was delivered to the group in the initial session. Perhaps her constructs of 'a psychologist' or 'consultation' may have evoked expectations that she was not completely comfortable with.

> *'I think I was a bit, unsure of how the sessions were going to be, because I think you mentioned that things it might bring up things that have happened to you in the past and things. I was thinking where is this going'.*

She was the only participant that made reference to writing a diary entry, as only Steve and Rachel completed an entry.

> *'erm, maybe I thought talking would be a lot easier but actually sitting and writing the diary made me reflect more, I think'.*

This could indicate that the consultation groups were not safe or conducive in allowing Rachel to express herself openly.

> *'I think sometimes when you sit talking you forget what to say or I don't know'.*

Consequently, the account highlights that she did not experience the group consultation in the same way as Steve or Pam. Rachel's reflections on her experiences of the group were mainly practical, valuing the solution development and protected time. Quotes stated above could be inferred as Rachel finding the

groups uncomfortable and exposing. Appendix 8.19 provides further presentation of the theme development for Rachel's account.

Reflective box
In the initial group consultation sessions Rachel appeared dominant. As the groups progressed this was less apparent and other members became more confident. This correlated with the nature of the discussions, in that when group members began to expose their emotions more openly Rachel started to withdraw. It could have also been that Rachel felt overshadowed within the group or that her role determined the amount that she could contribute. She maintained a focus on positive aspects of working with Tom and at times diverted the attention from group members by asking questions regarding the researcher's wellbeing. This could have suggested discomfort and avoidance in discussing her emotions. During the final session Rachel shared details of her own childhood. During the interview she shared, what could be perceived as an anxiety that she anticipated that group members may discuss personal life experiences, as shared details of the ethical requirements of the research. This could suggest that she had been holding this anxiety throughout the sessions. The interview may have been a similar experience in that the introduction may have been formal and anxiety provoking.

4.2 Participant four: Lunchtime teaching assistant

Elaine (pseudonym) began her career at the school as a care assistant to support a student with physical needs. Throughout the 12 years that Elaine has worked at the school she has supported students with special educational needs. At the time of this research Elaine supported breakfast club, lunch time supervision, allotment and forest school engagement. She had worked with Tom since he started at the school and knew his family within the community.

4.9.1 Reflective account of interview

Elaine appeared to lack confidence during some parts of the interview as she said 'I am not doing well am I?'. It could have been that the researcher unintentionally added a value expectation to what the interview should have entailed. Having participated in the groups for 9 weeks and built a rapport with Elaine, the need to build further rapport and comfort during the interview may have been overlooked. Elaine did share her experiences and was provided with the opportunity to return and expand upon her account, which she declined.

4.10 Interpretation of Elaine's experiences working with a child presenting with challenging behaviour in KS1.

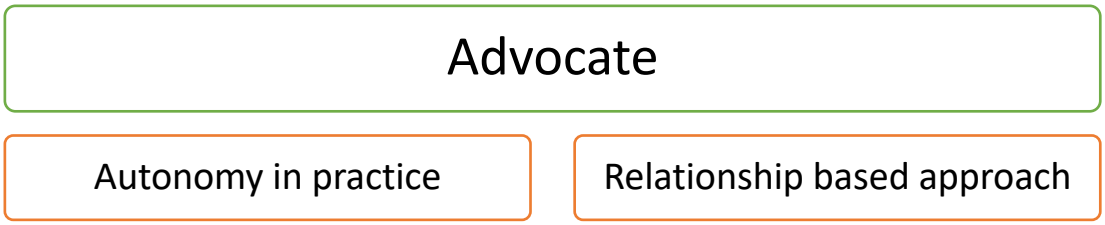

Figure 9. Superordinate and subordinate themes of Elaine's experience working with a child presenting with challenging behaviour in KS1.

4.10.1 Advocate

Elaine spoke very positively of her experiences working with Tom. She reflected on the opportunity within her role in ensuring his time at school was enjoyable and inclusive. At times she disregarded decisions that were perceived as overly punitive in order to support Tom in being engaged in school activities. It seemed important to Elaine that Tom had positive memories of school and would reminisce on this with a memory book that she made for him. Elaine felt that her role enabled her to build a bond with students unhindered by systemic pressures.

> *'no-one has had to tell me - you've got to do this, you've got to do that. We can give them the choice, we don't take them to the allotment and say - you've got to do this, you've got to do that, we just take them and do whatever they want or what we have planned'.*

As she seemed autonomous in her decisions which may have been guided by how she perceived that Tom should be treated. During the interview and group sessions she discussed her own childhood experiences and made reference to her own children, indicating a relationship-based approach was taken. Her role was not as hindered by systemic academic pressures, leaving opportunity to base her success criteria on relationship building and social, emotional development.

> *'…so I get to spend a lot of time with the kids, more than the teachers, because I see a different side to them when they are outside'.*

Elaine inferred to how she 'kept Tom in mind' through asking about him and tracking his whereabouts in school. She may have maintained a level of concern for

him through her developed understanding of him within the group, and with that a lack of confidence that others will manage him according to her values. An additional interpretation of this was that she advocated for him, his wellbeing, his experiences in school and if she could positively influence this then she did.

'On the playground, yea. When he is allowed there [laughs]. Sometimes I just try and don't ask if he can come I just grab him'.

Elaine may have seen some of herself in Tom, or her own son, developing an empathy and compassion for him based on her own experiences in childhood. She presents as a resilient person and shared her aspirations for Tom to become more resilient.

4.11 Interpretation of Elaine's experiences of group consultation.

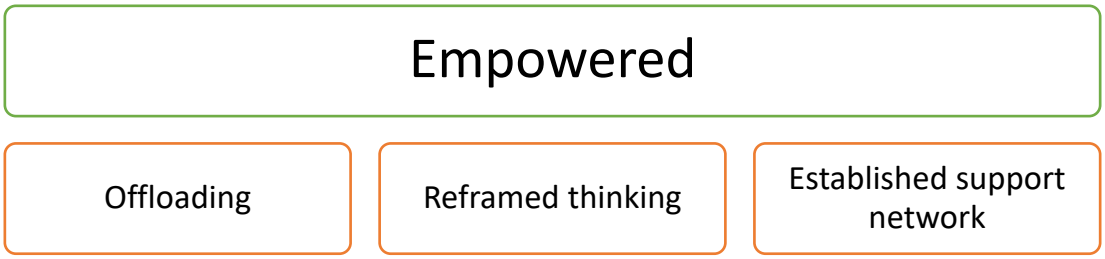

Figure 10. Superordinate and subordinate themes of Elaine's experiences of group consultation.

4.11.1 Empowered

Elaine described her initial reservations regarding the group members and the constructs she had of group sessions with a trainee educational psychologist. As the sessions progressed, Elaine shared that her confidence grew and her participation in the groups was more evident. It seemed that Elaine learned about the experiences and pressures of other group members, developing empathy for their position and pressures.

'…because I've done these groups I'm thinking oh they are helping him, they are thinking about him, yea'.

As Elaine's position is not classroom based, her perspective was unique in the group and she described her increased awareness of Tom and other students in his class. Elaine reflected on Tom's reputation within the school and how the group

consultation sessions challenged some of those attributions. The sessions offered a space to offload stressful events, for Elaine this was an opportunity to share her judgements on decisions that were made against her values. As the group members developed trust for each other, it also provided opportunity for reflection of Tom's childhood experiences and reflection on their own.

'...talk about things that you can't really talk about in the staff room'.

With this experience of opening and trust it appeared that Elaine developed a support network within school of people that she could relate to and rely on.

'Well I know who I can talk to and where I can get the help from. They'd probably give me more time if I had a problem rather than saying come back in ten minutes'.

There was a sense of the group sharing values that were important to Elaine, which may have empowered her to further advocate for Tom and other children with similar difficulties. Appendix 8.13 provides a presentation of theme development.

Reflective Box

Elaine was initially reserved during the group consultation sessions and a conscious effort was made to promote her position in relation to the group. Elaine's behaviour in the sessions indicated that she was observing the process and interactions. She would often take initiative for the actions developed through the groups and present these in the sessions. Over time she engaged in the groups with confidence and questioned group members. She was actively involved in theory development and reflection.

4.12 Shared experiences of working with a child presenting with challenging behaviour in KS1.

This section details the collective superordinate themes across the four participants. The collective themes were determined by drawing upon the subordinate and superordinate themes across the participants, relabelling and applying theoretical knowledge. Details of how the themes were combined using Nvivo software is presented in Appendix 8.21.

4.13 Theme one: Guided by values, pressured by systems.

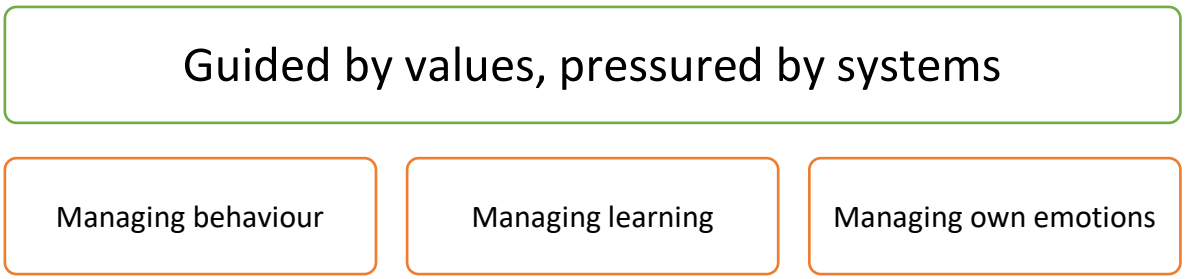

Figure 11. First master table of superordinate and subordinate themes for collective experiences of working with a child presenting with challenging behaviour in KS1.

Table 6. Superordinate, subordinate themes and quotes for master theme one 'guided by values, pressured by systems'.

Superordinate theme	Subordinate themes and Quotes
Guided by values, pressured by systems	Managing behaviour *'Some days it can be hard, especially when he constantly shouts out and wants your attention. Which will then have an effect on other students' (Rachel)* *'But with Tom, he doesn't need to be shouted at, you know, yea there is a time and a place for it but, yea, you will get more out of him if you sit and interact with him' (Steve)* *'He went and did something and then, the (staff member) saw him do it, so they just took him away without having the chance to try and sort it out ourselves' (Elaine)* *'Teachers are very keen to be seen as the person who is charge and is in control in the classroom. If you're not coming down on the discipline then you might be seen as weak and you don't want, no teachers want to be seen as weak and, you know, you wouldn't want your TA in the classroom to think that, you know, they are not doing anything about him, they are letting him get away with it' (Pam).* Managing learning *'…especially when we have so many demands of what we need to get the children up to what stages, it can be hard' ……' I think the pressure of SATS and getting them at set levels was hard going. Erm, and because they're just so far behind'. (Rachel)* *'But there is, at the end of the day, there is things that we have to do, and they have to get to certain levels, and you have to explain it. Because of Tom's ability, his ability is very low, he goes under the*

	radar a lot because you know he doesn't get as many interventions as, er, the children that are almost there get'. (Steve) *'we might try a bit longer but then I might just get him to talk it to me and erm, write it, just so he's got something to take. It's not going to be perfect. Oh he is going to have this lovely book, no he is not! Scribble on it by the end of the day won't he!' (Pam)* Managing own emotions *'I can do it, I can do it. Get through the day. But yea, he is really pushing, trying to evoke some kind of reaction today' (Pam)* *'I was a bit pissed. [laughs]. Because I thought, well, you could asked us if we could sort it' (Elaine)* *'Because sometimes you need 5 minutes just to go, you know yesterday was extremely difficult, yesterday morning and I just wanted, I just needed 5 minutes outside and then Rachel had them and it was fine' (Steve)* *'I just think it's the stress of everything, the demands of the job and the class' (Rachel).*

4.13.1 Guided by values, pressured by systems

Each participant made reference to the wider school system within the group sessions and the interviews. There was a consensus that the expectations set within the system pressured the group to manage Tom's behaviour in a way that was incongruent to their values. The agents of pressure extended beyond the school context as references were made to expectations of exam results and parents. The participants all indicated that the school system was at times detrimental to Tom's sense of belonging and enjoyment of school. This was evidenced by the perceived overly punitive decisions made within the school. Feelings of frustration were echoed in all participants encompassed by an overall fight for autonomy and control. The unified approach to working with Tom appeared to demonstrate empathy, with firm and consistent boundaries. This was jeopardised by the wider school staff and meeting the needs of other children in the class.

Participants' experience of supporting Tom eluded to a challenge in exercising themselves in a way that fits with their world view and values, whilst balancing this

with the expectations and pressures around them. Elaine and Pam presented as rebellious in enforcing their agenda and autonomy within the system; this may be due to their confidence and years of experience. Whereas Rachel and Steve presented as more cautious in defying school system expectations, perhaps in Steve's case due to his role in senior leadership being newly developed. Each participant highlighted the need to regulate their emotions as a coping mechanism to managing themselves within the system. Managing the projection of emotions from Tom was difficult, although each participant's resilience seemed reinforced by a strong rapport with him, wanting to be liked and valued by him, feeling able to keep him safe and protected. The identity of the group appeared to rely upon their rapport with him. Where this was challenged, participants described the difficulty in coming to terms with this. For Steve it seemed to challenge his sense of competence and identity as a teacher. An indicated challenge for Pam was her perception that Tom was distancing himself from her as the school year ended.

4.14 Theme two: Responsibility of advocacy

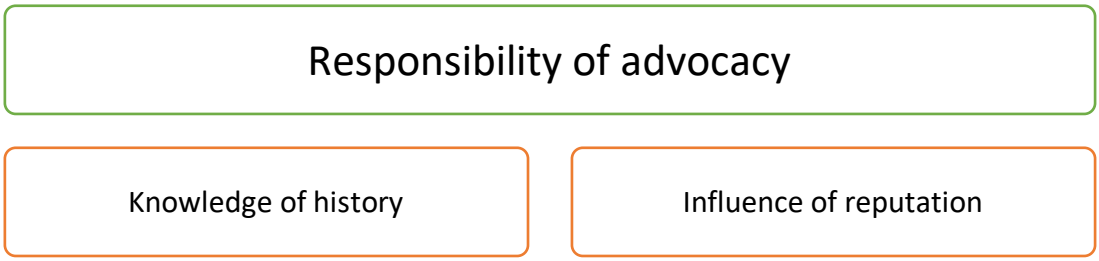

Figure 12. Second master table of superordinate and subordinate themes for participants' experiences of working with a child presenting with challenging behaviour in KS1.

Table 7. Superordinate, subordinate themes and quotes for master theme two 'responsibility of advocacy'.

Superordinate theme	Subordinate themes and Quotes
Responsibility of advocacy	Knowledge of history *'We have talked about another child in there, who you know, we want to see do well, they haven't had the greatest start in life and you always want the best for them' (Steve).* *'Because there are issues and he is a difficult child for us to manage and we know his history and it is a difficult history' (Pam).*

	'…he's had a hard life and they just probably need a bit more love and bit more understanding and that' (Elaine). Influence of reputation *'I thought it was probably the wrong thing to do for him, to miss all the breaks. And the dinners' (Rachel)* *'…as I said he's been through a lot of our classrooms and even teachers that haven't met him know about him and talk to me about it'. (Steve)* *'..before I was probably thinking, you know, because you get told, he's bad, he's bad, he's bad. But now I see him as different'. (Elaine)* *'…but I do see my role with Tom and other people, to keep chipping and saying let's take it from their point of view' (Pam).*

4.14.1 Responsibility of advocating

All participants except Rachel had historical involvement throughout Tom's school experience. Pam and Elaine knew his mother and grandmother professionally and within the community. Tom had remained at the school since nursery and attended meetings in school since he was a baby. Pam described the school as being his only constant environment, alluding to the secondary parental influence of the school. Each participant eluded to the responsibility that encompasses advocating for Tom. The knowledge and understanding of his history and experiences, in any capacity, could have fuelled their drive to support his achievement and wellbeing in school. This may be due to mirrored experiences in their personal lives, or in Pam's case the responsibility of managing the safeguarding process.

