

Maddi Austin

A Realistic Evaluation of a Problem  
Solving Group Consultation Intervention  
with School Staff supporting a Looked  
After Child

Thesis submitted to the University of  
Nottingham for the degree of Doctor of  
Applied Educational Psychology

May 2018

(Word Count 37,822)

## DEDICATION

To my Eva, hard work pays off, never stop trying and always believe in yourself, I believe in you.

To my parents who gave me everything, I owe this to you.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to sincerely thank Dr Nick Durbin for the ongoing academic support and encouragement with this thesis.

I would also like to express my thanks and appreciation to the rest of the tutor team at The University of Nottingham, we are blessed to have this opportunity and be in receipt of your knowledge and wisdom.

My endless thanks to Dr Judith McAlister, for being an inspiration, supporting me through all aspects of my training and being exactly who I have needed you to be!

Thank you to my cohort of colleagues for being an inspiring group of women and friends.

Finally, I will be forever grateful to Jonathan Popoola, who made me just get on with it!

## ABSTRACT

The current study evaluates a group consultation intervention, led by an Educational Psychologist (EP) within a Midlands Educational Psychology Service (EPS). The intervention was designed to support school staff in their work with a Looked After Child (LAC) in a UK Primary School setting. A literature review was conducted, and indicated that the current body of research examining group consultation in schools was outcome focused. Group consultation is a complex social programme and therefore the current study aimed to examine the mechanisms and complex psychological processes that address *why* the intervention may work within the current context. In order to achieve insight into such processes, a realist epistemology was adopted and a Realistic Evaluation (RE) methodology (Pawson & Tilley, 1997) was applied using a case study approach. The RE methodology highlights intricate processes within the intervention through identification of context, mechanism and outcome configurations (CMOCs). Six outcome themes were developed from the literature review and CMOCs within each outcome theme were collated into an Initial Program Theory. The CMOCs were further refined through three evaluation cycles. In evaluation cycle one, data was gathered through an observation of the group process and a Realist Interview (RI) with the facilitating EP. In evaluation cycle two, data was gathered through semi structured interviews with participants and a focus group was conducted in evaluation cycle three, which required participants to categorise final program theories according to perceived importance. Analysis of data was conducted using a thematic analysis that offered a framework to support the refinement and development of CMOCs. Findings suggest that according to participants, the most critical elements of the process were the opportunity to develop a whole group approach to working with the LAC and the skills of the EP facilitator in guiding exploration of the problem. The current research contributes in-depth insight into the critical mechanisms, which supported the perceived outcomes of a group consultation intervention involving the adults working to support a LAC. Limitations and implications for EP practice are considered to conclude the research.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.1	Study background and researcher interest	11
1.2	Aims of the study	13
1.3	Thesis structure	13
2.1	Literature Review: Introduction	15
2.2	Structure of the review	15
2.3	Part One	16
2.4	Outcomes for LAC	16
2.5	Teacher confidence and self efficacy in working with LAC	18
2.6	Support for teachers	19
2.7	What is Consultation?	21
2.8	Background and Theory	21
2.9	EP led consultation	24
2.10	Group consultation and problem solving in schools-examples of practice in the UK	26
2.11	Collaborative problem solving	27
2.12	Farouk's (2004) approach to group consultation	29
2.13	Circles of Adults (CoA)	30
2.14	Solution Circles (SC's)	31
2.15	Other variations on the problem solving approach used in the UK	32
2.16	Summary of part one	33
2.17	A Realist Synthesis (RS) of group consultation literature	37
2.18	Method of review	37
2.19	Synthesis of research	39
2.20	Discussion and critical reflections on the research	43
2.21	Synthesis of Contexts, Mechanisms and Outcomes	45
2.22	Findings of the Realist Synthesis (RS)	43
2.23	Outcome Theme: Increased Confidence	45
2.24	Outcomes Theme: Generation Of Strategies	47
2.25	Outcome Theme: Reducing Isolation and Stress	48
2.26	Outcome Theme: Collaboration and Sharing	49
2.27	Outcome Theme: Reflection and Self Awareness	51
2.28	Outcome Theme: Hindering aspects/difficulties encountered	51
2.29	Limitations of current research	52
2.30	Summary of the RS	55
2.31	Aims, context and rationale for the current study	56
2.32	Research questions	57
2.33	Contribution to research and knowledge	57

3.1	Methodology Introduction	58
3.2	Research Aims and Purpose	58
3.3	Ontology and Epistemology	58
3.4	Positivism	59
3.5	Interpretivism	60
3.6	Critical Realism	61
3.7	Chosen methodological framework	63
3.8	Research Design and Methodology	64
3.9	Realistic Evaluation	64
3.10	Generative causation and CMOCs in RE	64
3.11	Definition of context in RE	65
3.12	Definition of Mechanism in RE	66
3.13	Definition of outcome in RE	66
3.14	Rationale for adopting an RE framework	67
3.15	Qualitative vs. Quantitative data	67
3.16	Case study designs	68
3.17	Designing a Realistic Evaluation	69
3.18	Research Design and Procedure	71
3.19	Procedure-preliminary phase	73
3.20	Identifying a school and liaising with stakeholders	74
3.21	Criteria for involvement	74
3.22	Participants	75
3.23	Group Consultation Process	75
3.24	Procedure-Evaluation cycle one	78
3.25	Evaluation cycle one (data collection)	79
3.26	Evaluation cycle one (data analysis)	82
3.27	Procedure –Evaluation cycle two	85
3.28	Evaluation cycle two (data collection)	86
3.29	Evaluation cycle two (data analysis)	87
3.30	Procedure- Evaluation cycle three	95
3.31	Evaluation cycle three (data collection)	96
3.32	Ethical Considerations	99
3.33	Consent	99
3.34	Right to withdraw	100
3.35	Data storage	100
3.36	Confidentiality and Anonymity	100
3.37	Validity and Reliability	101
3.38	Chapter summary	103
4.1	Results: Introduction	104
4.2	Research questions	104

4.3	Presentation of findings	105
4.4	Findings from the Realist Synthesis	105
4.5	Findings from evaluation cycle one	106
4.6	Findings from Evaluation Cycle Two	107
4.7	Final Program Theory: Outcome theme 'Increased Confidence	108
4.8	Final Program Theory: Outcome theme 'Generation and Implementation of Strategies'	114
4.9	Final Program Theory: Reflection and Self-Awareness	117
4.10	Final Program Theory: Collaboration and Sharing	120
4.11	Final Program Theory: Hindering Aspects and Difficulties Encountered	125
4.12	Final Program Theory: Perceptions of Outcomes for the LAC	129
4.13	Chapter Summary	133
5.1	Discussion and Conclusions: Introduction	138
5.2	Final Program Theory-Outcome Theme; 'Perceptions of Outcomes for the LAC'	138
5.3	Final Program Theory-Outcome theme: 'Increased Confidence'	141
5.4	Final Program Theory-Outcome theme: Generation and Implementation of Strategies	143
5.5	Final Program Theory-Outcome theme: Reflection and Self Awareness	146
5.6	Final Program Theory-Outcome theme: Collaboration and Sharing	147
5.7	Final Program Theory-Outcome theme: Hindering Aspects and Difficulties Encountered	150
5.8	Summary of findings	152
5.9	Limitations	155
5.10	Limitations to the Realistic evaluation (RE)	155
5.11	Researcher Reflexivity	156
5.12	Case study design	158
5.13	Data collection	158
5.14	Data analysis	159
5.15	Implications of the research for EP practice	160
5.16	Future research	162
5.17	Final conclusions	162

## LIST OF TABLES

2.1	Gough (2007) Weight of evidence framework	35
2.2	Weight of evidence checklist	36
2.3	Example of individual paper review (Hayes & Stringer, 2016) for evidence of CMOCs	44
2.4	Example of CMOCs from Initial Program Theory (Outcome theme: Confidence)	47
3.1	Participant Information	76
3.2	Extract of data analysis	84
3.3	Phases of Thematic Analysis	87
3.4	Examples of data coding from outcome theme 'Confidence'	88
3.5	Example of participant analysis table (participant Z)	92
3.6	Threats to trustworthiness and applicability of the research	103
4.1	Initial outcome themes extracted from the RS	107
4.2	Final Program Theory: Increased Confidence	109
4.3	Final Program Theory: Generation and Implementation of Strategies	114
4.4	Final Program Theory: Reflection and Self Awareness	117
4.5	Final Program Theory: Collaboration and Sharing	119
4.6	Final Program Theory: Hindering Aspects and Difficulties Encountered	124
4.7	Final Program Theory: Perceptions of Outcomes for the LAC	128
4.8	Final Program Theory	133



## LIST OF FIGURES

2.1	Farouk's (2004) process of group consultation	22
3.1	Generative causation (Pawson & Tilley, 1997)	64
3.2	The RE cycle	70
3.3	Design and data gathering procedure (Preliminary phase)	73
3.4	Group consultation process	77
3.5	Design and data gathering procedure (Evaluation cycle one)	78
3.6	Design and data gathering procedure (Evaluation cycle two)	81
3.7	Structure of the RI	85
3.8	The Thematic Analysis process	90
3.9	Example of CMOC refinements made to outcome theme 'Generation and implementation of Strategies'	95
3.10	Design and data gathering procedure (Evaluation cycle three-concluding phase)	96
3.11	Categorisation process used in the focus group	99

<b>Appendix</b>		
2.1	List of removed studies	175
2.2	Comparison of included studies	176
2.3	Individual paper reviews	181
2.4	Outcome theme development	187
2.5	Initial Program Theory	190
3.1	Research Timeline	196
3.2	Participant Info and consent	199
3.3	RI questions	203
3.4	EP consent	204
3.5	RI and Observation analysis	206
3.6	Semi Structured Interview questions	221
3.7	Participant C transcript and analysis	223
3.8	Focus Group	240
3.9	Ethical Approval	241
3.10	Social Worker consent	242
3.11	Email to Head teacher	246
3.12	Data sources (example-Increased Confidence)	247
4.1	Program Theory 2	251
4.2	Evaluation Cycle one refinements	261
4.3	Thematic analysis and evaluation cycle two refinements (Example-Generation of Strategies)	276

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

CoA	Circle of Adults
CMOCs	Context, Mechanism and Outcome Configurations
DfE	Department for Education
EP	Educational Psychologist
EPIP	Educational Psychology in Practise
EPS	Educational Psychology Service
LA	Local Authority
LAC	Looked After Child
PCP	Personal Construct Psychology
RCT	Randomised Control Trial
RE	Realistic Evaluation
RI	Realist Interview
RS	Realist Synthesis
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SCs	Solution Circles
TEP	Trainee Educational Psychologist
TSTs	Teacher Support Teams
VS	Virtual School

N.B: A data file attached as a CD rom contains all original transcripts, data analysis for each participants, data sources for each CMOC and records of thematic analysis/refinements made for each outcome theme. Examples within the appendix are referred to throughout the main body of the thesis.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Study background and researcher interest

This research was conducted during the researcher's second and third year placement as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) working in an inner city Educational Psychology Service (EPS) in the East Midlands. Prior to embarking on the Doctoral training, the researcher worked in various roles within several schools, supporting a range of vulnerable children and young people. The researcher's experiences in schools were challenging on many levels, as a professional in terms of developing understanding of needs and personally in relation to managing the emotional labour associated with working with children and young people from difficult backgrounds. Previous experiences therefore supported understanding of the need from a school's perspective for dedicated time to reflect and discuss issues and difficulties that inevitably came from working with challenging children and young people.

Whilst working for the EPS the researcher developed an interest in a project that a team of Educational Psychologists (EP's) were working on, in collaboration with the Virtual School (VS), which involved specialist work to support schools in managing the behaviour of LAC. The researcher's interest in the project led to conversations with the lead EP on the project, who informed the researcher about the intended approach to this work being to develop a group consultation intervention that supported staff to collaboratively problem solve around the needs of LAC.

The researcher's initial experiences of group consultation came during the Interpersonal and Group Skills module in year one of the Doctoral training, which was found to be a supportive and reflective process that the cohort adopted within peer supervision sessions. As the EPS was involved in this project, the researcher was motivated to be involved because of personal understanding of the need for supporting school

staff working with vulnerable children and positive personal experiences of group consultation as a way of providing such support. At the time of conducting the research, this was a new and innovative way of working with school staff within the EPS. The researcher therefore wanted to embark on a research project that would support the EPS in gaining insight and understanding into how and why the group consultation intervention may be useful in supporting adults working with a LAC within the Local Authority (LA).

This was a relevant research project within the LA because the outcomes of the study may be used to evaluate group consultation and promote it as an intervention within the LA to support school staff working with LAC. Bomber (2007) reflects on the challenges school staff face in working with LAC in terms of the raw emotion that can be projected onto school staff. The impact of this on the emotional well-being of the staff member therefore needs to be considered (Bomber, 2007). Furthermore, in the school setting, it has been hypothesised by Barrett and Trevitt (1991) that a child who presents with anxious attachments as a result of a lack of a 'good enough' carer throughout childhood, the teacher can become an essential attachment figure for the child. Johnson (1992) therefore postulates that a child's attachment experience and particularly for children who are looked after, has implications for teachers or support staff who seek to assist the child in learning processes. Bomber (2007) highlights that having an in depth understanding of the LAC's complex behaviours as a result of their attachment relationships can be essential to the teacher-child relationship. Additionally, Bomber (2007) highlights the importance of the potential a school has in it's united front involving all school staff to replicate a 'secure experience' for the LAC in terms of practises and responses to behaviour, through providing a framework in which the child can experience a reliable and secure base. The current study therefore attempts to examine how the EPS can utilise group consultation to support school staff with managing potential issues that are specific to LAC.

## 1.2 Aims of the Study

The aim of the current study is to evaluate an EP led consultation group that utilised a problem solving approach with school staff who were supporting a LAC. A Realist Evaluation (RE) approach was adopted because the EP leading the project wanted to develop an increased understanding of how and why the intervention works to support staff within a school context. The lead EP was particularly interested in whether staff felt more confident in their management of the child following participation in the group consultation and what element of the process would support increased confidence. The RE was therefore seen as an effective way of enabling an exploration of how the consultation group worked within an individual school context and which mechanisms were significant in producing its perceived outcomes. The lead EP and the researcher also wanted to know what participants perceived to be the critical and most important elements of the intervention.

The current research aims to contribute to the body of research that examines group consultation with staff in schools through developing a Program Theory (PT), which provides detailed knowledge and in-depth insight of how group consultation works through considering the interactions between key contexts and mechanisms which led to outcomes.

## 1.3 Thesis structure

This research study contains five chapters. Chapter 2 contains two parts, starting with the presentation of information related to outcomes for LAC in the UK and a narrative account of the range of group consultation methods used by EP's in the UK, including the theoretical underpinnings, process and application of various methods. Part two of chapter 2 presents a Realist Synthesis (RS) of relevant literature that evaluates group consultation that adopts elements of problem solving approaches. The aim of the RS is to critically review and examine the relevant literature for evidence of Context, Mechanism and Outcome Configurations (CMOCs), which form the Initial Program Theory.