Advocacy was evident in the participants' commitment to challenge the conceptions and rhetoric surrounding Tom. His reputation within the school was described by participants as *that* 'bad', 'naughty' boy. Often his reputation was protected by managing his behaviour within the group. Steve described the 'desperate' attempts he made to keep Tom within his classroom and limit negative attention to the wider staff group. Ensuring that Tom had a positive experience of

school was a shared goal between participants, providing a sense of purpose and unity between them. Pam felt that this agenda filtered out towards the other staff and provided examples of when staff had managed him in a different way.

4.15 Shared experiences of group process consultation

This section details the collective superordinate themes across the four participants. The collective themes were determined by drawing upon the subordinate and superordinate themes across the participants, relabelling and applying theoretical knowledge (see Appendix 8.22 for presentation of themes).

4.16 Theme one: Space for reflection

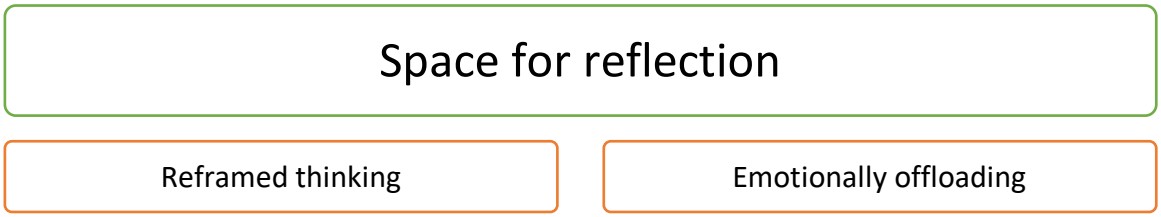

Figure 13. First master table of superordinate and subordinate themes for collective experiences of group consultation.

Table 8. Superordinate, subordinate themes and quotes for master theme one 'space for reflection'.

Superordinate theme	Subordinate themes and Quotes
Space for reflection	Reframed thinking *'Just by looking at it from different angle really. I think that's the main thing' (Rachel)* *'I think that it's helpful to have this more positive, let's look at what he has done and this is why'. (Steve)* *'Well, one it was nice to be asked to do it in the first place and I don't know, I just see things differently now'. (Elaine)* *'It's a really important question to ask and to think why might he have done that, you know, because you don't have the time in the moment to always be thinking about it' (Pam)* Emotionally offloading *'I was quite worried this morning that we weren't having the groups and I knew we'd had a difficult week with him' (Pam).*

	'I could come in and talk to Pam or Steve about something, or Rachel, rather than having to just keep it to myself, that's good as well'. (Elaine) *'There are lots of things that happen in the first five minutes of the day when you come in… Just sitting together and talking. I think it's important to talk'. (Rachel)* *'I think with Tom you'll always have something to talk about, there's not a day goes by that he doesn't do something that you could fill a session with' (Steve)*

4.16.1 Space for reflection

All of the participants supported the theme 'space for reflection' through their experiences. An interpretation of the group as a whole, perhaps influenced by personal experiences of teaching, was that group encountered end of year fatigue. The possible implications of this could have been that the experience of the groups was more rewarding and welcomed as they may have been less intrinsically reflective, due to time and fatigue pressures. Pam stated within her interview "it's the end of term and I'm tired now", and later referenced her dependence on the group for emotionally offloading. Pam and Steve shared how they stored events that occurred throughout the week to discuss them in the group sessions on a Friday morning. All participants made reference to an event that occurred where a decision was made within the wider school in response to Tom's challenging behaviour. The group individually expressed a desire to reflect and share their feelings about this event and made reference to their surprise and relief that the others shared their views. It could be concluded that the groups offered the participants an opportunity to offload their emotions, frustrations and stress, within a supportive and containing unit. As events were at times perceived and experienced in a mutual way this may have provided validation for the participant's feelings.

The groups appeared to offer an opportunity for participants to gather their thoughts and contemplate the events within the school day. In doing so alternative perspectives were developed that contradicted what was dominant within the wider staff group. Tom's reputation within the school was perceived as negative.

Offering the opportunity for participants to question this construct appeared important to them. Group members commented on the presence of an external person asking them to hypothesise the reasons behind events as being the agent to support reflection. This reframe in thinking is likely to have an impact on the group's behaviour, which is discussed in the next theme.

4.17 Theme two: Empowered team

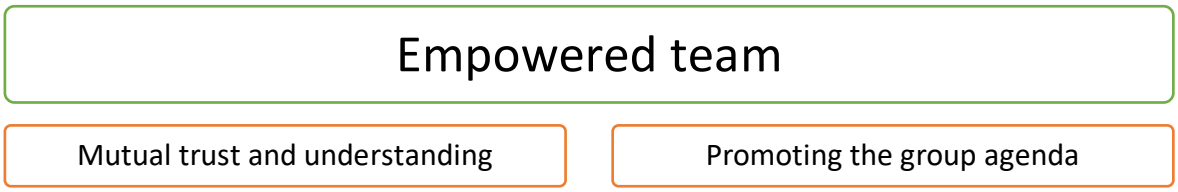

Figure 14. Second master table of superordinate and subordinate themes for group experiences of group consultation.

Table 9. Superordinate, subordinate themes and quotes for master theme two 'empowered team'.

Superordinate theme	Subordinate themes and Quotes
Empowered team	Mutual trust and understanding *'Whereas if someone is offering solutions or offering kind of ways around it, actually that's a lot more beneficial. I would say our attitude to Tom has improved, not improved that's the wrong word, I think our responses to what he does has improved' (Steve)* *'I can talk to Pam I can tell her anything and now since these 10 weeks I know I can talk to Steve about something or Rachel, without it going any further'. (Elaine)* *'I think the groups have been very supportive. I do think the groups. I think it's really, really been supportive to know there is a group of us, thinking the same thing or wanting to do the same thing for him'. (Pam)* Promoting the group agenda *'But we are the lead people on him, you know, if he has done something, between us we have to find a way to put it right.' (Steve)* *'You know that kind of stepping in when somebody is about to come and shout and tell him off, and we all know we are at it,*

	you know, we all know, we can, it's alright, we are sorting this' (Pam) *'It just makes me feel that I am allowed to think that I don't agree with certain things'. (Rachel)* *'I do want his last days to be nice times, that's not all down to me. I'm not the one in charge…'(Elaine)*

4.17.1 Empowered team

At the beginning of the groups it was notable that the participants spoke predominantly of Tom's behaviour, as the sessions progressed they reflected upon the influence of the wider staff dynamics and culture. Steve, Pam and Elaine were more open regarding their own emotions and shared personal childhood experiences. This was interpreted of this as trust developed between the participants enabling them to be more open. Pam and Steve made numerous references within their interview to the group members as 'us' and 'we', with other staff being 'them'. Steve and Elaine stated that they felt Pam "had chosen the right people for the groups"; this is in spite of some of the group members not knowing each other well. Over time the group appeared to develop a mutual respect and trust for each other, with each member stating that they now felt they had people that they could talk to within school. For Steve this support extended to developing his professional practise as he discussed the value of expertise within the groups and the ability to generate solutions to problems.

Pam, Steve and Elaine indicated how the group had helped to develop a set of norms and values, influenced perhaps by their reframed thinking and trust between each other. These set of norms guided the group in determining how to support Tom and challenge others within the school that did not align to these values. Rachel and Elaine expressed their surprise that others shared their frustrations of the school systems, as they viewed the school organisation as hierarchical, perhaps the hierarchy within the group was less pronounced and each of them were valued with an important role to play in supporting Tom. Pam made specific reference to 'an agenda between us' indicating that the group had explored theories and solutions in managing Tom's behaviour that were at times incongruent to the wider

school behaviour system. Each viewed the wider school system as overly punitive and demonstrated a unified approach to enforcing their method of managing Tom in spite of this. This was most clearly evidenced by Elaine and Pam. Elaine herself interfered to prevent Tom being withdrawn from activities that he enjoyed. Pam described how other staff members had persisted in maintaining a nurturing approach to Tom in spite of wider pressures to give sanctions. It could be that the consensus of the group empowered participants to pursue behaviour approaches that were defiant of the school culture, with the knowledge that there were a group of staff supporting them and sharing their goal. Overall the group viewed themselves as the primary leads in managing and supporting Tom, this was their identity as a group.

4.18 Reflections on the convergences and divergences within the group

The superordinate theme 'guided by values, pressured by systems' appears relevant to each participant in their experiences of working with Tom. The pressures experienced within the system may be individually reflective to their role within school. For Pam her pressures involved being submerged in the safeguarding process and managing the knowledge and responsibilities involved. For Steve the pressure for him appeared to be based on the perceptions of other staff, managing his reputation as a teacher and newly appointed member of the senior leader team. Compared to Pam his position appeared less secure and he was perhaps developing his identity. Pam appeared to have established her position in the school and gave examples of how she was viewed by other staff in the school: "they know I will always come back with the child's point of view".

Rachel described externalised pressures of exam expectations and parents' perceptions. She did not seem as affected by internal pressures within the school, or this was not reflected in her interview. She appeared to have an objective view of the school culture and was able to detach herself from it. Comparatively Elaine described her frustration in managing the pressure within the school system. She appeared to devalue her role ("I *only* take him to the allotment") and seemed to be removed from the wider school operations due to not being class based. Elaine and

Pam displayed a similar empowerment in that they actively engaged in behaviour that was fitting with their agenda rather than that set in the school.

All participants experienced the opportunity for reflection within the groups. There was a consensus that their attributions and patterns of thinking had shifted in some way as a result of the groups. For Steve the positive focus appeared important as he had experienced negativity throughout the year in teaching a challenging cohort of children. The groups seemed to offer a professional and emotional learning opportunity for him particularly. Pam disclosed her dependency on the groups to support her emotionally and inferred its importance to other members of the group, although Rachel did not share this. The group appeared to experience a unified bond which was perceived as supportive for Tom. Rachel may have had an established support network within school and was less dependent on the others for emotional offloading, or less comfortable in the groups to expose herself emotionally. Pam's experience of the groups was that the impact was evident within the wider school environment. This was not stated by other members of the group, although all of them made reference to how the group handled Tom in a unique and unified way. Pam viewed herself as influential within the school environment and her perceptions of the group's influence is in line with this.

4.19 Summary of Findings

The group's experiences of working with a child presenting with challenging behaviour in KS1 reflected an importance in taking a professional approach that was harmonised with their morals and values. This was at times challenged by external and internal pressures within the school environment. The participants portrayed themselves as advocates for Tom, empathising with his difficult history and safeguarding his reputation within the wider school setting. Each participant provided examples of when the school environment was punitive and fuelling of Tom's misrepresented reputation.

Participants' experiences of group consultation resembled a team mentality and established support network. The sessions seemed to offer them space to reflect upon Tom's behaviour and decide between them the appropriate strategies to manage it. There was a sense of empowerment as a result of this unified approach.

5 DISCUSSION

This chapter will initially summarise the findings of the study through the proposed research questions generated from the literature review. This section will discuss and critique each master theme accounting for relevant literature previously introduced and additional research where applicable. Consideration of the application of IPA, the implications of the research for practice and future research will be outlined.

5.1 Research question one: How do staff experience working with a child presenting with challenging behaviour in KS1?

The group summarised their experiences as being guided by values and pressured by systems; this related to how they managed behaviour, learning and their own emotions within the school system. A second identified theme was the role of advocacy in working with Tom, in terms of managing his reputation in school and ensuring an understanding of his difficult history. The themes will now be explored in turn in relation to relevant literature.

5.1.1 Guided by values, pressured by systems

The interpretation of accounts offered by participants denoted an intention within their professional role that was guided by beliefs and values. At times this appeared incongruent to the expectations placed on them by the school system. Each participant made reference to this and how it impacted their role in working with Tom. An area that seemed to be more pronounced was how participants' felt challenging behaviour should be managed. The group seemed to have a shared perception that the wider school system was overly punitive in managing Tom's behaviour.

Previous research has shared this view indicating that a 'one size fits all' punishment model is not conducive to students that have adverse life experiences or have low self-esteem, despite this being the dominant model in schools (Emerson, 2016). In relation to attachment theory, it could be argued that a punishment model exacerbates a negative internal working model, potentially emphasising a view of the young person as 'naughty' and 'disliked'. Pam made reference to this, recalling a time that Tom seemed to internalise a teacher's comments about him. She made

numerous comments regarding teachers' portrayal of themselves as powerful and dominant, referring to this being incongruent with her constructs of what makes an effective teacher. This was echoed in Elaine's account, as she was able to separate herself from the pressures to discipline in an authoritarian manner, although she acknowledged that it was there. Steve interpreted his experiences as feeling pressured to exert discipline on students from other staff members; he attributed this to him being one of the few male members of staff in the school.

Externalised pressures were discussed by Rachel in relation to parental and external governmental pressures on academic performance. Educational researchers have suggested that the UK is dominated by a 'performance outcome' based value culture, in which student academic results is regarded as the most important output (Hutchings, 2015). Pam and Steve also made reference to outcome-based pressures faced by teachers and the negative consequences for students with a similar profile to Tom. Steve and Rachel appeared to experience an anxiety around balancing the demands for the rest of the class and tailoring them to Tom. This may be due to the overlaying pressure of academic performance and discipline being incongruent with his needs. In relation to previous research detailing the anxieties experienced by nursery teachers, organisational pressure was identified as a significant factor (Boyer, Reimer and Irvine, 2013) and in Dawson's (2013) study of teachers working with LAC.

Each account interpreted their approach to managing their emotions in working with Tom. Feelings of frustration, anger and disappointment were recalled by each participant, alongside positive emotions and experiences of a close rapport with Tom. Steve made multiple references to the emotional labour involved in working with Tom and the influence of the wider school environment. He expressed strong emotional reactions reflecting on a very difficult year of teaching. Research claims that professional breakdown in teachers is not simply linked to the time factor (i.e., number of years teaching), but is influenced by a range of contextual variables, such as overall wellbeing within the school context (Ryan and Deci, 2000). A protective factor for the group was the support from colleagues and between themselves.

Steve and Rachel explained how they supported each other to take breaks when their emotions became difficult to mask. Incorporating emotional labour theory, it could be argued that Steve and Rachel engaged in 'surface acting', masking their frustration to commit to their professional role within the classroom. When this strategy was exhaustive, they relied upon each other to eradicate the risk of burnout. Negative feelings towards the self and role are recognised consequences of emotional labour within research (Grandey, 2000; Brotheridge and Lee, 2002) and could impact on relationships with students (Kinman, Wray and Strange, 2011). In contrast Elaine's account portrayed positive emotions towards Tom, which she felt able to display to him, possibly indicating experiences of more 'deep acting'. Elaine attributed this to the autonomy in her role and not being restrained by meeting outcomes, therefore experiencing emotional consonance in her role and desired behaviour. Interestingly Pam's account could have been interpreted as experiencing emotional labour in relation to Tom, wider staff and the school environment. She described incidents of surface acting in times she felt that Tom was evoking feelings of frustration and anger. Another incidence was her description of Tom distancing himself from her and the possible masking of the impact of the rejection. Deep acting appeared relevant when Pam talked about his history and her clear perceptions of how staff should interact with students in a nurturing manner. The recall of staff experiences assimilates to those described by Edwards (2016) further indicating that emotional labour could be an important feature of the teaching profession (Sutton, 2003).