Chapter 3 presents the methodology section, which outlines the researcher's epistemological position, followed by a rationale and explanation of the researcher's chosen methodology (RE). The design and procedure for the current research is outlined, including methods of data collection and analysis and limitations to the selected methods. Ethical considerations are presented, followed by threats to the trustworthiness and applicability of the study.

Chapter 4 presents the results of the study, providing a commentary of the CMOCs within each outcome theme that were elicited through the research process based on examples of evidence from the data set within each evaluation cycle. Chapter 5 then discusses the findings of the research, with reference to relevant literature and findings of the RS. Chapter 5 also outlines limitations of the current research, final conclusions and implications for future EP practice.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

Through working within an EPS (Educational Psychology Service) service as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP), the researcher had the opportunity to conduct research linked to a wider project being undertaken with the 'Virtual School' (VS). The VS is a team working within the Local Authority (LA), who support all of the children and young people who are 'looked after' (LAC). The VS had commissioned the EPS to put together a small team of Educational Psychologists (EP) to support the needs of individual LAC in the local authority. Each child receives the support of an assigned EP to conduct some systemic and/or therapeutic work with, or on behalf of the child. The systemic work involves the EP facilitating a consultation group, using a process based on various models of 'problem solving' group consultation. The consultation group consists of adults who work closely with the child and an EP facilitator. The group consultation aims to build the confidence, range of strategies and network of support for the adults working with the LAC. This study therefore proposes to evaluate the systemic element of the VS project, starting with a review of the literature and existing evidence base relating to the outcomes of group consultation and problem solving approaches in schools.

### 2.2 Structure of the review

#### Part One

This review will be presented in two parts; the first part will provide some context for the study through presenting information about current outcomes for LAC in the UK. A narrative account will provide a brief exploration of literature outlining protective factors for LAC, with a particular focus on teacher confidence and efficacy in working with LAC. The purpose of part one is to 'set the scene' and provide some context for the current research.

The range of group consultation methods in EP practice will then be considered and discussed in terms of the theoretical underpinnings,

structure/process and application of each model. The purpose of this is to provide the reader with a clear overview of the development of group consultation and problem solving within EP services in the UK.

## Part Two

The second part of the review will examine the evidence base of the different forms of group consultation and problem solving in UK schools using a Realist Synthesis approach. Following a search for relevant literature, each research paper will be critically reviewed and examined for evidence of Context, Mechanism and Outcome configurations (CMOCs), (Pawson, 2006). Evidence of CMOCs will be cross-referenced between papers and then synthesised to form an Initial Program Theory. Further details of the search strategy and review methodology can be found in section 2.15.

### 2.3 Part One

Part one of the literature review begins with definition of the term 'LAC'. A narrative account of what is known about typical outcomes for LAC is then reported with particular focus on school achievement and behaviour to enhance relevance to the current research. Following this, the concept of teacher confidence and efficacy when working with LAC is considered, with a focus on how teacher confidence and efficacy may be supported by having knowledge of issues faced by LAC and how they may impact on pupil behaviour in the classroom. Finally, the effects of challenging classroom behaviour on teachers is explored, followed by some consideration of what support is currently available for teachers.

### 2.4 Outcomes for LAC

"Looked after" is the term used in the Children's Act (1989) to describe all children who are the subject of a care order, or who are provided with accommodation on a voluntary basis for more than 24 hours. Looked after children in the UK typically have poor educational



outcomes as compared with the general population (Liabo et al, 2013). In 2015-2016, 79 children in this cohort (11%) achieved 5 or more GCSEs at grade A\* to C (DfE, 2015) compared with 31% of those who are registered for free school meals. Disproportionately negative outcomes have also been reported for LAC children in statistics relating to exclusion, well-being, employment and social mobility (DfE, 2015). However, as with any statistical measure, not all young people who are looked after experience poor educational outcomes and evidence suggests that some protective factors exist (Hill & Thompson, 2003). For example, support and stability within both the care placement and school placement have been found to elicit more success in educational attainment, (Jackson & Martin 1998). Likewise, successful peer relationships and opportunities to develop out-of-school interests have also been found to be beneficial to overall outcomes related to well-being and employment (Goddard 2000; Martin & Jackson 2002). Moreover, Campbell (1998) reports that the stability and safety of some care placements have enhanced educational experience for young people as compared to their previous situation in unstable home environments. Goddard (2000) adds to this, suggesting that enhanced support and encouragement from parents and teachers are key to building more successful outcomes for LAC.

In addition to the above, higher commitment to LAC's success is evidenced when local authorities take a corporate parenting approach, which includes effective communication and liaison between agencies. In a review of LAC's perceptions of support for educational progress, Harker et al (2004) discovered that the majority of comments made were made in relation to support from teachers. Some of the LAC described situations whereby teachers had given additional academic assistance when they had fallen behind or were having problems concentrating due to challenges associated with being looked after. Teachers were also mentioned in relation to emotional support and encouraging feelings of self-belief around academic performance (Harker et al, 2004). Harker et al (2004) conclude that teachers and school play a significant and central role in the lives of LAC. This is

supported by Jackson and Hojer (2013), who indicate that where LAC have had successful educational outcomes, it is largely due to appropriate support of significant adult role models, who place a high priority on education and balance this with unconditional counsel and advice.

## 2.5 Teacher confidence and self efficacy in working with LAC

Self-efficacy is a psychological construct, which has been associated with teacher burnout (Brouwers & Tomic, 1999). Bandura (1997) posited that self efficacy in terms of our confidence and belief in ourselves has the potential to influence our actions and responses.

Parker and Teasdale (2016) suggest that teachers, in particular, often misunderstand LAC's emotional health and underestimate their abilities to achieve educationally and emotionally due to false 'within child' attributions, often those which pathologies' LAC through medical labelling. Dann (2011) also discusses difficulties for teachers in terms of familiarity with the issues faced by LAC such as attachment and trauma, which are influential in shaping the child and his/her learning behaviour. For example, Dann (2011) outlines some of the possible attachment characteristics that a LAC may present when forming relationships with teachers in school. The need for control and manipulation within the relationship is highlighted, evident in behaviours such as the child trying to select which items of work they engage with, which adults they will chose to co-operate with or trying to avoid engaging in tasks completely (Dann, 2011). Dann (2011) also reflects that despite efforts, many teachers are not familiar with the difficulties related to attachment and trauma that many LAC face, or how some of the behaviours that the impact of attachment and trauma may present. In Dann's (2011) view, an appreciation of the underlying causes related to LAC's behaviour is fundamental to supporting educational success.

Edwards (2016) investigated the emotional labour experienced by teachers who work with LAC. A thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews highlighted that teachers own feelings of competency when working with LAC had an impact on well-being. Furthermore, teachers described that through their experiences of teaching LAC, a heightened awareness of their circumstances occurred, however a need for increased understanding of the child and ensuring a positive bond was also reported. Peer support was also perceived as a key protective factor for teachers in Edwards (2016) study, the opportunity to share perceptions with other staff members and the availability of peer teacher support was reported as a key factor in managing emotions.

It has been highlighted above that teacher's confidence and strategies in managing LAC's challenging behaviour can be influenced by their knowledge and understanding of the issues that are faced by LAC. Feelings of competency are also a contributory factor to teacher well-being, with teachers feeling an increased sense of well-being when peer support is available. The following section will discuss the importance of peer support for staff in schools, and then lead into some reflection of how the EP can support and encourage school staff to engage in peer support through group consultation and problem-solving.