5.1.2 Responsibility of advocacy

Importance of advocacy echoes previous research in this area as being a key feature of LAC key adult experiences (Underdown, 2016, unpublished thesis). It is thought that staff were able to advocate for Tom, which involved challenging constructs within the wider system. This may have been facilitated by their knowledge of his history and key-adult relationship with him. Teachers within Edwards' (2016) study expressed feelings of empathy and sadness in discovering a LAC's difficult history. Staff within this research echoed these feelings and interpreted how this impacted on their interactions with Tom. Elaine made reference to her own childhood and how this deepened her empathy and understanding of Tom. The knowledge of his

history was inferred to be supportive in staff understanding his behaviour, as suggested in literature this is likely to enable a supportive relationship with LAC (Davis, 2003; Bombèr, 2009). For Pam the burden of extensive knowledge and involvement in Tom's history may have negative feelings of guilt and additional responsibility, although her apparent resilience could be attributed to her personal characteristics, attitude, values and coping strategies (Evers et al, 2004). Arguably this understanding of Tom's background could have developed staff's attribution of his behaviour as being outside his control and depersonalised, unintended to cause detriment to them. Although the researcher acknowledges this alternatively could have been a consequence of reflection within the group consultation sessions (Knotek, Rogers and Babinski, 2002).

Participants' account of their experiences relayed a role in advocating for Tom in countering his negative reputation within the school. Perceptions of some wider staff members' attributions of his behaviour indicated a discourse of it being intentional, personal and fixed. Research has suggested that teachers' attributions affect their emotional state and how they respond to challenging behaviour. If a teacher believes misbehaviour is a result of parenting, which is an external, unstable and uncontrollable stance, then their willingness to engage in school intervention may be compromised (Mavropoulou and Padeliad, 2002). Fixed attributions of this nature are likely to result in teachers using punitive measures in responding to behaviour (Greene, 2009), which was recalled in participants' experiences in this research. Pam in particular attempted to challenge these attributions and what she felt were 'knee jerk reactions'. The resistance she experienced may be explained by the school's defence system; the norms, beliefs and values of those individuals being integral to the culture, in terms of what behaviour 'we' accept at this school (Prosner, 1999).

5.2 Research question two: How do staff experience group process consultation?

5. 4.1. Space for reflection

Experiences of reflection and protected time to talk were apparent in each participant's account. In line with previous research of group consultation, the

opportunity to reflect upon practice was a significant feature of consultee experiences (Babinski and Rogers, 1998; Masse et al, 2013; Hayes and Stringer, 2016). A key attribute to enabling reflection was the protected time offered and the consistency of the weekly sessions. Pam and Steve made reference to storing content within the week to discuss in the consultation sessions on a Friday. Pam described her concern that the final session would not go ahead and the perceived negative impact this would have had on the group. This possibly indicated that the reflection became increasingly important to Pam and Steve as the sessions progressed.

Each participant highlighted different aspects of the consultation process that they felt were important to them. Rachel indicated the opportunity to talk facilitated a strong working relationship between herself and Steve; this mirrors a statement from Davison and Duffy (2017) suggesting that the process can support ongoing effective communication between teachers and teaching assistants. Steve made numerous references to the knowledge and support gained within the group, leading to a reframe in his thinking and additional strategies in his practice. Elaine also noted the reframe in her perceptions of Tom's behaviour and her perceptions of staff. Theory development was highlighted within accounts as supporting them to consider the possible functions of Tom's behaviour. Within the literature, authors advocate that school staff be cognisant of the unconscious defence mechanisms that can be evoked in pupils and staff, recommending that staff enable pupils to acknowledge and make sense of their responses (Delaney, 2012: Bombèr, 2009). Knotsek et al (2002) found that teachers' narratives about a focus student became more positive as a result of group consultation. Within this research the participants' accounts are given reflectively therefore it cannot be determined whether their attributions of Tom remained consistent or changed throughout the consultation process. Steve and Elaine offered a perception that they 'see things differently now', suggesting this occurred as a consequence of the process consultation sessions.

In contrast Rachel did not appear to value the consultation sessions in the same way, highlighting that the space and time alone is not sufficient in supporting

reflection in the group. Pam, Steve and Elaine made reference to the role of the process consultant in facilitating reflection. Pam specifically noted the questioning used and stated how she had replicated this in questioning staff about the possible functions of Tom's behaviour. Elaine highlighted the theory and strategy development within the process as being applicable for her. The impact of facilitation has been noted within research, with all except Rachel's account mirroring findings that the consultant can determine the effectiveness of the process (Soni, 2013). The most valued functions seemed to be time keeping, effective questioning and supporting group harmony (Schein, 1998). This is expressed with the necessary caution that participants gave their experiences of the process to the consultant directly, therefore raising the likelihood of researcher bias. Rachel's account contradicted previous research in that she felt the process could have been facilitated by an internal staff member, whereas Pam felt the neutrality of an external person was a necessity (Bozic and Carter, 2002; Hayes and Stringer, 2016).

Each participant referenced the emotional intensity of their role and how peer support offered within the group consultation provided an opportunity to offload. Previous research has suggested some young people in care can hold unresolved feelings of guilt and loss that may be unconsciously projected on to trusted teachers (Winter, 2010). Whilst a secure teacher relationship is thought to be a fundamental factor in supporting positive educational experiences (Sugden, 2013) the staff within this research expressed the emotional resilience that's necessary to maintain it. Pam and Steve stated the importance of sharing and reflecting upon their emotional reactions to Tom, Steve in particular openly expressed his feelings of frustration. The group shared their feelings in regards to punitive decisions made in the wider school environment, their negative emotions appeared to be collectively experienced. The group appeared to reflect upon the suggestion made by Delaney (2012 pg. 123) in that teachers spend longer having confrontation with students than reflecting on the emotions that they are conveying and how this is received. Pam made reference to how this was supported within the group consultation by sharing her experiences of "trying to separate some of those emotions sometimes

because he will want to drag you in to being cross with him and, but, yea. So being able to talk through that, think through that and being questioned about why he might, and you've asked why do you think he might have done that?" (Pam, line 306).

The safety of sharing emotions may have been facilitated by the ground rules set within the initial session, although this was not explicitly mentioned in any of the interviews, Steve tested the boundaries within the group sessions by saying 'I don't think you are going to like this Pam but…', the group would then restate the ground rule 'be non-judgemental'. Within his account he expressed the openness of the groups enabling him to share concerns and reflections with Pam, which she echoed. Schein (1988) suggests that ground rules are supportive in maintaining collaborative behaviour within the group, although the promotion of open emotional expression could have been enabled by the facilitator through expressions of empathy and unconditional positive regard (Egan, 2002). Critically, however, expressing emotions openly was not enabled for all of the group. Schein (1969) differentiates between the four areas of self: the open self (revealing about ourselves), concealed self (deliberately kept from others), blind area (concealed from ourselves but noticeable to others) and unknown self (unknown to us and others). This can be identified in participants here - where Steve may have displayed more of his concealed self in the earlier groups, the opposite is true for Rachel. Caplan (1970) notes that the concealed self is personal, and the researcher was mindful of this in Rachel's case particularly.

5. 4.2. Empowered team

A second theme to emerge from the participants' collective experiences was their sense of empowerment as a team. Each reflected on the mutual trust that developed between them throughout the consultation groups. Elaine noted that she now had a group of people within the school that she felt she could talk to and know that it would be kept confidential. The group exposed their feelings of the wider school environment and aspects of the system that they perceived as being detrimental to their role. Elaine and Rachel stated their surprise in learning that the other members of the groups shared their views and granted them a sense of

permission for their feelings. This is in line with a statement by Hochschild (1983) who suggested that peer support can be an avenue to "…separate the company's meaning of anger from their own meaning, the company rules of feeling from their own…" (p. 197). The consultation groups appeared to support the staff team to manage Tom in a consistent and unified manner. They appeared to develop a unified way of reflecting upon Tom's behaviour and agreed a manner in which to manage him. Pam and Steve expressed the supportive nature of a unified approach, trusting that a group within the school shared their values and worked preventatively. Nash and Schlosser (2015) stated that 'a significant predictor of teacher stress was the use of reactive (as opposed to proactive) behaviour management strategies. Whereas reactive strategies are used in response to disruptive behaviour, proactive strategies are instigated to prevent troublesome behaviour from occurring or escalating. The greater sense of teacher control in the latter could enhance staff well-being.' (pg 168). The accounts of the staff in this context suggested that preventative and unified working was supportive.

This theme relates to previous research reflecting on the systemic factors influencing consultation. Following interviews with 24 primary school teachers, Miller (2003) describes examples of discontent with teachers' personal views and values and those imposed by the school system. He theorised that consultation with the EP created a temporary boundary that permitted the development of new values and constructs, that led to collaborative solutions without threatening the homeostasis of the wider system. Within this research it could be suggested that a temporary boundary was created around the group as a result of the consultation sessions, as the participants discussed their experiences of 'an agenda between them'. Boundaries refer to the physical and psychological borders of a system which can contain anxieties of those within it, as described by Bion (1970). Similarly, boundaries can be around the behaviour expected within a role dependant on the expectations ascribed by the organisation, the expectations of others and the experience of the individual. Incongruence between these three elements of a role is thought to increase anxiety, which may have been highlighted within participants' accounts. In relation to this theoretical view, it could be proposed that Elaine and

Pam experienced congruence between what was expected of them in their role by the school, other staff and themselves. Pam made reference to how she was perceived by others and this seemed congruent with how she saw herself (advocate of child voice). In contrast, Steve appeared to grapple with the expectations placed on him by the organisation with his promotion to senior leadership, his perceived expectations of other staff and those of himself.

5.3 Limitations of the study

The researcher has advocated that IPA was an effective methodology in addressing the proposed research questions. As with any methodology, the approach comes with limitations and the acknowledged strengths within IPA can also be identified as its weaknesses (Willig, 2007).

The participants did not complete diary entries in the way that was anticipated within the research, as only Steve and Rachel completed an entry, completing one each. Limited time was identified as the fundamental barrier to enabling participants to engage in this aspect of the research. The diaries aimed to supplement the details of experiences given within the interviews, and offer a forum for participants to express their experiences that would not be in the presence of the researcher. As this was not achieved, it could be argued that participants' experiences are reflected solely upon how they felt at the moment of interview and may not be as rich as what would have been offered in weekly research diary entries, reflecting their experiences over time.

This research was carried out over one academic term within one school setting within an East Midlands city. The study therefore concentrates on the experiences of staff within that setting at that specific time frame. IPA does not attempt to offer a generalisable view, however these findings offer an interpretation to be utilised as a framework that readers can relate to their own practice, experiences or theoretical knowledge.

A pilot study was not carried out in order to appraise the interview questions, which could have provided additional information of their appropriateness in answering the research question, although, the questions were carefully constructed with

regard to previous research and supervision feedback. It was felt that flexibility within the interview schedule made this less detrimental. It would have been difficult to have conducted a pilot interview that would not have influenced subsequent interviews, as the group were the only people that had experienced the phenomenon in question.

The findings of the research were developed and presented through the interpretation of the researcher. Whilst the permitted detail and openness is a recognised strength for this research, the potential bias incurred is an identified weakness. As indicated in section 3.9, the researcher acknowledges the potential for bias as the interviewer had the dual role of process consultant and researcher, which may have influenced participants' responses. This is a recognised limitation of this research due to the risk of social desirability in participants' accounts. They may have offered a biased reflection of their experiences and felt pressured to offer an evaluation of the facilitation. Attempts were made to limit the power imbalance between researcher and participants through developing a rapport overtime. This may have been compromised at times by formal procedures that were necessary for the research, such as audio recording the interviews and reading the scripts detailing ethical procedures.

Similarly, the researcher conducted the process consultation sessions and may have unconsciously interpreted the data in a positive, complimentary manner. IPA guidelines and supervision were sought to overcome this potential bias, ensuring that interpretations are clearly evident within the database. Additionally, it is acknowledged that the researcher engaged with IPA for the first time and therefore encountered this learning experience as the analysis progressed. The approach being new and flexible was both an advantage and disconcerting.

The sample of participants were effectively selected by the SENCo (Pam) and the head teacher, with the rationale of ensuring that the experiences investigated were of significance to the participants (as advocated by Smith et al, 2009). It is possible that participants were selected as they shared a unified view or due to their relationships within the school.

Some of the quotes and details of participant's experiences have not been highlighted in the main body of this research due to ethical considerations. It was felt that the inclusion of certain details may have revealed personal experiences of participants that were not directly related to the experience in question, although could have supported hypotheses made within the interpretation. In other cases, data was not highlighted due to risk of compromising the position of the participants within the school and over exposing them.

5.4 Strengths of the study

Whilst acknowledging the limitations of the study, it is important to highlight the strengths of the research. The current study provided an in-depth account of a selective group of teachers' experiences in working with a child presenting with challenging behaviour and engaging with process consultation. The findings in this study offer an insight to participants' experiences of the process and the reflections of the consultant. The benefits of IPA permitted an interpretative account that acknowledged the position of the researcher, which was discovered as a neglected area within the systematic literature search. Additionally, the researcher's active role in the consultation and interviewing may have enabled a fuller understanding of their unique context.

To the author's knowledge, only a few studies have sought school staff views on their experiences working with a child looked after, and none in relation to group process consultation. This research captures the experiences of staff in a range of roles that encounter challenges in working with a child presenting with challenging behaviour in KS1. Their accounts indicate that process consultation provided the opportunity for reflections in their practice and the methodology chosen permitted them to discuss examples of how this applied to their school interactions. The data detected some systemic implications of the group process consultation which could have been overlooked with alternative methodologies. The study hoped to relay the participants' experiences and highlight the multifaceted nature of working with complex students within complex systems.

5.5 Process consultant reflections

This section addresses the reflections of the researcher following the engagement as process consultant. McFadzean (2002) suggests that training consultants ask themselves the following questions when reflecting on group consultation: 'what methods did you use to establish trust between yourself and the group?' and 'what did you learn from your experience of supporting this group that might change the way you practice?'. Subsequently these questions will now be addressed in turn. The researcher aimed to build trust and rapport with the group and facilitate the same between the participants. Methods adopted were guided by previous research (Schein, 1969; Hanko, 2002; Farouk, 2004) with the hope of establishing a safe environment to enable open discussion. Additional affective elements were added by the researcher, such as bringing coffee and food to each session. The ground rules appeared effective in providing safety in the group; they were referred to when participants were anxious to share views that were dissimilar to others.