## 2.6 Support for teachers

Teachers have reported positive effects of peer support (Boyle, Topping, Jindal-Snape, & Norwich, 2011). In 2010, the Department for Education (DfE) advocated peer support as a way of promoting high quality teaching. Some of the positive effects reported are the opportunity to share good practice, particularly around the inclusion of children with Special educational Needs (SEN), (Boyle et al, 2011). Norwich and Daniels (1997) also noted that teachers reported the importance of sharing strategies that may also be applied to supporting the wider student body. Frederickson, Dunsmuir, Lang, and Monsen (2004) found that factors reported by teachers as important to making

inclusion successful included communication and support, and sharing staff expertise. Further, Hsu (2005) found that student teachers requested support from peers more frequently than from university tutors or teachers, highlighting the value of peer support.

Creese, Norwich and Daniels (1998) completed a national survey to estimate the prevalence of teacher support groups in schools and concluded that around 25% of schools have some form of teacher support groups in operation. The less formal peer support groups were the most prevalent. Norwich and Daniels (1997) developed a formalised process of peer support in schools, namely 'Teacher Support Teams'. Teacher Support Teams (TST's) are a group of teachers who meet regularly, to problem solve an issue that has been identified by a member of the group. The group acts as a support to the teacher, who (in theory) develops increased awareness and strategies to support a pupil. Norwich and Daniels (1997) conducted an evaluation of the outcomes of TST's and found that teachers reported an increase in confidence in working with children who present challenging behaviour.

With the importance of peer support for teachers highlighted in government literature (Boyle et al, 2011), the role of the EP in supporting and advocating this may be paramount. The EP has the skills and knowledge to support teachers in being reflective in their practice (Creese et al, 1998). If, as research suggests, successful outcomes for LAC are enhanced by the support of the adults around them Jackson and Hojer (2013), it may therefore highlight a role for the Educational Psychologist (EP) in working at a systemic level through group consultation to support the adults or 'team around the child'. This could be in the context of support with managing the emotional labor associated with teaching a LAC and with supporting teachers in the development of strategies to manage challenging behaviours, as highlighted as a positive and essential factor in inclusive practice by Frederickson et al (2004).

Stringer et al (1992) refer to the Warnock Report and the Education Act of 1981, which highlighted the importance of developing a commonality of understanding and practice between professionals. This report also highlighted the responsibility of teachers in working with children with SEN the impact of emotional labor on teachers due to occupational stress, summarising that an open acknowledgement of challenges within the profession should be embraced, discussed, accepted and supported.

Consultation is a model of service delivery in the field of Educational Psychology, Farrell et al (2006) place emphasis on EP's using a consultative approach to working with groups of teachers or school staff to problem solve difficulties relating to individual children. Furthermore, Dent and Cameron (2003) suggest a consultative model of service delivery is particularly pertinent when considering the most effective support for vulnerable groups such as LAC, because the EP can provide staff who work with the child daily with regular opportunity for discussion and support.

This section has focused on the issues faced by LAC and how teachers can be supported in managing challenging behavior, the subsequent section will provide a description of consultation in EP practice, followed by some example approaches to group consultation and problem solving methods within EP practice, that are currently being used in the UK.

## 2.7 What is Consultation?

## 2.8 Background and Theory

Conoley and Conoley (1982) outline three key models of consultation, which have influenced modern day psychology practitioners. 'Mental health consultation' was developed by Gerald Caplan, (1970). This model takes its theoretical base form psychodynamic theory (Larney, 2003) and focuses primarily on overcoming the consultee's difficulties in the hope that the consultee will then gain the interpersonal

knowledge and insight to be able to deal with the problem independently (Caplan, 1970). Larney (2003) suggests that the psychodynamically orientated approach within mental health consultation has prevented it from growing in popularity in terms of application within school settings. Watkins (2000) suggests that a lack of empirical evidence for this approach has also rendered it unpopular.

Behavioural consultation is grounded in social learning theory (Bandura, 1971) and involves the consultant leading the consultee through a structured problem solving process. The focus within behavioural consultation is more heavily weighted to behavioural technologies and understanding of the child, rather than on the psychodynamics of self-awareness or relationships, (Larney, 2003). Gutkin and Curtis (1999) suggest that behavioural consultation is the most widely used approach in the UK .

Process and organisational/systems consultation are rooted in the psychology of group and share many commonalities. Schein (1988) developed 'process consultation', which aims to make people more aware of the systems and psychological mechanisms between individuals that impact on events in the environment and how these affect the organisation. Farouk (2004) describes Schein's process consultation model as a problem solving approach, with elements of psychodynamic theory due to its focus on managing individual group members and dynamics within the group. Larney (2003) suggests that this would be a potentially useful approach to consultation in school contexts, however due to lack of familiarity and potential amount of training required to implement correctly, psychologists have not adopted the process consultation approach on a large scale basis, (Larney, 2003).

The various models of consultation can be underpinned by different assumptions. However, all models of consultation as a means of EP practise can be linked to social constructionism, as described by Macready (1997), who proposes the notion that all of the services provided by an EP have relevance to social constructionist theory. The

world according to the social constructionist is built on the stories that we tell ourselves, and those that we relay to each other (Macready, 1997). Therefore, language is the key to how relationships and identities are formed and maintained in the social world and also the vessel of change. Macready (1997) gives further explanation through providing an example of how the consultation process can support change from the social constructionist perspective. The example given is based on the assumption that the client is experiencing a sense of distress or 'stuckness' with a situation and therefore has developed a repetitive dialogue in the way that they tell the story to the world. This repetition of story telling often reinforces the certainty felt by the individual that the situation is helpless and unchangeable. The consultation process therefore provides the individual with responses that influence their sequence of story telling, providing different lines of conversation that help the client to re-vision and hence 're-author' the story. New meanings that emerge from conversations will therefore influence actions because the client will begin to understand and respond to the situation in different ways. Macready (1997) also highlights that within group consultation, these changes are a resource to all participants involved.

Wagner (2000) believes that other interactionist and systems psychologies also contribute to the theoretical underpinnings of successful consultation in the complex social contexts within which the EP works. Wagner (2000) discusses the theory of symbolic interactionism, which is concerned with meaning making within social interactions and how the EP can use this theory to think about and understand what meaning the client/s is/are making of their own and others behaviour. Hargreaves (1978) also highlights that symbolic interactionism provides the EP with rationale for consulting with significant adults rather than direct work with the child, because the EP's interacting with the child may reinforce the attributions that assume 'within child' difficulties.

Personal Construct Psychology (PCP) (Kelly, 1955) may also be a useful theory to underpin the consultation process. Wagner (2000)

suggests that EP's can use ideas that support understanding of how and why an individual is making sense of a situation based on their core beliefs or constructs. Raising awareness in individuals of their actions that relate to imbedded constructs based on past influence and experience can be a key precursor for change, (Wagner, 2000).

Systems theory, taken from the field of family therapy (Burnham, 1986) is also a useful contributor when thinking about consultation, particularly for the EP who is working towards elements of organisational change. This field provides theories about how social contexts develop over time and often adopt repetitive patterns that are linked to espoused beliefs within the system or organisation. This theory is also linked to the rational supporting EP's working within a consultation model, because the paradigm itself is interactionist and supports the notion that the problem is not 'within' the person but 'between' the people, therefore shifting unhelpful attributions. Wagner (2000) also comments that systems theory highlights the importance of understanding processes that can occur within interactions between members of a system such as school, home and members of professional systems that exist at the periphery of the organisation.

## 2.9 EP led consultation

Within EP services in the UK, consultation can be adopted as a model of service delivery, or offered to schools as part of a wider package, which may include individual casework, staff training and therapeutic interventions (Wagner, 2000). Bozic and Carter (2002) describe consultation as an indirect model of service delivery, where work is conducted with a significant adult (a teacher or care giver) rather than the child (the client). Moreover, Wagner (2000) posits that, '*consultation is a voluntary, collaborative, non supervisory approach, established to aid the functioning of a system and it's inter related systems*' (p11). Further explanation of the aim of consultation within the work of the EP is provided by Turner et al (1996), who infer that consultation can be provided to individuals, groups or organisations who need to develop thinking around a particular problem. The problem may be related to an



individual child, whole class or systemic difficulties within the organisation. The principal premise of a consultative approach is that the process will support the client or client group to develop thinking, deeper insight and reframing of the problem, which then enables the development of contextually relevant solutions (Farouk, 2004). Bozic and Carter (2002) note commonalities in previous conceptualisations of consultation as being a collaborative problem solving process, which focuses on the work related needs of the individual client or client group. Hanks (1985, 1989) introduced a model of group consultation in the UK in which the group discussion centres on the learning and behavioural difficulties of particular child using a 'collaborative problem-solving approach'. Within the Hanks (1985) model of consultation, staff who support the child are supported by an EP to pool their knowledge and strategies to increase their understanding of the child and find workable ways forward.

Consultation within EP practice can be conducted within different levels of a system and the type of consultation used may differ depending on the circumstances and suitability for using a particular framework (Wagner, 2008).

Kelly and Woolfson (2008) suggest that all the above theoretical approaches can be used by EP's to carry out consultation and are not necessarily mutually exclusive. A network of theories and frameworks can be used to support and guide effective EP practice in consultation.

Kennedy, Frederickson and Monsen (2008) support this notion within their exploration of the diversity of theories, concepts and methods employed by EPs when using consultation. The research investigated psychological theories surrounding consultation and its practice. Results showed that EPs mainly said they were employing problem solving/analysis, a systemic focus and a solution-focused approach. Many of the models of practice named by EPs in the research were applications of a particular theory. For example, a solution-focused approach is an application of social constructionism. As EPs are applied psychologists therefore it is not a surprise that the most popular

theories and practices named were about how to do consultation rather than a particular paradigm.

Furthermore, Hylander (2012) noted in her research that EPs need the skill to adjust approaches to the dynamics of the consultation process and that it is not about learning one approach or one theory, EPs need to know how to use different psychological processes as tools in the consultation process.

The above section of the review has considered the psychological theories relevant to consultation and how it may be used as a part of EP service delivery. Attention will now be turned to how EP's work in schools with groups of teachers, as this is the phenomenon being examined in this research. It is therefore a necessity to consider how 'group consultation' has been formalised, used and researched within the EP profession.

#### 2.10 Group consultation and problem solving in schools-examples of practice in the UK

In order to scope current examples of practise in the UK, the Educational Psychology in Practice (EPIP) journal and Google Scholar were searched using the following terms:

'Group Consultation AND Educational Psychology'

'Group Problem Solving AND Educational Psychology'

Hayes and Stringer (2016) surmise that the various approaches to group consultation used in practice all imply a problem solving process and in the UK, different approaches to group consultation have been devised and researched. The following part of this review will examine the range of approaches that have been recorded in UK literature.

#### 2.11 Collaborative problem solving

Group work in schools has been highlighted as being an effective way of working with staff to support students by Hanko (1985), who developed the 'collaborative problem solving' approach to group

consultation (Hanko,1999). This approach involves groups of teachers discussing difficulties with a particular child with colleagues, typically facilitated by an EP. Hanko (1999) cites Caplan's (1970) medical health consultation model as being a major influence on her work. Caplan's model has its roots in psychodynamics and the influence of this is evident in Hanko's (1999) descriptions of the theoretical underpinnings of her work. For example, Hanko (1999) claims that exploration of issues influencing a child's behaviour can help restore objectivity for the teacher, and help to develop self-awareness of why personal feelings may have impacted on relationships or other areas of professional practice. A specific structure is followed in Hanko's collaborative problem solving approach, firstly, a case is presented by one member of the group. This is followed by gathering additional information, through the process of group members questioning the case presenter. Further exploration of the issues are then discussed, with a view to producing new ideas and strategies for working with the child. The role of the EP within Hanko's approach is to facilitate the process and to model questions and language that helps the group members to gain a deeper understanding of the situation as a whole.

#### 2.12 Farouk's (2004) approach to group consultation

Four key phases provide a framework for Farouk's approach. During each phase, group members take on different roles, with a view to the EP eventually being able to let the group lead the sessions. Farouk (2004) describes each phase in more detail and provides information about each group member's role during each phase, this is depicted in figure (2.1):

Figure 2.1: Farouk's (2004) process of group consultation

The process	Role of group members	The most relevant process functions that the consultant may adopt
1. Description and clarification phase The teacher presenting the concern talks about his/her situation freely, while other members of the group only ask clarification questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To engage in active listening and only asking clarification questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiating</li> <li>• Modelling</li> <li>• Active listening</li> <li>• Promote information seeking</li> <li>• Gatekeeping</li> </ul>
2. Reflection phase The teacher presenting the concern is asked questions and other group members may give examples of similar experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To ask questions and given examples that facilitate reflection by group members</li> <li>• Not to offer advice or solutions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiating</li> <li>• Modelling</li> <li>• Clarifying</li> <li>• Promote information giving</li> <li>• Elaborating</li> <li>• Gatekeeping and encouraging</li> </ul>
3. Personal theory generating phase Group members (including the teacher presenting the concern) put forward their personal theories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To put forward their personal theories (possibly supported by examples) as to what is underlying the area of concern</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiating</li> <li>• Opinion seeking</li> <li>• Clarifying</li> <li>• Elaborating</li> <li>• Gatekeeping and encouraging</li> <li>• Harmonising and compromising</li> <li>• Summmaring and consensus testing</li> </ul>
4. Strategy generating phase The final phase consists of the group making suggestions, that the teacher presenting the concern may or may not take up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To suggest and discuss possible ways forward and recommend strategies that can be implemented</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiating</li> <li>• Clarifying</li> <li>• Elaborating</li> <li>• Gatekeeping and encouraging</li> <li>• Harmonising and compromising</li> <li>• Summarising and consensus testing</li> </ul>

Taken from: Farouk (2004, p214)

Farouk's (2004) approach was also influenced by the work of Hanko (1999). However, Farouk was more interested in how internal group interactions and other interpersonal factors, such as emotional needs and agendas of group members, impact on the process of consultation. Farouk (2004) therefore combined Hanko's approach with Schein's (1988) model of process consultation, which was developed within organisational psychology. Farouk (2004) claims that the

psychodynamic theoretical base for both approaches gives them enough in common to be easily combined. The main difference in implementation of these two models is that Hanko's (1999) model is processed around the individual teacher's presenting problem, whereas Schein's (1988) approach involves a problem solving process between group members but not necessarily focusing on one particular member of the group.

Therefore, Farouk (2004) draws on Hanko's (1999) model for the structure and sequence of the process itself, and uses the Schein (1988) approach for its focus on managing relationships and dynamics within the group. Farouk (2004) also refers to systemic thinking, and defines the model of consultation used as being a combination of the application of psychodynamic psychology and interactional systems thinking. Farouk (2004) also refers to the use of solution-focused questioning, in helping teachers to become less problem-focused and more contextually and systemically orientated in their thinking. Turner, Robbins and Doran (1996) also refer to the use of solution focused questioning within the process consultation approach and suggest that questions which encourage thinking around exceptions to the problem can provide a template for employing systems thinking with individuals in a school organisation.