The frequency of the groups may have facilitated trust, ownership and commitment between participants. This was demonstrated through their attendance and commitment within the sessions and evidenced by how they had adapted or tried something as a result of strategies developed earlier. The attributes of the consultant in facilitating the task and maintenance functions of the process may have enabled trust in the group. The consultant model used may have enabled the flow of the sessions and offered predictability for the consultees. The process was potentially beneficial in enabling the consultant to be explicit regarding the psychology and stages in the process that were used, which has been advocated by other practitioners (Wagner, 2000). Consultant engagement in active listening, summarising, clarifying and reflecting is likely to have elicited openness in the groups. Pam and Steve made explicit reference to the role of the facilitator in developing reflection. Therapeutic elements of facilitation: unconditional positive regard, empathy and consonance, could have been impactful for Steve as he likened the experience to counselling. The solution focused questioning was attributed to enabling a positive and proactive outlook on situations.

Professional learning from the enactment of process consultant begins with the reflection of Farouk's model application for this and future groups. The process was originally designed for staff working in a variety of school settings, therefore has been applied in this case as it was perhaps not intended. Nonetheless, Pam and Steve picked up elements of the techniques used by the consultant in that they recognised the use of questioning and theory development. Pam shared that she has since incorporated this into her practice when discussing students with teachers. The notion of 'passing on psychology' as Farouk (2004) intended the model was not a goal of this research, however it received mixed reviews from the participants in terms of feasibility. The absence of the facilitator may have limited the reflective experiences of the consultees and there was a concern that in the absence of the facilitator the sessions could lose focus and involve less constructive negativity.

A question remains whether in the absence of the model, would the maintenance functions of the facilitator have been adequate in enabling a similar experience. In the researcher's opinion, the model is necessary as a foundation for structuring the discussion, enabling objectivity and purpose to be explicit. In the initial sessions the structure of the model was useful in helping the group find a collaborative rhythm and building trust to open up. The initial stages of 'problem presentation' and 'reflective questioning' were less distinct within this research, as the group shared the same 'problems', although offered their individual experiences of them. Eventually the stages appeared to become integrated in that often problems, theories and strategies were offered within a discussion, followed by another problem presentation. Eventually, as the sessions progressed, this structure seemed less important or became more embedded.

In facilitating the groups, the consultant reflected on the significance of group dynamics. There are many complexities that can impact upon the helping relationship, as perhaps indicated by the individual differences of experiences in this case. Schein (1969) has talked extensively of consultee's behaviour in group consultation. The notion of circular process and self-fulfilling prophecies, relevant to this context, are based on the previous experience people have as an expectation

of how they will assert themselves in a group and their potential to influence others. Pam seemed to view herself as articulate and influential, hence always having that presence in the groups. Whereas Elaine may have viewed herself as less articulate and influential, carrying the risk that she may be overlooked and contribute less. Over time within the groups Elaine seemed to make increasing contributions and took ownership of all the 'actions' generated within the groups. This may have been her way of establishing worth and value to the group. Her contribution was noted by Steve and Rachel in their interviews. Noting the dynamics within the group, the communication styles and expressions of self within the consultees will be a fundamental skill in future consultation.

5.6 Future research

As discussed within the introduction and methodology section of this research, the focus of LAC and group process consultation is a relatively recent and limited area of study. Therefore, there are many possible areas worthy of further exploration. This study addressed the experiences of staff working with a child presenting with challenging behaviour in KS1, acknowledging that this is a very limited sample within a specific context. The research could be replicated across a range of settings, e.g. secondary schools, specialist settings, provisional units and with staff working with young people of all ages. As there were only four staff members in this study, further research may explore the experiences of staff within a larger group and whether this impacts on the group dynamics. Additionally, the research could be replicated to include external professionals that work with LAC such as virtual school teachers, behaviour support, and respite workers, although this could be practically difficult in negotiating time and associated financial aspects.

The study intended to elicit participants' experiences through diary entries; future research may wish to develop this further by overcoming the limitations noted within this study. Changes in methodology may be problematic due to the contextual nature of the intervention. Realistic evaluation (Pawson and Tilley, 1997) and action research models may be suited to future group consultation research as it accounts for the contextual factors related to its implementation. Realistic evaluation could be beneficial to unpick the role of the consultant and what

elements of the process (model, relationships, task and maintenance skills) lead to the outcomes.

Throughout this research, questions were raised which could be explored further. In the accounts of the participants their attitudes and attributions were stated after the group consultation sessions, therefore raising the question were their attitudes and attributions influenced by the consultation groups, or were they already like this? Each participant offered hypotheses for Tom's behaviour in their accounts, this research did not seek to determine the changes as a result of the consultation. Future research could explore the changes in attributions before, during and after the consultation, possibly with discourse analysis as in Knotek, Babinski and Rogers (2002).

A further potential research question came from Pam's account in a comment she made about the group process consultation impacting upon the wider staff environment (although this was not stated by the other participants). Subsequent research could attempt to capture the views of the wider staff group that also work with the focus student or are impacted in some way by the consultation groups.

5.7 Implications for schools

At a school level, the study advocates the importance of facilitating and promoting staff and pupil relationships, particularly for LAC, by adopting a commitment to the promotion of social and emotional wellbeing to support the resilience and attainment of students. The recognition of staff wellbeing as being an integral feature of this agenda is important. Staff that work with a LAC should be given protected time to meet and share their experiences. The support of external professionals can develop this discussion further and provide a training element. As highlighted in this research, the school behaviour system and perceptions of wider staff were perceived as hindering to the participants' practice. A punishment model can cause conflict within schools and reinforces students' negative views of themselves. If challenging behaviour is not recognised as a form of communication then the pupil may become increasingly anxious, angry or antagonistic if sanctions are implemented rather than attempting to understand the behaviour (Nash,

Schosser and Scarr, 2016). Consultation groups provide an opportunity for staff to reflect on the possible reasons behind behaviour and collaboratively explore how best to respond. Alongside this a flexible, restorative behaviour system is likely to be congruent with teaching LAC. Greene (2009) recommends a drastic shift in systems that are not working for students displaying challenging behaviour, which incorporates strategies that are proactive rather than reactive and provide space for people to work on problems collaboratively.

The researcher met with the participants for a debrief session to share details of the study findings (see Appendix 8.24). The perceived implications for the focus participants were their increased confidence in being able to apply the solutions they developed to students of a similar profile to Tom. They shared that they may develop their own consultation groups for future students and involve newly qualified teachers.

5.8 Implications for educational psychologists

EPs are ideally placed to support schools in implementing targeted approaches to working with LAC, due to their knowledge of relevant psychological theory, understanding of complex systems and strategies for managing learning and behaviour. As research has indicated that psychologically informed understanding of behaviour creates a more positive and preventative reaction from staff, the role of training seems pertinent. Theories of attachment, resilience and emotional labour could be relevant to support staff's understanding of their pupil's emotions and their own, as a teacher that understands the antecedents of the behaviour is thought to have a different and more effective response (Taylor, 2010).

As identified within the literature search access to mental health support may be limited for some young people, consequently EPs may be drawn upon to support schools in addressing this. Resiliency factors such as secure relationships and sense of belonging can be utilised by supporting staff to recognise their own skills. Consultation may be a useful approach in reframing staff views about mental health and supporting their development of effective management strategies.

In discussions around LAC, it would be pertinent for EPs to continue recognising and monitoring the wellbeing of school staff working with that student. The development of group consultation sessions may enable staff to execute the strategies offered within training, reflect upon their feelings and how they impact on their interactions with the young person. As indicated in this research, the setting up of consultation sessions is an integral feature of its impact. Firstly, negotiating the time needed to implement the intervention was a fundamental aspect, relying upon support from the wider school staff and leadership. Research recommends that sessions are implemented within school hours to encourage protected time for consultees. This would depend on a dedicated agenda within the school to undertake this. Secondly, the participation in the groups is considered most effective when voluntary, which may need to be made explicit to school leaders. EPs are ideally placed to support the negotiation and implementation of consultation groups due to their knowledge base of system theories and organisational change (Prochaska, 2000).

This research suggests that EPs should continue to advocate the importance of adult-pupil relationships within schools, particularly for LAC, understanding what teaching staff need to enable this to be successful. Maintaining awareness of the evidence base for interventions supporting social and emotional needs of students and staff may be useful, particularly when met with resistance due to the drive for schools to focus on academic outcomes (Hutchings, 2015). Given the identified vulnerability of LAC EPs should continue to prioritise this area of work and collaborate with the range of professionals that promote LAC attainment and wellbeing. This focus may be allocated as a specialist EP role to unsure relevant research is disseminated across the service.

5.9 Implications for local authorities / policy makers

The current research has offered the experiences of school staff working with a child presenting with challenging behaviour in KS1 and engaging in group process consultation. The systemic aspects of the participants' experiences have been explored in previous sections. This may be particularly relevant to local authorities and policy makers. Whilst there is an acknowledged drive to improve the mental

health of young people (Weare, 2015), this research indicates the need for recognition and management of teaching wellbeing; without this the initiatives to support children are likely to be compromised. As indicated in research, teaching has been identified as one of the most stressful, least rewarding and psychologically testing professions, alongside ambulance staff and social workers (Johnson, Cooper, Cartwright, Donald, Taylor and Millet, 2005). Therefore, there would be an expectation that school staff are offered supervision to a similar capacity to ambulance staff and social workers. A proactive and preventative measure, such as protected time, peer support and group supervision, could potentially support teaching staff retention and reduce pupil exclusions.

Participants in this research experienced elements of the school behaviour system as being damaging to the LAC they worked with. Consequently, policy makers and local authorities could support schools to execute positive behaviour systems that have a restorative focus. Whilst the LAC in this research was not at risk of exclusion, this is a disproportionately common experience for many students with this profile. Exclusion should be the absolute final consequence of a series of graduated responses, facilitated if necessary by external support. Group process consultation has indicated a potential intervention as part of this supported and preventative response.

It is hoped that this study encourages policy makers to reconsider the pressures and motivations that are placed on schools in the UK, as these could be counterproductive to achieving the intended outcomes. As summarised by Hargreaves, “by focusing only on cognitive standards themselves, and the rational processes to achieve them, we may, ironically, be reinforcing structures and professional expectations that undermine the very emotional understanding that is foundational to achieving and sustaining those standards” (2000 pg. 825). Evoking academic pressure and stress may be particularly detrimental to vulnerable students, as teaching staff may be less emotionally available to support their needs. This was concluded in research conducted by the National Union of Teaching (NUT) indicating that the assessment, results driven culture of schools leaves little opportunity for social and emotional wellbeing teaching and relationship

development. This was highlighted as being particularly damaging to vulnerable students (Hutchings, 2015).

Implications for the LA in which the research was conducted has thus far been the addition of staff group consultation sessions to the EPS brochure, which is being promoted to schools as part of the traded service. The LA is currently developing a support package for schools to improve their inclusive practice and reduce exclusions. Group process consultation is being incorporated as part of the offer for schools. The service has also recently increased its involvement with the virtual school team. The researcher shared the study purposes at a virtual school conference and following its completion a participant presented their experiences. That same participant is developing the use of Farouk's consultation model with designated teachers across schools in the LA.

5.10 Reflections as a researcher

Conducting this research has had an impact on the researcher personally and professionally. To the researcher, teaching staff in this research presented as passionate, caring and committed. An exemplary group of school staff working in what appeared to be a supportive and nurturing school. Still their accounts echoed feelings of frustration from systemic pressure and barriers, reflecting the implications that wider societal and political norms have upon working with vulnerable children in society. This enabled the researcher to reflect on the wider systems at play when working with individual staff, where their pressures are, motivations and attributions. EPs have a unique role in supporting schools to prioritise the wellbeing of their staff and recognise the potential benefits for them, students and the school generally.

The researcher's skills in consultation are still developing, as perhaps they will always be. Maintaining a self-reflective focus on the consultees' behaviour, expressions and emotions felt important. As advocated for school staff, the researcher felt that this was best achieved when the consultant herself was emotionally regulated and safe to manage others emotions. The researcher feels immense gratitude to the participants in this study for the opportunity to share their world view and experiences of group process consultation.

6 CONCLUSION

6.1 Summary of findings

This research set out to explore the experiences of staff working with a child presenting with challenging behaviour in KS1 and engaging in group process consultation, capturing the experiences of a class teacher, teaching assistant, SENCo and lunchtime teaching assistant working with a LAC in KS1 within a mainstream primary school. Two superordinate themes were developed to summarise participants' experiences working with a child presenting with challenging behaviour in KS1. The first 'guided by values, pressured by systems' illustrated the potential incongruence of punitive school behaviour systems and meeting the needs of the child, leading to the second theme of 'advocacy' in key adults protecting LAC wellbeing and supporting wider staff in understanding their needs. In summary of participants' experiences of group process consultation, two superordinate themes were interpreted: 'space for reflection' and 'empowered team'. Group process consultation appeared to offer a protected opportunity for participants to reflect upon and develop their practice. Within this case, the participants appeared to establish a support network that was empowered in meeting the needs of a child presenting with challenging behaviour who is looked after. The findings have been disseminated to the local authority of which it was conducted, by the researcher and a participant. It is hoped that this research can add a meaningful contribution to the literature base of working with looked after children and group process consultation.

6.2 Concluding comments

This research was conducted at a time of increased accountability for schools in relation to academic outcomes and recently intensified responsibility for mental health (Weare, 2015; DH, 2014). Whilst the high expectations of academic outcomes are important, many feel that the pressure upon schools hinder their ability to meet the social and emotion needs of students (Hutchings, 2015). Arguably one of the factors contributing to this pressure is the wider limitations placed on external mental health services. This has particular relevance to LAC as the academic attainment and mental health outcomes for the group are a concern

(Meltzer, 2002) and access to mental health support can be hindered due to instability in placement (Bonfield et al, 2010). Teaching staff are often identified as a consistent relationship for LAC, which is an important protective factor in building resilience. In facilitating this relationship staff need to be resilient themselves and reflective of their own emotional wellbeing, particularly if students display challenging behaviour (Bombèr, 2012). Work place stress has been acknowledged as highly prevalent in the teaching profession (NUT, 2013), with limited focus on improving staff wellbeing. This was highlighted 16 years ago as Hanko (2002) warned of the consequences to educational policies that promote a results-centred and prescriptive teaching climate. In her view the risk was a lack of appreciation for the affective dimension of learning, devaluing of teachers' profession and the 'sapping of morale' in the profession. Whilst the concerns raised then feel dishearteningly relevant to the education system today, there may be waves of recognition evident in policy makers as the newly appointed chief of Ofsted Amanda Spielman, referenced her ambition for inspectors to focus on staff wellbeing and an enriched, inclusive curriculum (DfE transcript, 2017; 2018). This may present an opportunity for EPs to further reinforce the importance of staff wellbeing and support schools in raising academic attainment of LAC whilst maintaining a focus on social and emotional needs.

Group process consultation has the potential to support schools with managing staff wellbeing. The establishment of regular consultation groups to support staff wellbeing relies upon a commitment from schools and recognition from policy makers. Within this research it has been experienced as allowing an opportunity for reflection and relationship building in staff. The participants in this case described the emotional intensity of working with a looked after child in terms of managing their learning and behaviour within a wider system that can be detrimental to their aims. Consultation appeared to offer staff a chance to question and reflect upon their attributions and those of others, as shared by Elaine in her quote: '...before I was probably thinking, you know, because you get told, he's bad, he's bad, he's bad. But now I see him as different'.