### 2.13 Circles of Adults (CoA)

Circles of Adults (CoA) has two facilitators, one who leads the process and one who captures the content of the session by producing a graphic representation of the dialogue in each phase of the process. Wilson and Newton (2006) claim that utilising two facilitators supports in the development of a more thorough understanding of the group dynamics, as well as allowing the task of facilitating the group to be shared, thereby reducing the demand of complex interpersonal skills needed by the EP facilitator. The CoA takes around 90 minutes to complete and has a process of 10 steps, which lead the group members through a problem solving process that also examines

relationships, organisational factors that help or hinder the problem situation, the child's voice, strategies and an action plan is devised that outlines next steps the problem presenter can take in the very near future.

Wilson and Newton were also influenced by the work of Hanko (1999) and the use of psychodynamic perspectives in developing a process to support and facilitate effective problem solving. The CoA is aimed at adults who are working directly with a child or young person who has emotional and behavioural difficulties. In discussing the theoretical underpinnings for CoA, Wilson and Newton (2006) refer to suggestions made by Miller (2003), that school staff can benefit from support in recognising emotions and feelings that influence relationships and responses to behaviour, which in turn prompts feelings that translate into responses in the child. This psychodynamic perspective provides explanations of how conscious and unconscious thoughts and feelings can affect our behaviour, although Wilson and Newton (2006) point out that there is a lack of understanding of how psychodynamic theory can be of use in working with children with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

#### 2.14 Solution Circles (SC's)

Forrest and Pearpoint (1996) developed the SC's approach to staff support. The SC is a process that assumes people within an organisation have the capacity to help one another. The aim of the SC is to bring people together to generate ideas and solutions to a particular problem. The problem is brought to the group by a problem presenter, who starts the process by discussing a problem that he/she may have with an individual pupil, a whole class or a wider school issue (Brown & Henderson, 2012). The group then work to brainstorm solutions for the problem presenter, with some back and forth discussion that will also support the clarification and definition of the problem. Some first steps are then agreed upon, which are usually one or two practical things that the problem presenter can do to try and overcome the problem.

## 2.15 Other variations on the problem solving approach used in the UK

Other approaches to problem solving group consultation have also been explored, for example Stringer, Stow, Hibbert, Powell and Louw (1992), a group of EP's working in Newcastle, describe their work in setting up consultation groups in schools. The team cite Hanko as being influential on their work in consultation with groups of teachers. Further variations on the problem-solving model have been developed by Duffy and Davidson (2009-cited in Nugent, Jones, McElroy, Peel, Thornton & Tierney, 2014), Guishard (2000) and Evans (2005).

The sessions start with all members of the group presenting what they aim to give to the session, this may be a variety of contributions, some examples given by Stringer et al (1992, p91) are "*to practise different kinds of questions, to attend carefully so as to be able to give helpful summaries, to give feedback about the progress of a concern previously shared*". Following this each member then discusses what hopes they have for the session, such as support with a particular problem or feedback about a previous contribution made towards someone else's problem. The aim of this activity is to orientate the group and support the direction of the process. This activity is followed by a process that is guided by problem management frameworks, whereby participants spend the first part of the session outlining and exploring the problem, without rushing into providing solutions or giving advice. Participants' interpersonal skills are then utilised in a process of supporting the problem holder to recognise which elements of concern the problem holder is able to take responsibility for and do something about, theoretical knowledge and experience of other group members will also be contributed to move into a period of time for thinking about possible ways forward with the problem. Fifteen minutes at the end of the session are then left for process discussion, which allows group members to discuss the functioning of the group and revisit ground rules if required.

## 2.16 Summary of part one

Part One of this review has focused on defining the concept of consultation, describing theoretical underpinnings and approaches to practice in the UK. Part two will now conduct a critical review of the existing research evaluations of group consultation and problem solving in schools.

### **Part two (Realist synthesis)**

#### 2.17 A Realist Synthesis (RS) of group consultation literature:

RS is an alternative to a traditional systematic review, but is deemed comparable in terms of robustness by Pawson (2006). Pawson and Tilley (1997) also describe RS as a bedfellow to the method of evaluation used in this study, 'Realistic Evaluation (RE)'. The format of this review takes a typical approach in terms of conducting a database search for relevant papers, using the search strategy outlined below.

The RS aims to develop a detailed understanding not just of 'what' outcomes or impact the intervention may have had, but also 'how' and 'why' this may have been the case. In order to do this, Pawson and Tilley (1997, p5) discuss how theories are generated from existing literature by examining in detail;

*"What is it about the programme that might produce change?"*

□

(Pawson and Tilley, 1997, p. 85)

In order to conduct a thorough investigation of the above question, an 'Initial Program Theory' will be developed drawing on the evidence from the existing literature. Pawson (2006) describes the program theory as a tool to provide a set of hypothesis that attempt to explain HOW a program works. The program theory provides information about the outcomes of a program, alongside how features of the program CONTEXT set up MECHANISMS of change (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). The Context (C)+ Mechanism (M)= Outcome (O) formula presented by



Pawson and Tilley (1997) is proposed as a means of evaluating social programs. The C + M = O is the essence of the RE methodology, because it provides a framework for an evaluation, which does not only focus on the outcomes of a program, but attempts to establish “*why a program works, for whom and in what circumstances*” (Pawson & Tilley, 1997, p. xvi). The Realist Synthesis will therefore will attempt draw up an Initial Program Theory in order to understand how, according to previous research, EP led group consultation works.

Therefore, the programme theory developed from reviewing the existing EP led group consultation literature will be based on elements of the context, mechanisms and outcomes, drawn from a variety of sources. The RS will also be used to inform the RE research questions, by highlighting gaps in the current research.

## 2.18 Method of review:

### *Search strategy:*

The following databases were searched to identify all the relevant research into group consultation in schools:

□

- Taylor and Francis Online
- Google Scholar □ □ □ □
- □□ Science Direct
- Web of Science
- NUsearch

Terms used as keywords in this search were:

‘Group consultation AND schools OR teacher OR staff’ (437)

‘Circle of adults OR solution circles AND schools OR teacher OR staff’  
(184)

'Collaborative problem solving AND schools OR teacher OR staff' (185)

The key words were searched for in the article title, the abstract or the keywords linked to the study. Following a review of the number of titles and abstracts indicated above in brackets, duplicates and non-relevant studies were removed (typically based on studies not being related to EP led group consultation in schools). A total of 25 articles were reviewed in full. Following full review, 15 studies were removed for a variety of reasons. A list of removed studies, with reasons for removal can be found in appendix 2.1. As a consequence, 10 studies remained that were considered relevant and were therefore included in the current review.

Gough's (2007) 'Weight of Evidence' framework provides a helpful tool for supporting the process of "*appraising the contribution that each one [study] makes to the developing synthesis*" (Pawson, 2006, p. 87).

Gough (2007) suggests there are three review criteria (A,B,C) which lead to an overall assessment (D) of the quality and appropriateness of a research paper (see Table 2.1). Each paper was assessed against these criteria and awarded a 'low', 'medium' or 'high' grade, in relation to how well it matched each criteria.

Table 2.1: Gough (2007) Weight of Evidence Framework

Weight of Evidence Criteria	Implications for current review
A – Quality of research to draw conclusions	Research which has been peer-reviewed and published is likely to offer more robust evidence to shape C+M=O development.
B – Appropriateness of the evidence and relevance to participants in current study	Research conducted within the past 10 years is likely to be more relevant to the RE due to reflecting a more current use of consultation groups in the UK. UK research into EP led consultation groups with school staff around challenging behaviour are more relevant to the aims of the current research.
C – Relevance to research question	In order to provide evidence for the development of a programme specification, the literature must attempt to explain <i>how</i> the programme works, with reference to context and mechanisms, as well as outcomes (Pawson and Tilley, 1997).