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8 APPENDICIES

8.1 Appendix 1: Search outcomes derived from the systematic review.

Table 10. Outcomes of literature search

Search engine	Search terms	Results	Results within criteria	Date searched
Web of Science	'group consultation' OR 'support groups', AND 'collaborative OR problem solving'. Refine results: school staff then looked after children (0)	425	3	26.06.2017
Psych – info (ovid)	(group consultation or support groups) and (collaborative or problem solving) and (school staff or teachers)	24	4 (one duplicate and one text unavailable) so total of 2	26.06.2017
	(group consultation or support groups) and (collaborative or problem solving) and (looked after children)	0		
Scopus	(group consultation or support groups) and (collaborative or problem solving) and (school staff or teachers)	200	5 (two duplicate)	
	(group consultation or support groups) and (collaborative or problem solving) and (looked after children)	0		
Google scholar	group consultation or support groups) and (collaborative or problem solving) and (school staff or teachers)	71,400	8	26.06.2017
	group consultation or support groups) and (collaborative or problem solving) and (looked after children)	54,000	1	26.06.2017
Grey literature	group consultation or support groups) and (collaborative or problem solving) and (looked after children) and (school staff)	6	4	26.06.2017

8.2 Appendix 2: Excluded studies from systematic review

Table 11 Excluded studies from systematic review

Search engine	Study details	Methodology	Outcomes	Reason for exclusion
Web of science	Teacher support teams for SEN in primary schools. Norwich and Daniels (1997)	Stated that was unable to find comparable schools to act as control group or ethical in not allowing teachers access to help. TST met weekly for 30-45 minutes. 8 schools – 3 infants and 5 juniors. Trained staff members to implement TST over 3 days training. Schools then managed themselves. Post-Questionnaire as evaluation and selected interviews.	TST logs: (1) Ten of the 49 cases (20%) in which specific notes were made about increased teacher confidence and happiness. (2) Sixteen of the 49 cases (33%) in which some degree of child improvement was noted. (3) Fourteen of the 49 (28%) which involved some future action with the consequences as yet unknown. Referring teachers: Fourteen out of 41 or 34% reported that the TST enabled them to distance themselves from a problem and re-examine their activities. Nine out of 41 or 22% reported that the process enabled problems to be aired. (3) Five out of 41 or 13% reported that the process enabled them to form their own strategies. (4) Five out of 41 or 13% cited the TST as an opportunity to let off steam legitimately and that it was cathartic to talk to sympathetic colleagues with a non-judgemental attitude.	The eight schools had varying approaches to implementing the TSTs. Highlighting the impact of systemic factors in determining the success. Those that conducted it successfully reported positive aspects during interview and in the questionnaire. Some of the teachers that decided not to attend TST questioned the value and relevance to them. Was not facilitated by an EP and the process used is unclear – (similar to Stringer et al, 1992). Reduced psychology input. Not detailed about experiences.
Scopus	An investigation into the nature of inclusion problem solving	PST within a case study school in USA. Audio recorded the consultation groups and then 21 interviews with participants.	Teacher interviews revealed three main benefits: social support from colleagues, new strategies and reflection on practice. Issues raised were time constraints and too many cases to discuss.	Teachers found the group consultation to be beneficial, however some negatives were reported. The groups

	teams (Williamson and McLeskey, 2011)	Problem presenters = progress, behaviours.	Some group dynamic issues were raised as teachers felt blamed, sometimes conflict and lack of focus.	were not facilitated by an EP or external person. Similar PC used though.
Google scholar	The teacher support program- Westling et al 2006	In response to dissatisfaction and stress in staff – implemented a teacher support system involving collaborative groups, online and in class support. Over 3 years covering school district in USA. 178 participants. End-of-year Likert-type surveys, individual interviews, classroom observations, and document analyses of evaluation forms.	Many teachers reported a renewed feeling of personal and professional competence, sharing and increased peer support and network of friends. Increased emotional support and reframing perspective. Group consultation was rated as most valuable aspect of teacher support programme.	Direct response to emotional wellbeing of teachers, longitudinal, in depth analysis. No EP facilitation and unclear process of consultation.
	Prevalence and usefulness of TSTs (Creese, Norwich and Daniels 2002)	National Survey		Not implemented support groups
	Group work in schools: a process consultation approach (Farouk, 2004)			Did not evaluate support groups
	Using the staff sharing scheme (Jones, Monsen and Franey, 2013)	SSS five 1h1/2 sessions involving training and collaborative sessions. Pre/post questionnaire data, then interviews	Interviews – greater time for reflection, emotional support, more open school staff, reframing of attribution and approach to teaching changed. 6 weeks after training only 2 staff support sessions had taken place.	Hanko incorporated model, removal of psychodynamic focus. Trained staff to deliver own sessions – low uptake. Not EP facilitating following training.

	Evaluating TST in secondary school (Creese, Norwich and Daniels 2000)	Baseline, introduction of TST and then one year following. Observations and interviews pre-post and questionnaires.	Summarised four case studies and found that organisational factors influenced the staff's ability to continue with TST, support from SMT is essential, collaborative, open and trusting relationships needed.	Trained staff to implement own group consultation sessions. EPs did not facilitate.
	Mental health in schools: what about the staff? Jackson 2002	Teacher support groups in large London secondary school, fortnightly with a psychotherapist.	Some quant data stating groups were beneficial. Detailed description of case discussions highlighting useful reflection for teachers and emotional offloading.	Unclear structure of consultation (Tavistock model) Not fully evaluated.
	THINKSPACE – consultation for LAC (Swann and York, 2011)	Reflecting team model (Anderson, 1987). Psychologists, LAC nurse and social workers discuss cases each month.	Evaluation sheet of open ended questions revealed participants valued: open reflection, holistic understanding of child and reduced anxiety.	Unclear methodology and evaluation. LAC case referral. Does not involve school staff.
	Knotek, S., Babinski, E., & Rogers, L. (2002). Consultation in New Teacher Groups	Recorded group consultation sessions, post-session reflections and interviewed teachers. Same data set as Babinski and Rogers (1998). Discourse analysis of consultation groups to determine professional development.	The study found that over time the teacher's conceptions of themselves and their students changed to become more positive. The teachers became more empathetic towards their students and spoke with a stronger sense of efficacy and power.	Does not address staff experiences, focus of study is how discourse changes overtime and influence upon practice is inferred.

8.3 Appendix 3: Recruitment Letter

The University of Nottingham
UNITED KINGDOM · CHINA · MALAYSIA

Dear _____ (Headteacher/ SENCo),

I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist from the University of Nottingham, currently working at [redacted] Educational Psychology Service. I am carrying out a doctoral research project to explore the experiences of emotional labour and peer support groups with staff that support a looked after child (LAC) in Key Stage 1. Emotional labour refers to when our emotional experiences are incongruent to the portrayal of emotions that are necessary for our professional role. It is suggested by previous research that school staff may benefit from sharing and reflecting upon the positive and negative emotions experienced within their role. For this research, staff will participate in 50 minute weekly peer support group meetings across the spring and summer term. To understand their experiences, participants will be asked to keep a diary detailing their work with the LAC.

Participants will be interviewed at the beginning and end of the research, to further explore their experiences of the support groups. Data will be collected and analysed to determine themes that develop within the experiences of the group.

I would like to ask for your support in the project outlined, through:

1. Identification of a LAC
2. Consent to hold fortnightly peer support group sessions on your premises, preferably within school hours.

I am looking for four or more participants from the same school, who work with a LAC that meets the following criteria:

- Currently in Key Stage 1
- Identified as a LAC
- Been at a foster placement for at least one year
- Identified as having social, emotional and mental health needs

In order to conduct the research, at least four members of staff involved with LAC would need to attend the peer support group sessions, for two academic terms. Agreement from the LACs social worker and foster carers will be required for

participation in the study and for their information to be shared prior to the implementation of the support groups.

If you would like to take part in this study or would like to find out any further information about peer support groups, please do contact me on the details below. Should you decide to participate, I would be grateful if you could provide the names of any LAC and associated staff that meet the criteria above. All information will be kept confidential. Written consent and confirmation of a confidentiality agreement will be required for all participants.

Thank you for your time.

Sandra Kempsell

(Trainee Educational Psychologist and research student)

Researcher:
Sandra Kempsell
Trainee Educational Psychologist and research student lpxsk6@nottingham.ac.uk
Tel: 07508037806 / 01158765668

Supervisor:
Dr Sarah Atkinson lpasa3@nottingham.ac.uk
Academic and Professional Tutor
Specialist Senior Educational Psychologist
School of Psychology
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8.4 Appendix 4: Participant Consent Letter

The University of Nottingham
UNITED KINGDOM · CHINA · MALAYSIA

An exploration of staff support groups and experiences of emotional labour in working with a Looked After Child (LAC) in Key Stage 1.

Researcher:
Sandra Kempsell lpxsk6@nottingham.ac.uk
Trainee Educational Psychologist
Tel: 07508037806 / 01158765668
Supervisor:
Dr Sarah Atkinson lpasa3@nottingham.ac.uk
Academic and Professional Tutor
Specialist Senior Educational Psychologist
School of Psychology
University of Nottingham
Tel: 0115 8467238

I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist from the University of Nottingham, currently working at [redacted] Educational Psychology Service. I am writing to invite you to take part in a research project that seeks to explore the experiences of peer support groups for those that work with a looked after child (LAC) in Key Stage 1. This research will be part of my doctoral study thesis.

Before you decide if you wish to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of the research?

The purpose of the research is to explore staff experiences of support groups, by creating these groups, holding regular discussions and producing analysis. This research holds relevance to my placement service, as they are interested in strategies to support LAC as a priority group within the local authority. This research is interested in 'emotional labour', which is when emotional experiences are incongruent to the portrayal of emotions that are necessary within a professional role. It is suggested by previous research that school staff may benefit from sharing and reflecting upon the positive and negative emotions experienced within their role. Participants will be asked to reflect on their experience of working with LAC via peer group discussions and consider their relationship/work with the LAC. Participants will be required to keep a diary, with an entry for at least every support group session. Discussions and analysis of diaries will lead to final analysis. The research may form the basis of further study into the effects of peer support groups, which may show impact on both the wellbeing of staff and educational

benefit for LAC. The focus looked after child will be selected by the head teacher and SENCo at your school.

What will it involve?

Participants will be required to take part in peer support group sessions lasting approximately 50 minutes on a weekly basis. These support group sessions will be facilitated by me and will occur during work hours. The frequency and duration of the group sessions can be agreed between all of the participants and stakeholders. You will be asked to attend each peer support group session and keep a reflective diary to describe your experiences working with the LAC. All participants will be interviewed by the researcher following the study, and asked to discuss their experience of attending the sessions. The interviews will be audio recorded and analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis. This method will develop themes within the description of your experiences and quotations will also be used to convey meaning. The researcher will inform you of the quotations that are likely to be used in the final write up of the study.

How long will it last?

The peer support groups will run over two academic terms. A week following this, I will conduct interviews of peer support group members. A debrief session will be scheduled to discuss the findings of the study and answer any further questions that you might have.

Participation in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to take part. You are free to withdraw at any point before or during the study. This will not impact upon your access to the Educational Psychology Service. All data collected will be kept confidential and used for research purposes only. It will be stored in compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

If you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely,

Sandra Kempsell
Trainee Educational Psychologist and research student
lpxsk6@nottingham.ac.uk
Tel: 07508037806 / 01158765668
If you have any complaints about the study, please contact: Stephen Jackson (Chair of Ethics Committee) stephen.jackson@nottingham.ac.uk

The University of Nottingham
UNITED KINGDOM · CHINA · MALAYSIA

An exploration of staff support groups and experiences of emotional labour in working with a Looked After Child in Key Stage 1.

Researcher :
Sandra Kempsell lpxsk6@nottingham.ac.uk
Trainee Educational Psychologist
Tel: 07508037806 / 01158765668
Supervisor:
Dr Sarah Atkinson lpasa3@nottingham.ac.uk

I have read and understood the information provided. YES/NO

I have had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss the study. YES/NO

Any questions have been answered satisfactorily. YES/NO

I have received enough information about the study. YES/NO

I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study:

At any time. YES/NO

Without having to give a reason. YES/NO

I understand that any confidential information which is disclosed during the support group meetings should not be disclosed outside of the group, unless necessary due to safeguarding procedures. YES/NO

I have been informed of the support available to me throughout this study and I am aware of how I can access it. YES/NO

I consent to the research interview being audio recorded. YES/NO

"This study has been explained to me to my satisfaction, and I agree to take part. I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time."

Signature of the Participant: Date:

Name (in block capitals)

I have explained the study to the above participant and he/she has agreed to take part.

Signature of researcher: Date

8.5 Appendix 5: Social worker consent letter

The University of Nottingham
UNITED KINGDOM · CHINA · MALAYSIA

An exploration of peer support groups and experiences of emotional labour in working with a Looked After Child (LAC) in Key Stage 1.

Dear ……. (Social Worker),

I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist from the University of Nottingham, currently working at [redacted] Educational Psychology Service. I am carrying out a doctoral research project to explore the experiences of emotional labour and peer support groups with staff that support a looked after child (LAC) in Key Stage 1. The purpose of the research is to gain an increased understanding of how peer support groups are experienced for school staff that support LAC. Previous research has found that peer support groups are useful in helping school staff to reflect on their practice, problem-solve and utilise their own strategies.

……. (SENCo) at …….. (pupil's) school has expressed an interest to become involved in this study. As ……'s Social Worker I am writing to you to ask for permission for ……. to be discussed in peer support group sessions between school staff that are familiar with him/her. If you give permission, school staff will reflect upon and share their experiences in working with …….. (pupil). Any written notes will be anonymised and information will be shared with the purpose of improving teaching practice and wellbeing. To gain further information regarding staff experiences working with …..(pupil) and engaging in the peer support group, school staff will be asked to keep reflective diaries which will be shared with the researcher. Any written or verbal data will use pseudonyms to protect the student's identity. The peer support group sessions will be conducted weekly over two academic terms. Following this, school staff will be interviewed by the researcher to reflect further on their experiences. The interviews will be audio recorded and analysed by the researcher. The focus student is not directly involved in the study.

Participation in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to give permission for ….. to be discussed in the peer support group sessions. You are free

to withdraw your consent at any point, before or during the study. All data collected will be kept confidential, stored securely, and used for research purposes only. If you have any questions or would like to find out any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me on the details provided.

Yours sincerely,

Sandra Kempsell

Researcher :
Sandra Kempsell lpxsk6@nottingham.ac.uk
Trainee Educational Psychologist and research student
Tel: 07508037806 / 01158765668
Supervisor:
Dr Sarah Atkinson lpasa3@nottingham.ac.uk
If you have any complaints about the study, please contact:
Stephen Jackson (Chair of Ethics Committee) stephen.jackson@nottingham.ac.uk

The University of Nottingham
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An exploration of staff support groups and experiences of emotional labour in working with a Looked After Child (LAC) in Key Stage 1.

Researcher :
Sandra Kempsell lpxsk6@nottingham.ac.uk
Trainee Educational Psychologist
Tel: 07508037806 / 01158765668
Supervisor:
Dr Sarah Atkinson lpasa3@nottingham.ac.uk

I have read and understood the information provided. YES/NO

I have had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss the study. YES/NO

Any questions have been answered satisfactorily. YES/NO

I agree for the staff that support ……(pupil) to take part in support group sessions to discuss their experience working with him/her at school. YES/NO

I consent to school staff interviews being audio recorded. YES/NO

I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study:

At any time. YES/NO

Without having to give a reason. YES/NO

"This study has been explained to me to my satisfaction, and I agree to take part. I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time."

Signature of the Participant: Date:

Name (in block capitals)

If you would like any information about the findings of this research please provide your contact details below.