A list of studies assessed against criteria and the weight of evidence judgements can be found in table 2.2. This was used to support the development of the RS by drawing on research that was deemed more pertinent to the current study, as defined by the above criteria.

Although a shortage of papers resulted in all the relevant literature being included, those considered more relevant to the current study were drawn more heavily when developing the Initial Program Theory.

Table 2.2: Weight of evidence checklist for each study

Study	Weight of Evidence A: Quality of Research to draw conclusions- published? Peer reviewed?	Weight of Evidence B: Appropriateness of the evidence and relevance to participants in current study Year (last 10=high) post 2000=medium, before =low. UK=high EP led (facilitated by an EP in school) = high	Weight of Evidence C: Relevance to research question (Does the study elicit how and why + outcomes) Outcomes only =low Context and mech (how and why)=high	Weight of Evidence D: Overall judgment
Newton (1995)	High	Low/medium	Medium	Medium
Turner (2014)	Low	High	High	Medium
Bozic and Carter 2002	High	Medium/high	High	High
Nugent et al (2014)	High	High	High	High
Jackson (2008)	High	Medium	High	Medium/High
Hayes and stringer 2016	High	High	High	High
Guishard (2000)	High	Medium	Low/Medium	Medium
Brown and Henderson (2012)	High	Medium/High	High	High
Grahamslaw and Henson (2015)	High	High	High	High
Evans (2005)	High	Medium/high	Medium	Medium/high

## 2.19 Synthesis of research

Having outlined the method of the review and selection criteria for inclusion of the specified studies, the RS will now consider the detail of each study, including the research sample, design and methodology, measures and outcomes. This information is presented in a table in appendix 2.2 and discussed in detail below.

## 2.20 Discussion and critical reflections on the research

Collectively, the literature presented suggests that various models of group consultation in schools that use a problem solving approach can have a positive effect on the range of participating school staff. Commentary on contextual factors, implied mechanisms and a summary of outcomes from the research is provided in section 2.20.

### *Samples/participants*

The participant demographics and size of samples vary between studies. For example, 2 of the studies take place in a single school setting (Turner, 2014; Newton, 1995) and others range from 2 schools or colleges (Guishard, 2000; Brown & Henderson, 2012) to 6 schools (Evans, 2005). Other studies report the number of participants rather than number of settings (Nugent et al, 2014; Jackson, 2008; Grahamslaw & Henson, 2015). The largest sample was reported by Nugent et al (2014), who received session evaluations from 205 participants.

In some cases the school demographics were reported (Hayes & Stringer 2016; Evans, 2005, Nugent et al, 2014, Turner, 2014) in terms of similarity of settings related to demographic intake and number of pupils. Other studies examine consultation groups that were set up with staff 'across' different school settings, with participants from various schools that formed a locality wide consultation group (Grahamslaw &

Henson, 2015). Participants in all of the studies were school staff, including teachers, SENCO's and a range of support staff.

### *Methodology/design*

Most of the research reviewed utilise mixed (qualitative and quantitative) methods in order to triangulate information (Bozic & Carter, 2002; Evans, 2005; Nugent et al, 2014; Brown & Henderson, 2012; Jones et al, 2013; Jackson, 2008). However some studies have used only qualitative methods such as thematic analysis (Grahamslaw & Henson, 2015), or simply provided some qualitative analysis of post hoc interviews (Newton, 1995). Only Guishard (2000) reports quantitative outcomes as a single method of research, however with a small sample of 16 participants, only pre and post descriptive statistics are reported.

### *Measures*

In qualitative elements of the majority of studies, thematic analysis was used to search for themes from either semi-structured interviews (Hayes & Stringer, 2016; Grahamslaw & Henson, 2015), a focus group (Turner, 2014) or open-ended questions as part of a post hoc questionnaire (Bozic & Carter, 2002). Nugent et al (2014) report results from a content analysis of participant answers to open ended questions. Other qualitative data is simply reported as a commentary by the researcher/s, including Jackson (2008), who reports comments made by participants about their experiences of taking part in group consultation. Brown and Henderson (2012) also report comments made by participants during a 'round of words' following each session and reflections given during a structured discussion with the Head Teacher of the participating school.

Pre and post questionnaires are used in some of the research, including Hayes and Stringer (2016); Guishard (2000); Turner (2014).

Some studies use only post hoc questionnaires; Bozic & Carter (2002); Evans (2005); Nugent et al 2014); Brown and Henderson (2012); Jackson (2008). The majority of questionnaires used were designed by the researchers, depending on the research question (Hayes & Stringer, 2016; Bozic & Carter, 2012; Evans, 2005; Nugent, 2014; Jackson, 2008). The exception to this is Turner (2014), who used standardised questionnaires to measure teacher efficacy and attribution analysis. All of the studies with a quantitative element report descriptive statistics. An exception to this is Tuner (2014), who introduced a quasi-experimental design with a control group and used a repeated measures mixed analysis of variance (ANOVA) to identify significant differences in outcome measures.

## 2.21: Synthesis of Contexts, Mechanisms and Outcomes

*What does previous research indicate about features of the context, which help or hinder group consultation?*

The majority of studies are outcome driven, however some studies pay attention to process related observations or comments made by participants. For example, Hayes and Stringer (2016) explored what contextual factors supported or hindered the running of the consultation groups and examined the perceived value in the contributions made by the EP. Other studies also pay closer attention to specific contextual factors such as; (Bozic & Carter, 2002; Nugent et al, 2014; Jackson, 2008).

Some of the contextual factors reported within the current body of research are summarized below;

- The consultation group sets aside time for collaborative discussion (Hayes & Stringer 2016, Bozic & Carter, 2002, Nugent et al 2014, Brown & Henderson, 2012)

- The consultation has a clear and structured process (Bozic & Carter 2002, Nugent et al 2014, Brown & Henderson, 2012)
- The group has an appropriate and confidential space, time and senior management support (Hayes & Stringer 2016, Nugent et al, 2014, Evans, 2005)
- The group is facilitated by an 'expert' EP (Hayes & Stringer, 2016, Brown & Henderson, 2012, Evans, 2005; Grahamslaw & Henson, 2015)
- Schools are busy and staff do not have structured time to discuss problems (Newton, 1995, Nugent, 2014, Brown & Henderson, 2012)
- Membership is voluntary/compulsory, (Bozic & Carter, 2012, Jackson, 2008)
- A range of professionals with different expertise attend the group, (Evans, 2005, Turner, 2014)
- Ground rules are/are not set and explored, (Evans, 2005, Newton, 1995)

Some hindering contextual factors are also reported within research in relation to the process of setting up and implementing group consultation as a model of service delivery within EP practice.