I have explained the study to the above participant and he/she has agreed to take part.

Signature of researcher: Date:

8.6 Appendix 6: Ethics letter

The University of Nottingham
UNITED KINGDOM · CHINA · MALAYSIA

School of Psychology
The University of Nottingham
University Park
Nottingham
NG7 2RD

T: +44 (0)115 8467403 or (0)115 9514344

SJ
Ref: S965R

Thursday, 27 April 2017

Dear Sarah Atkinson and Sandra Kempsell,

Ethics Committee Review

Thank you for submitting an account of your proposed research 'An Exploration Of Staff Support Groups And Experiences Of Emotional Labour In Working With A Looked After Child In Key Stage 1'.

That proposal has now been reviewed by the Ethics Committee and I am pleased to tell you that your submission has met with the committee's approval.

Final responsibility for ethical conduct of your research rests with you or your supervisor. The Codes of Practice setting out these responsibilities have been published by the British Psychological Society and the University Research Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns whatever during the conduct of your research then you should consult those Codes of Practice. The Committee should be informed immediately should any participant complaints or adverse events arise during the study.

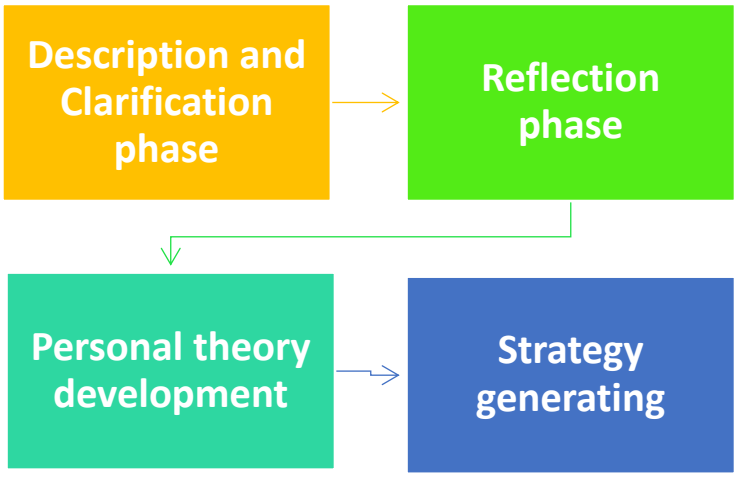
Independently of the Ethics Committee procedures, supervisors also have responsibilities for the risk assessment of projects as detailed in the safety pages of the University web site. Ethics Committee approval does not alter, replace, or remove those responsibilities, nor does it certify that they have been met.

Yours sincerely

Professor Stephen Jackson
Chair, Ethics Committee

8.7 Appendix 7: Intervention handout for staff

Support Group Consultation Process.



Phase of consultation	Description	Role of group
Description and Clarification phase	One staff member presents a concern or reflection and is given the opportunity to speak freely.	The group listen and engage in active listening.
Reflection phase	Open discussion for the group to gain more clarity on the situation presented. Can ask solution focused questions, although discouraged from giving advice at this stage.	Group members ask questions to gather more information and encourage further reflection. The presenting staff member answers the group questions.
Personal theory development	The group as a whole develop hypotheses in relation to the presented issue.	Group to develop hypotheses sensitively and openly.
Strategy generating	Group members can brainstorm possible 'solutions' or actions from the presented concern, if necessary.	Presenting member can take ownership of actions if they wish or the group can create joint actions.

Group Consultation Summary Form.

Date and time of meeting……

Please do not use the student's name within your notes.

Phase 1 – Description and clarification

Summary of main discussion points

Phase 2 – Group reflection

Summary:

Phase 3- Personal theory generating

Main hypotheses:

Phase 4- Strategy generating

Note any strategies discussed.

Note any further action.

8.8 Appendix 8 Facilitation questions

Date and time of meeting……

Attendance…….

Phase 1 – Description and clarification

Model active listening.
Gatekeeping and ensuring the presenter has time to speak.

Phase 2 – Group reflection
Discourage group from giving advice. Exploring / Colombo questions
Model solution focused questions and give rationale for use:
What do you think, you did differently that time?
What do you think made you feel differently that time?
What do you think the child may be gaining from this behaviour/your response?
What do you think made that lesson easier to manage?
What do you think the class is getting out of …….?
Is he/she a popular member of the class?
If_____ was here what do you think he would say about …….?
What is your response/other children's response?
What influence do you think your response/other children response is having on ……?

Phase 3- Personal theory generating

Gatekeeping and harmonising
Explore all possible different viewpoints.
If group focuses on home factors encourage hypotheses that are also school based

Phase 4- Strategy generating

Brainstorming ideas based on addressing the hypotheses that the group have developed.

Final words

Reflection on process – what can be taken from it

8.9 Appendix 9 Fidelity checklist

Observer name: **Date:** **Session number:**

Please indicate whether the following aspects of consultation have been observed at least once by indicating Yes (√) or No (χ). Qualitative data can be captured in the 'comments' section.

<table>
<tr><th>Group process stages</th><th>Observed Yes /No</th><th>Comments</th><th>Facilitation skills</th><th>Observed Yes/No</th><th>Comments</th></tr>
<tr><td>Reminder of ground rules</td><td></td><td></td><td rowspan="2">Ensuring the presenter has time to speak.</td><td rowspan="2"></td><td rowspan="14"></td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Stage one: Description and Clarification phase
One staff member presents a concern or reflection and is given the opportunity to speak freely.</td><td rowspan="2"></td><td rowspan="2"></td></tr>
<tr><td>Demonstrating active listening skills (Mirrored body language, nodding, maintained eye contact, open body posture).</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="4">Stage two: Reflection phase
Open discussion for the group to gain more clarity on the situation presented. Can ask solution focused questions, although discouraged from giving advice at this stage.</td><td rowspan="4"></td><td rowspan="4"></td><td>Solution focused questions</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Exception questions</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Focusing group to exploring the issue</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Summarising</td><td rowspan="2"></td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="4">Stage three: Personal theory development
The group as a whole develop hypotheses in relation to the presented issue.</td><td rowspan="4"></td><td rowspan="4"></td></tr>
<tr><td>Unconditional positive regard</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Open questions</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Reframing</td><td rowspan="2"></td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Stage four: Strategy generating Group members can brainstorm possible 'solutions' or actions from the presented concern, if necessary.</td><td rowspan="3"></td><td rowspan="3"></td></tr>
<tr><td>Demonstrates empathy</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Gatekeeping (reducing the activity of overactive members and increasing the activity of more passive members)</td><td rowspan="2"></td></tr>
<tr><td>Final reflections: Staff share a word or sentence reflecting on process.</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
</table>

8.10 Appendix 10 Draft script of initial group consultation session:

I would like to welcome you all to our first support group session. Before we go through the steps in the process and establish ground rules, I would like to run through some important points regarding the ethical considerations within this project. As written on the consent forms, the support groups sessions are a protected space for us to reflect and share experiences working with (target student). The information shared within these sessions will be kept confidential and anything written will not contain your names or student names. Therefore, when writing notes or entries in your diaries please use a fake name to maintain confidentiality. Confidentiality may only be breached following the disclosure of any safeguarding concerns, this information will then be shared with the safeguarding officer, following your school safeguarding procedures. Does anyone have any questions regarding confidentiality or safeguarding procedures?

During the support group sessions it is likely that you will share your personal experiences in working with (target student). For some people this can be an emotional experience. If at any time you feel that the experience is emotionally overwhelming or uncomfortable you can speak to myself or [redacted]. I will stay for additional time after each session to allow us to talk privately and outside this time I can be contacted on the details provided on the consent forms. I can arrange to call you at a time that is convenient for you, if you would prefer. You can also contact the school educational psychologist who is [redacted] and can be contacted by (details supplied). [redacted] can be contacted within school if you would rather speak to someone outside the EPS. Within this project my involvement is limited to the boundaries of this research, therefore if you would like additional support from an EP – for example for assessment then [redacted] would be able to support this.

Your involvement in this research project and support group sessions is completely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from the project at any time and this will not affect your access to the Educational Psychology service. Please inform myself or [redacted] if you decide that you no longer wish to participate.

This project is going to run for 10 weeks, at the same time, each Friday. Following this I will interview each of you regarding your experiences within the group. As part of the research we will conduct these groups and you are asked to keep a diary of your interactions with (target student).

As stated the group is designed to allow time for reflection and discussion. My role will be to facilitate the group process and support you in developing your thinking around the case. This may be more prominent in the initial stages, however as the group becomes more comfortable and familiar with the process my facilitation input may be reduced. I have provided a handout to outline the stages in the process and the role of the group. The discussions can be summarised by one member of the group (including me) or each of you individually, which we can agree at the beginning of each group. We won't be using the student's name on these notes to protect their identity.

Before we start the group it may be useful to establish some ground rules which we will revisit each session.

8.11 Appendix 11 Reflective diary

Reflective Diary

Name……
Date……
Location……

Summary of event/ interaction/ experience

Please state what happened before and after the event. If possible reflect on your emotional reactions during the event. Please do not use the student's real name.

How was this interaction/ experience shaped by discussions in the support group?

8.12 Appendix 12 – semi structured interview schedule

Semi structured interview questions:

Tell interviewees: The interview will be recorded and stored safely, only the researcher will listen to the recording and anonymous transcription will be the next step. 'I am interested in you and your experiences; there are no right or wrong answers'.

Could you tell me about your role within the school?
Prompt: How long have you been in the role? What does it involve? How long have you worked with (LAC)?

What do you think your role is in supporting (LAC)?

What, in your opinion, is unique about supporting this particular student?

How does working with the student make you feel?
Prompts. .. why do you think that is?

What supports you in fulfilling that role?
Is there anything that you find challenging in your role?

You have been involved in the group sessions for two terms. Were they what you expected?
Prompt: To elaborate on experience, (e.g. in what way did it / or didn't it meet expectations?).

How would you describe the group sessions?

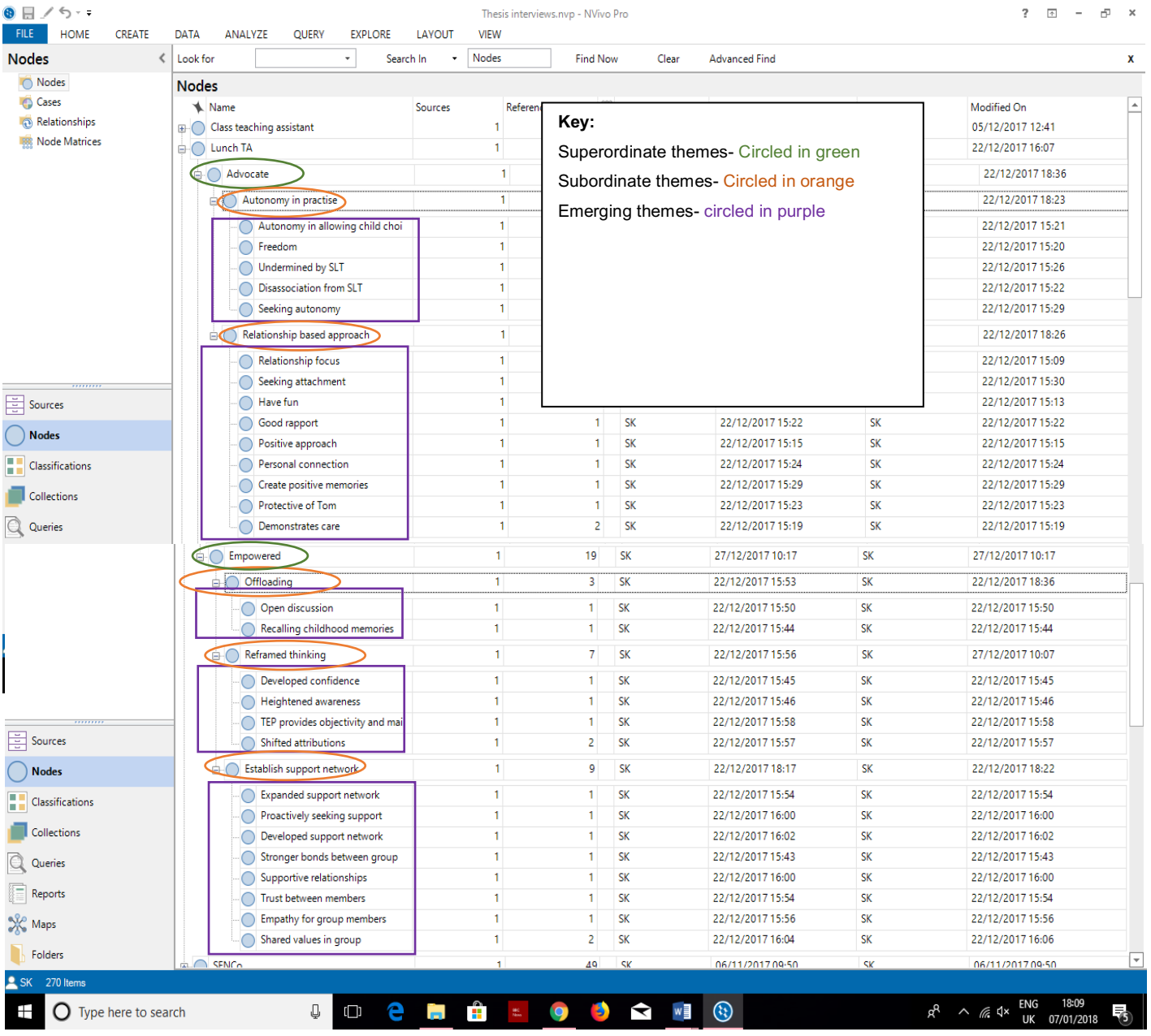
In what way have the sessions had an impact on your relationship with the LAC?

How would the groups have been different if an external facilitator was not there? Or a different process was used?
Prompts for interviewer… structured and timed process

What's your overall opinion of participating in peer review sessions?
Prompt: If so, would you change anything? Is there anything you wish we covered? Would you continue?

8.13 Appendix 13 Presentation of theme development for Elaine

Figure 15. Hierarchy of themes for Elaine presented through Nvivo software.



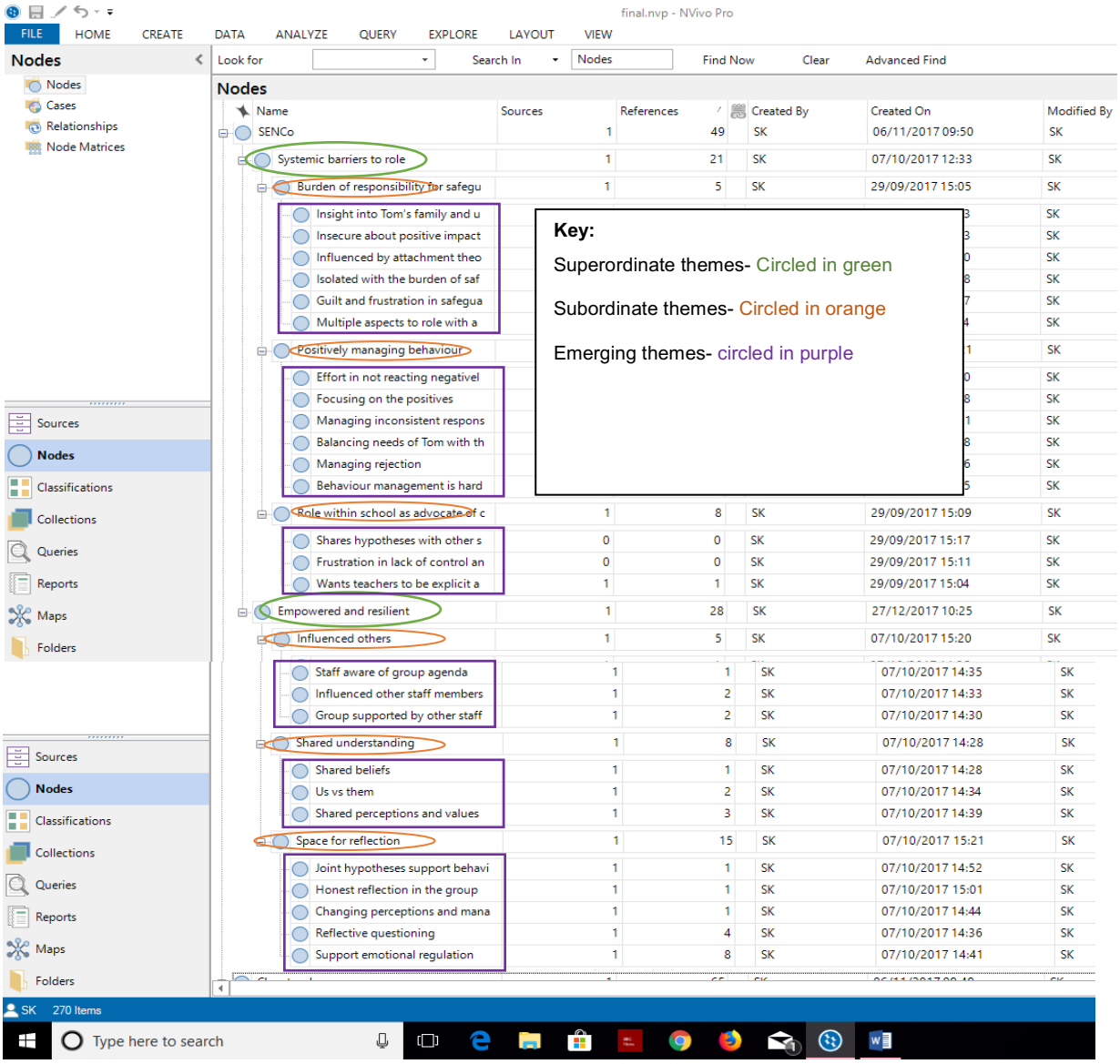
8.14 Appendix 14 Extract of interview and initial analysis for Elaine

Table 12. Extract of initial noting and development of emerging themes for Elaine.

Expanded support network	Well, I think, I wouldn't want to keep it in. I can talk to (SENCo) I can tell her anything and now since these 10 weeks I know I can talk to (CT) about something or (TA), without it going any further.	Developed trust between group members.
	And what makes you know that you can talk to them?	
Trust between members	(SENCo) I know that and I'm sure the other two will keep it to themselves. But its nice to be able to talk and tell someone else, and think, because (SENCo) is a good listener anyway.	
	Do you think the group sessions have had an impact on your relationship with T?	
Reframed thinking	Yea, yea, yea, because before I was probably thinking, you know, because you get told, he's bad, he's bad, he's bad. But now I see him as different, you know, he's had a hard life and they just probably need a bit more love and bit more understanding and that. And what, and why he is doing these things.	Reframed thinking. Changed attributions towards Tom.
	How do you think the groups have kind of helped that?	
Empathy for group members Shifted attributions	Talking. But yea, talking and talking about how stressed, you know, (SENCo) gets stressed from other members of staff and (CT) gets stressed and that, so, yea. Those kind of things. Because sometimes I've probably thought well they're doing nothing to help him, because I've done these groups I'm thinking oh they are helping him, they are thinking about him, yea.	Feels other staff members have offloaded. Developed an understanding from their perspective.
	Do you think that's changed your relationship with them?	
	Yea, yea. Because probably before I'd think, they're doing nothing, but then they are, because they had a lot to say about him, good and bad.	Recognised a common goal and values within the group.
	Do you think the groups would have been different if say, I wasn't here, if it was the four of you?	
	No, well it was good to have you here because you said things that we never even thought about, like the letter and stuff and putting that up there. So, no. It was good to have you here.	External person useful for objective view and offering strategies.

8.15 Appendix 15 Presentation of theme development for Pam

Figure 16. Hierarchy of themes for Pam presented through Nvivo software.



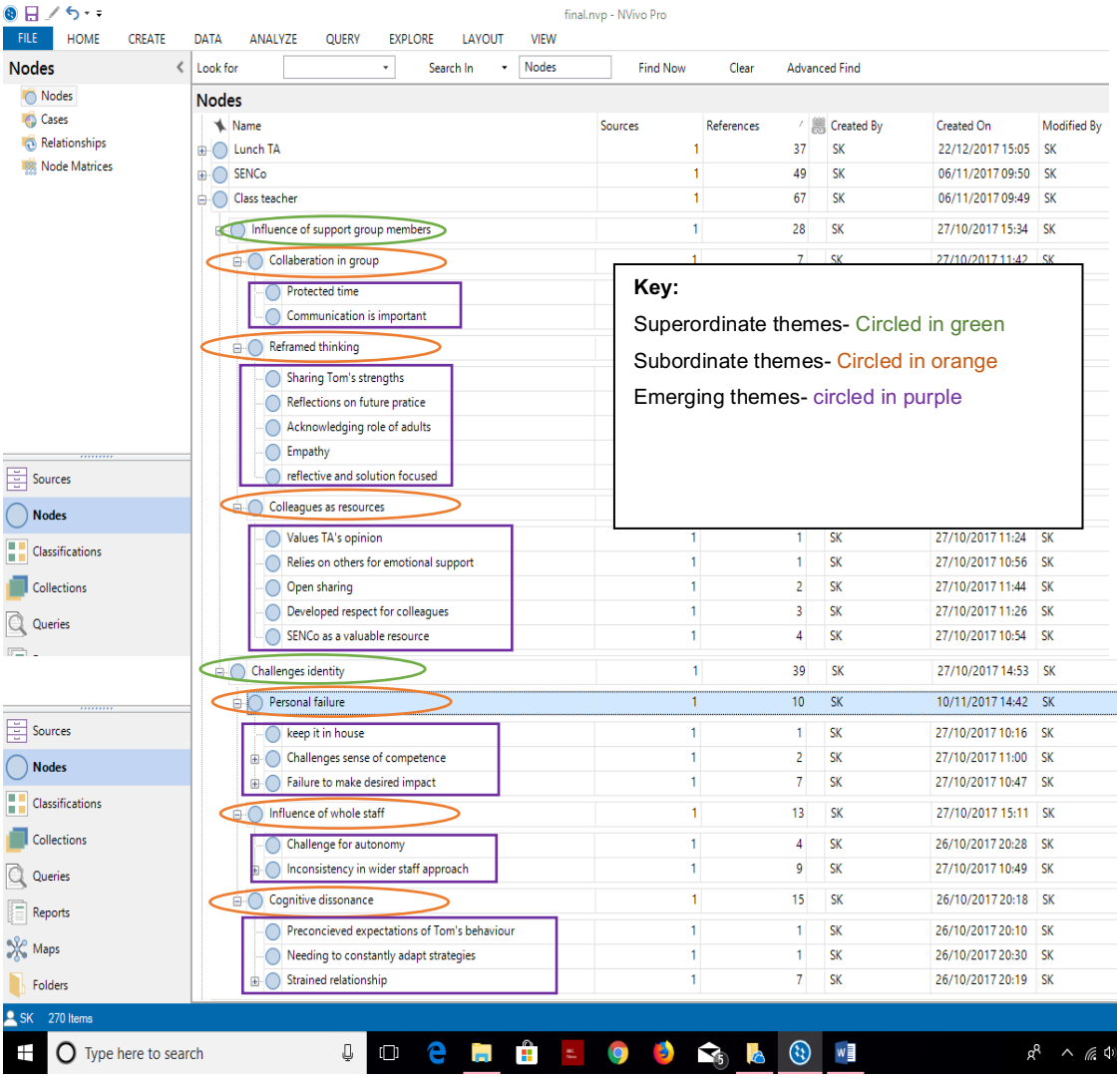
8.16 Appendix 16 Interview extract and initial analysis for Pam

Table 13. Extract of initial noting and development of emerging themes for Pam.

	Can we start by you telling me what your role is in the school?	
Community involvement	So, I'm the SENCo in school. I have worked here a very long time, so I came here as a community teacher 26 years ago, so I have always done a lot with the families and then I was class teaching and then when our previous SENCo retired I took over the SENCo role. A few different jobs here [laughs].	Working with families is important and being connected to the community. Has a long history with the school and numerous roles within it.
	How many years have you been in the SENCo role?	*Repetition of 'probably about' indicates the length of time being so long that you could forget how many years.*
	Erm, probably about 10 now, I think, probably about 10.	
Insight into Tom's family and upbringing	And how long have you worked with Tom or been involved with him?	Vivid memory of the CAF meetings, significant event in Tom and SENCo relationship. Unique insight into his early upbringing and family.
	I've been involved with Tom since before he started nursery because erm, there was a CAF open on the family and we had his brother in school. So, his brother was in nursery and I was involved in the CAF. So actually Tom used to attend the meetings because he was in the pushchair with his mum, she used to bring him along to meetings when he was very little and then before he started nursery I went to visit him a couple of times at his other nursery, because there were concerns about him at that stage, because of lack of language and actually was slow to walk as well and that sort of thing. So, yea, yea, quite a long time. But also previously I knew his mum because his mum came to the school as well, so I also know his grandma, because grandma was a parent.	Tom had additional needs that were evident before arriving at school. SENCo invested time in him before he started school.
Multiple aspects to role with an increase in safeguarding	Wow, yea. And how would you describe your role?	*'Huge role' may indicate the sense of responsibility within the role.* Teaching is important aspect of role and identity.
	Being SENCo?	School cohort and community have a range of needs that she supports.

8.17 Appendix 17 Presentation of theme development for Steve

Figure 17. Hierarchy of themes for Steve presented through Nvivo software.



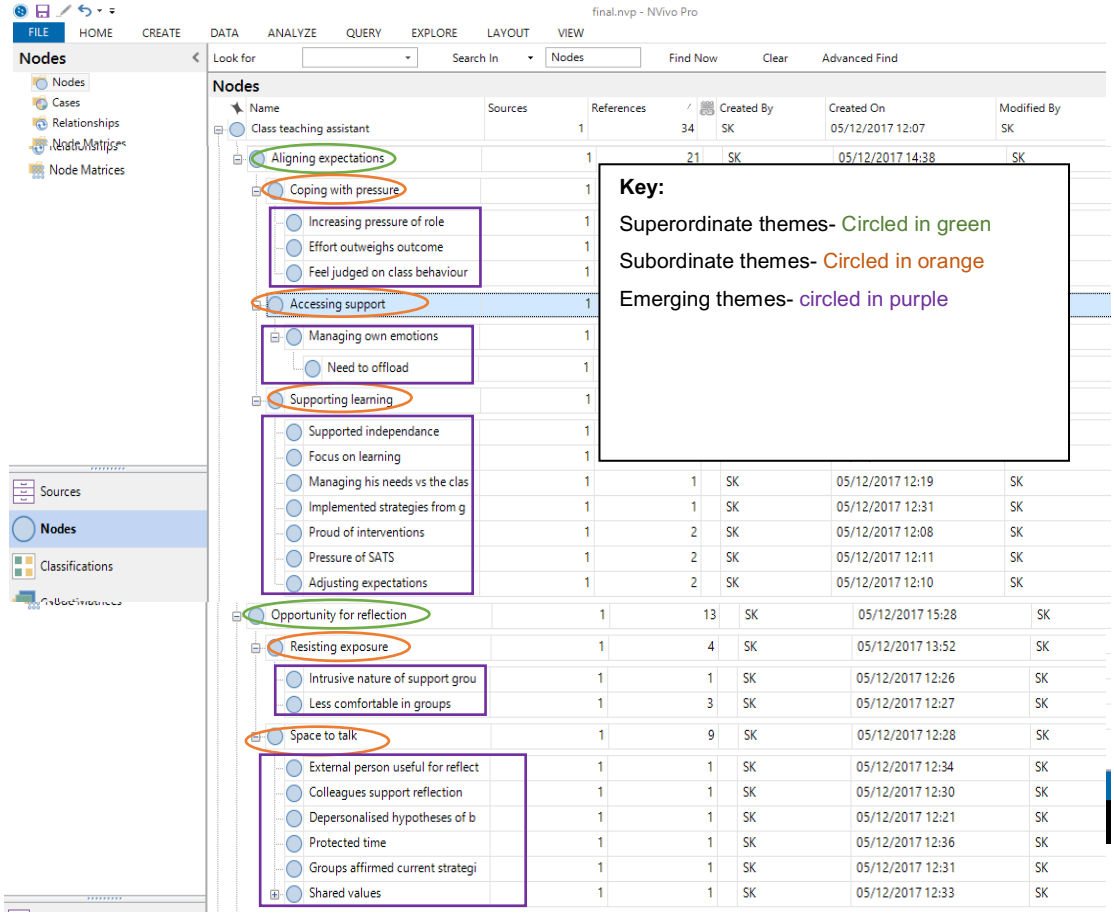
8.18 Appendix 18 Extract of interview and initial analysis for Steve

Table 14. Extract of initial noting and development of emerging themes for Steve.

Want to contain behaviour management Instant vs reflective reaction to behaviour. Strained relationship Empathy and understanding Pressure from senior management	Yea, I would say. I would say (SENCo) does a lot of the nice nurture stuff, (C TA) is fantastic at classroom management, she is by far in a way, probably the best person that I've worked with in my time here. She does it in a very different way, erm, and deals with the rest of the class normally when I deal with T. Because it has to be dealt with and we try as much as we can to keep it in house, as we've talked about in the groups. We've tried not to, desperately not to, kind of take him upstairs or take him to another class. We have tried to keep it in the classroom as much as possible. Erm, and it is draining that he does things, that you think, in the heat of the moment you think, why have you done that? And, you know, you can't understand it, and then when you take a step back and you think about it, there is a reason why he has done that and you know why he's done it. Erm, and our relationship is very much, if you were looking from the outside you would probably say, that we have quite a good relationship because he does, he doesn't show affection, but he shows, you know, kind of, mutual respect type thing. I think that is the best way to explain it, between the two of us, because he, obviously, the instant reaction is to shout at him and we know that isn't the right thing to do, but if he's doing something dangerous to another child half way across the room and you're at the back of the room teaching a group of children, you've got to, you've got to use the voice. Almost to make him jump to stop him doing it and yea, it's quite, a difficult relationship to have with him. And how does it feel to work with him? I mean like, I think the worst thing is, he's *that* child and it's unfortunate that he's in a room with so many of them. Erm, because, they're the ones that you want to see do well. We have talked about another child in there, who you know, we want to see do well, they haven't had the greatest start in life and you always want the best for them. And working with (SENCo) as well, has kind of, not changed my opinion but kind of enlightened it to actually yea, you know, all these things have happened, we need to see the best things for him and we need to try and do that. But it is, it's having that reaction time to go, actually I don't need to shout at him here. And sometimes it's about picking your battles. You know, I've had senior management and other observers come in to, into school to watch me and, you know, he is fiddling with the pencil or he's throwing something up in the air to himself, or he's doodling or he's doing something. And they pick up on that and go, you know, 'why didn't you stop him, why didn't you do that?, this is unacceptable', etc, but there's a part of you that goes if I start doing that and then have to carry that on and it's that constant, it's like you have to pick your battles with him. Because throughout the day you might have to keep in it at playgroup because he's hit someone, I've got nothing then to take away. If he's nasty to someone or says something out of turn, and then you have to deal with it in a	Respect and admiration for colleagues. Significant effort in managing Tom between trusted class team (CT, TA, SENCo). Difficult to not be reactive and punitive in managing Tom's behaviour. Contradiction is way he wants to manage Tom's behaviour in the moment and after reflection, places strain on their relationship. Tom has a reputation within the school. Greater awareness of Tom's upbringing and how that may impact upon his behaviour. Need time to be reflective and manage his behaviour positively. Concerned about the perceptions of other staff.

8.19 Appendix 19: Presentation of theme development for Rachel

Figure 18. Hierarchy of themes for Rachel presented through Nvivo software.



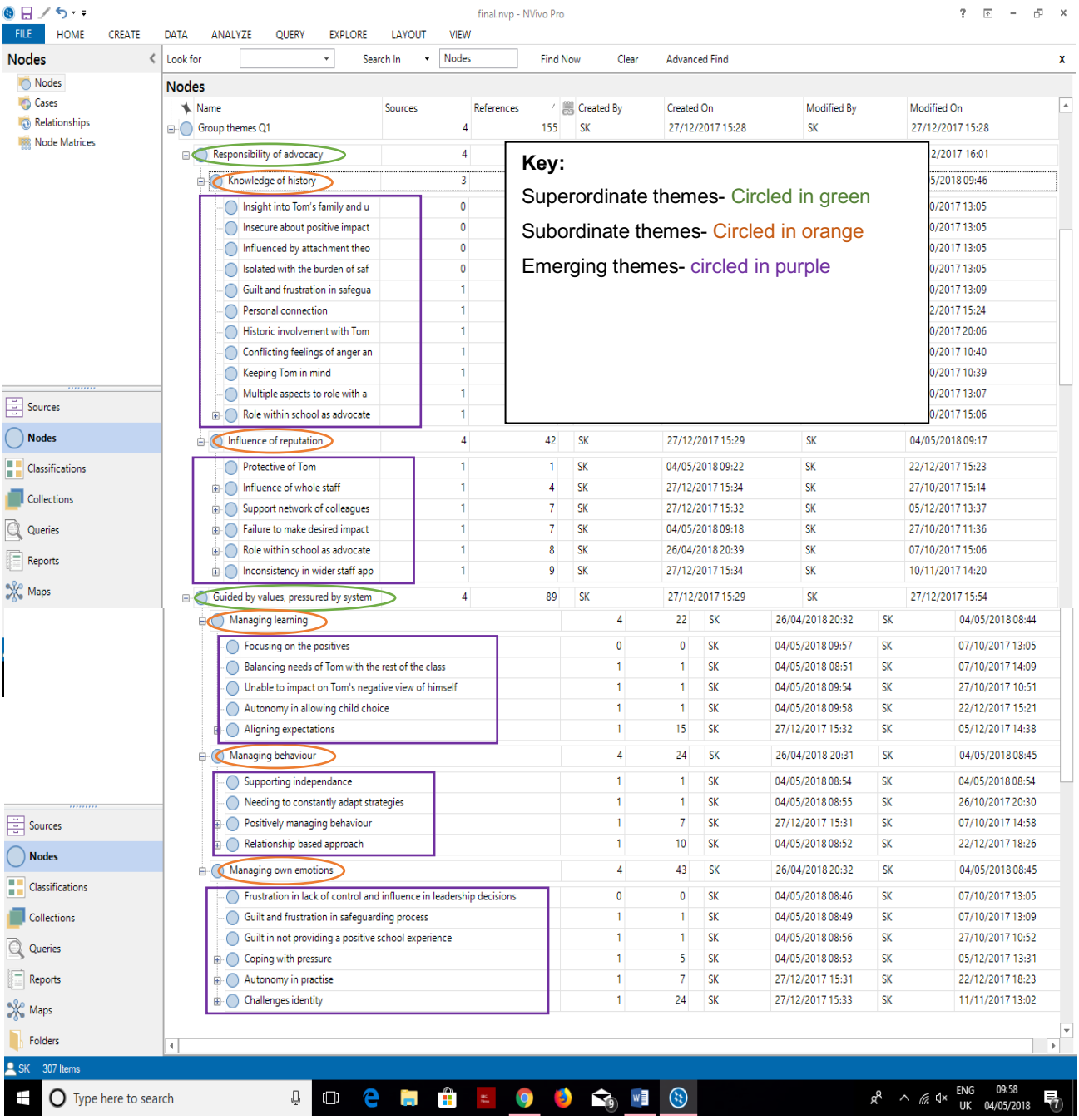
8.20 Appendix 20: Extract of interview and initial analysis for Rachel

Table 15. Extract of initial noting and development of emerging themes for Rachel

Coping with pressure	especially when we have so many demands of what we need to get the children up to what stages, it can be hard. Can you say what you mean by hard?	
Effort outweighs outcome	I just can be physically tiring. Some days. Yea. I can be physically tiring. And we say a phrase, *'it's like pulling teeth out'* [laughs]. So yea it can be hard. But then we have good days as well, I'm not gonna say it's all hard. We do have some good days. We do. And how do the good days feel? Good days feel really good. They do, they do feel really good. I think at the beginning of the year there's probably a lot more good days. I think the pressure of SATS and getting them at set levels was hard going. Erm, and because their just so far behind. They are, and there are so many gaps to fill. Interviewer: What do you think has been supportive in doing your role? Do you mean who has supported me? Interviewer: Or anything that has been supportive? I think the (other TA) definitely has supported me, across in year 2. What we did is so that I can have a break, so we'd swap Thursday afternoons so that (other TA) would go in my class and I's go in the year 2's. Just to have that break. Why do you think that is important?	Pulling teeth out – perhaps refers to the laborious nature of teaching. Positive reframe on reflecting on year. SATS has been difficult pressure to manage with the school cohort.
Managing own negative emotions	I just felt like, it just kinda, I just felt that thinks got a bit too much in there and I just needed a break. To be honest. Yea because obviously (CT) goes out and has his PPA time, then obviously (SENCo) comes in. I just felt I needed a bit of a break and I didn't wanna come across snappy all the time at the kids. Erm, yea. Didn't want them to see that side so I thought it would be best that I had a break, so we swapped classes. It has helped because obviously I have got to know	Needed a break to be able to emotionally support students. Did not want to reveal negative emotions to students.
Support from colleagues	that year two class, (other TA) has got to know my class. Obviously working with the interventions and things it has been beneficial. Just because we've done that it's going to continue with the other classes in key stage 1. So they've seen it as a good thing. So, yea that has been really helpful. Erm, also (other TA) is amazing, she's the one who has been covering the class on a Friday. Erm she supports all the special needs. So like, T will come across to her and help, he likes to sit with special needs. Is there anything that has been challenging in doing your role? I don't know, I'd have to think about that. I don't know. Sorry. That's alright. It sounds like there are lots of supportive people here, which enables you to have a break.	Pride in joint worked interventions and the acknowledgement gained from rest of school. Complimentary of other staff members. Uncomfortable focusing on negative aspects of role. Or reluctant to share negative experiences?

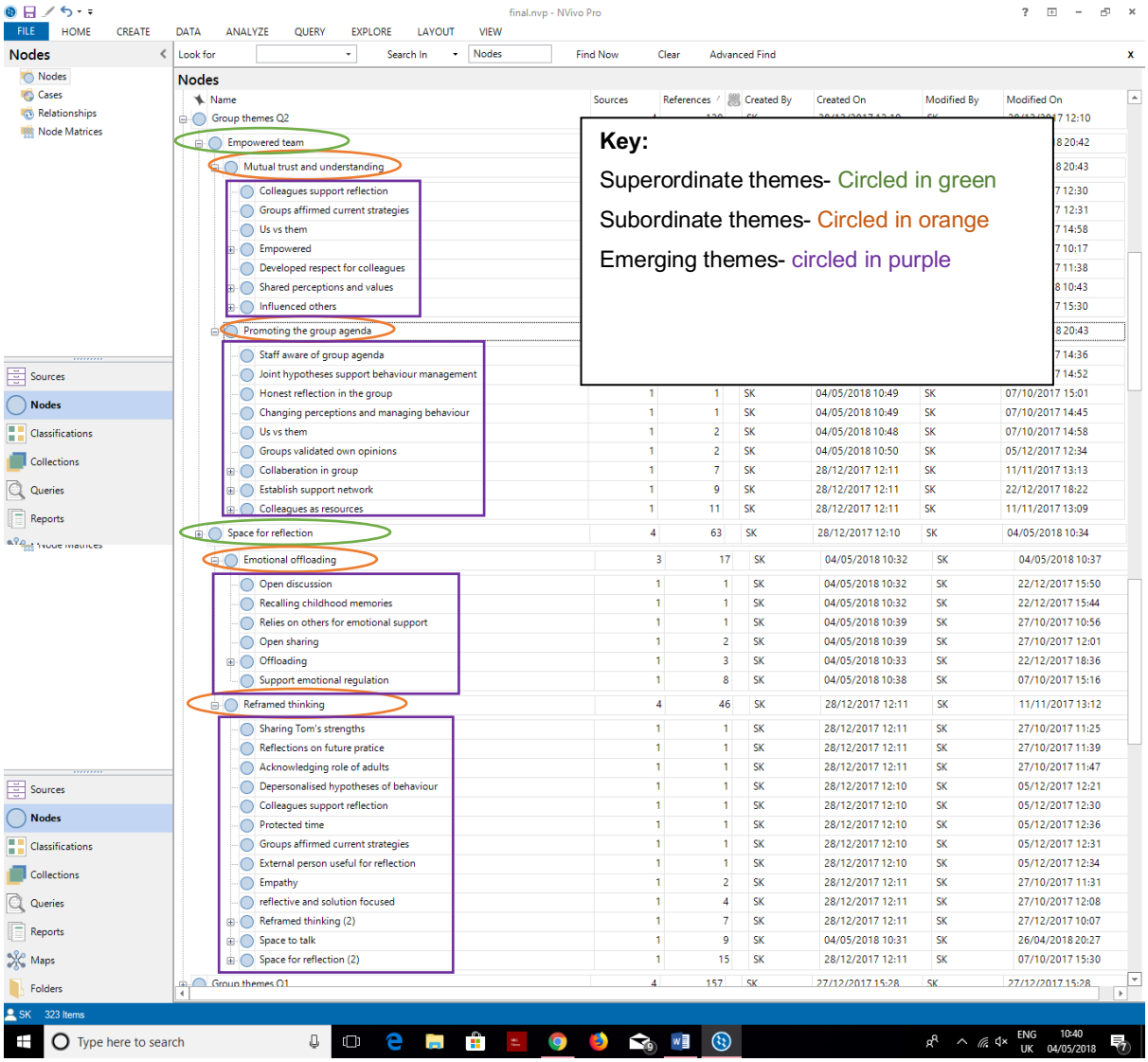
8.21 Appendix 21: Presentation of theme development for research question one:

Figure 19. Nvivo presentation of group themes for research question one: how do staff experience working with a child presenting with challenging behaviour in KS1?.



8.22 Appendix 22: Presentation of theme development for research question two.

Figure 20. Nvivo presentation of group themes for research question two: how do staff experience group consultation?



8.23 Appendix 23: Extract from research diary

Forth research group

The group reviewed the actions from last week - which were to build upon class dynamics by incorporating more team work games and reflecting on individual needs in the class. Staff reflected that the actions were implemented and went well. Another goal was to include the focus student more at break time by providing structured activities. This was still an area to develop and that staff were still hoping to action.

Within the session staff reflected and talked a lot about their own feelings, which had previously not been the case. They described how event impacted upon them personally. This could have been due to the group feeling that they can trust each other and feel safe. At the beginning the class teacher said that he didn't want to upset the SENCo with things that he would say, we reflected on ground rules and respecting each other's opinion. The group talked passionately about their frustrations in how other people perceive their approach to managing the student, such as 'I know they think I am too soft'. The staff demonstrated quite strong emotions and reflected on the staff dynamics within the system they work in.

For the first time this week staff reflected on their own feelings, perhaps as an acknowledgment of the projection of feelings in working with the particular student, or as their trust as a group has developed they feel that they can now do that. The ground rules may have been effective in allowing difference of opinion to be shared openly.

8.24 Appendix 24: Research debrief information.

The University of Nottingham
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RESEARCH DEBRIEFING INFORMATION

School of Psychology

University of Nottingham

Name of Researcher:
Sandra Kempsell
Trainee Educational Psychologist and research student
Tel: 07508037806 / 01158765668

Email of Researcher:
lpxsk6@nottingham.ac.uk

Name of Supervisor:
Dr Sarah Atkinson Academic and Professional Tutor
Specialist Senior Educational Psychologist
School of Psychology
University of Nottingham
Tel: 0115 8467238

Email of Supervisor:
lpasa3@nottingham.ac.uk

Research title: An exploration of group process consultation and experiences in working with a Looked After Child in Key Stage 1.

Background:

This research aimed to explore the experiences of process consultation for staff that support a LAC in KS1. As process consultation have previously been recommended for those that work with LAC this research aimed to gain a detailed account of staff experiences. This research was interested in whether staff experiences mirrored the findings from previous research on group process consultation, in that it supported group problems solving and teaching strategies (Stringer and Hayes, 2016; Nolan and Moreland, 2014).

Findings:

These findings illustrate the themes developed through the research interviews. The collective themes of experiences working with a LAC in KS1 are interpreted as:

Guided by values, pressured by systems

Managing behaviour | Managing learning | Managing own emotions

These themes represent, what I perceived as a consensus within the group that the expectations set within the system pressured you to manage Tom*'s behaviour in a way that was incongruent to your values.

Responsibility of advocacy

Knowledge of history | Influence of reputation

Advocacy was considered as evident in your commitment to challenge the conceptions and rhetoric surrounding Tom. His reputation within the school was described as *that* 'bad', 'naughty' boy. Often his reputation was protected by managing his behaviour within the group.

Collective themes of experiences participating in the group process consultation were interpreted as:

Space for reflection

Reframed thinking | Emotionally offloading

The sessions appeared to offer an opportunity for you to gather your thoughts and contemplate the events within the school day. In doing so alternative perspectives were developed that contradicted what was dominant within the wider staff group.

Empowered team

Mutual trust and understanding | Promoting the group agenda

As a group you may have developed a set of norms and values, influenced perhaps by your reframed thinking and trust between each other. These set of norms may have guided you in determining how to support Tom and challenge others within the school that did not align to these values.

Please note that anonymous statements may be used to add depth and clarity to the themes discovered, these may appear in write up of this research and possible future publication. Please do not hesitate to contact me on the above details if you would like any additional information regarding the findings of the research.

Implications:

This research aimed to offers insight into the experiences of staff working with LAC and participating in group consultation. This research will be disseminated within [redacted] Educational Service to inform practice and further explore ways to support staff that work with LAC.

Further support:

If you would like additional support regarding your experiences within this research project please contact myself, your designated educational psychologist or [redacted] to arrange this.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your participation in this research.

8.25 Appendix 25. A screenshot of research presentation delivered at a virtual school conference.

The presentation was delivered using Prezi software. The screenshot aims to provide an overview of what was covered.