Some of the hindering factors are summarized below:

- Time-not having enough time for deep reflection, the amount of time taken by the group process in terms of releasing adults from other duties in school, sticking to time within the structure: (Hayes & Stringer, 2016; Nugent et al, 2014; Turner, 2014)
- Lack of equal contribution/involuntary membership/poor and sporadic attendance (Hayes & Stringer, 2016; Jackson, 2008)
- Group size too big or too small (Jackson, 2008)
- Lack of follow up-checking and support with how well strategies have worked and been implemented (Nugent et al, 2014)



- Participants feeling fear of exposure and ridicule (Brown & Henderson, 2012; Turner, 2014)
- Lack of privacy when conducting sessions (Hayes & Stringer, 2016)
- A closed group may cause suspicion within the organisation (Hayes & Stringer, 2016)

*What does previous research indicate about the mechanisms of group consultation and problem solving for the adults involved?*

Mechanisms for change are implied within some the qualitative analysis within the current body of research. The mechanisms listed below have been extracted as examples from the body of research, some of which may be individual and been ‘triggered’ due to the specific context of the individual study:

- Collaborative problem sharing and solving occurs (Hayes & Stringer, 2016, Newton, 1995, Jackson, 2008, Nugent et al, 2014, Brown & Henderson, 2012, Grahamslaw & Henson, 2015)
- Participants share skills and expertise (Hayes & Stringer, 2016, Jackson, 2008, Bozic & Carter, 2002, Turner, 2014)
- Specific issues related to SEN are discusses (Turner, 2014, Grahamslaw & Henson, 2015, Guishard, 2000, Evans, 2005)
- The EP facilitator uses expertise in questioning (Hayes and Stringer, 2016)
- Exploration of individual stories occurs (Newton, 1995, Jackson, 2008, Nugent et al, 2014)
- Success is recognised (Newton, 1995, Brown & Henderson, 2012)
- Expert advice is given by the EP facilitator (Nugent et al, 2014, Turner, 2014)
- A range of strategies are discussed that are contextually relevant (Nugent et al, 2014, Brown & Henderson, 2012)

- The wider staff body become suspicious about the group (Nugent et al, 2014)

*What does previous research indicate about the outcomes of group consultation and problem solving for the adults involved?*

A summary of outcomes extracted from the literature is presented below:

- Useful strategies are generated (Bozic & Carter, 2002)
- Increased objectivity related to pupil behaviour (Turner, 2014)
- Useful and holistic insight into pupil's behavioural needs (Brown & Henderson, 2012; Evans, 2005; Guishard, 2002)
- Teacher's feel supported by colleagues (Bozic & Carter, 2002; Brown & Henderson, 2012; Guishard, 2002)
- Teachers feel they develop better behaviour management strategies (Bozic & Carter, 2002; Nugent et al 2014; Grahamslaw & Henson, 2015; Hayes & Stringer, 2016)
- Teachers engage in deeper reflection about the pupil and own practise (Brown & Henderson, 2012)
- The wider school population benefit from the generalisation of enhanced behaviour management skills (Jackson, 2008)
- Teacher's perception of the role of the EP move from that of an 'assessor' of children (Jackson, 2008)
- Raised awareness of a variety of strategies (Evans, 2005)
- Professionals feel more able and confident to try new things (Guishard, 2000; Brown & Henderson, 2012)
- Increased confidence with SEN (Newton, 1995)
- Decreased stress (Turner, 2014)
- Discussion of strategies with wider staff body (Evans, 2005)
- Reduced feelings of isolation (Bozic & Carter, 2002; Guishard, 2000)
- Increased confidence in action planning (Bozic & Carter, 2002)

- Benefit from skills and experience of other colleagues  
(Grahamslaw & Henson, 2015)

It is important to acknowledge that these findings within existing research into group consultation in schools relies on mainly anecdotal case study evidence and descriptions of practise. Further limitations within the current body of research are discussed in section 2.28 below.

## 2.22 Findings of the Realist Synthesis (RS)

In order to develop an Initial Program Theory, which considers not only 'if' but 'how' and 'why' EP led group consultation may be an effective intervention for school staff, each research paper was reviewed individually by the author for evidence of C+M=O configurations (CMOCs). This process is recorded in appendix 2.3, an example of this is presented in table 2.3.

Table 2.3: Example of individual paper review (Hayes & Stringer, 2016) for evidence of Contexts, Mechanisms and Outcomes:

Context	Mechanism	Outcome
The groups allows space for shared reflection	Collaborative problem solving occurs	Better understanding of pupil behaviour is developed
The EP is viewed as an 'expert' assessor	Participants begin to develop skills using their own collective experience	Reliance on the EP as an expert is reduced
Change within organisations can be slow and difficult to maintain	Staff gain experience in supporting each other	Positive changes in the school culture occur
The EP has skills in consultation and facilitation	The EP models and asks questions which support the group in defining problems	Staff develop enhanced problem solving skills
The EP and teachers work together as professionals with equal but differing expertise	The EP asks answerable questions in a non challenging and supportive way	Insights and understanding of problems increases
Sufficient time is given to run the group	Consistency and structure support group cohesion and process	The sessions are valued
Support is given towards running the group	Attendance is good	Participants feel valued
Group members are encouraged to share and contribute	Strategies and problems are shared between group members	Learning from the groups spreads to the wider staff body
Within child attributions dominate	Staff acknowledge each others success and efforts	Holistic insight into behaviour is gained
The group is facilitated by an EP	Everyone gets a chance to be the problem holder	A supportive and equal atmosphere is created
	Expert advice is shared	Useful strategies are generated
		The group feels reliant on the EP

All of the 'outcomes' were then examined and grouped based on similarity to the outcome represented, this process is depicted in appendix 2.4. Each outcome extracted from the literature was categorised into an overarching theme. The six outcome themes identified by the author through this process were:

- Increased Confidence
- Reflection and self awareness
- Generation of strategies
- Reducing isolation and stress
- Collaboration and Sharing
- Hindering aspects/difficulties encountered

In order to bring together the CMOCs from each paper and develop an Initial Program Theory, Contexts, Mechanisms and Outcomes from each study were combined. This contained 36 CMOCs and is therefore too large to present in the main body of the review (See Initial Program Theory in appendix 2.5). Each CMOC is grouped based on it's relevance to the outcome theme. The following section provides commentary relating to each outcome theme, demonstrating evidence that supports the author's interpretations in developing the Initial Program Theory. The iterative process of the RE will result in changes being made to the Initial Program Theory as a result of data collection and analysis that will inform the development, refinement and possible rejection of CMOC's.

### 2.23 Outcome Theme: Increased Confidence

Hayes and Stringer (2016) report that participants valued having allocated time for 'deep discussion' about individual pupil behaviour and hence time for the careful development of behaviour management strategies. This could therefore highlight the mechanism that leads to

feelings of increased confidence in behaviour management, as reported by Grahamslaw and Henson (2015). Furthermore, Hayes and Stringer (2016) discuss the role of the facilitator as enabling participants with different expertise to become self reliant on their problem solving skills and collective knowledge. This may also be an implied mechanism that increases participant confidence in their own expertise. Bozic and Carter (2002) reported that 56% of participants said that the consultation group had made them feel more confident about working with children who have SEN. Bozic and Carter (2002) also comment that a higher proportion of participants reported an increase in confidence about sustaining the group internally without the 'expert' help of the EP facilitator, once the consultation group had been running for a few sessions. However, it is important to note that despite an increase in confidence with sustaining a group without the EP facilitator, a greater number of participants still reflected that the presence of the EP supported their feelings of containment and confidence in the consultation process, (Bozic & Carter, 2002). Grahamslaw and Henson (2015) consider some of the qualitative responses from participants that could also be mechanisms contributing to feelings of increased confidence, particularly a range of comments that highlight the importance for participants of feeling valued within the group consultation process, for example one participant reflected that "*Your input in the solution circle is relevant and is helpful to others no matter how small an idea it is*" (Grahamslaw & Henson 2015, p 118). A full account of the CMOCs that have been extracted from the research within the outcome theme 'Confidence' can be found in appendix 2.5 (Initial program theory). An example is displayed in table 2.4.

Table 2.4: Example of CMO configurations taken from the Initial Program Theory (Outcome theme: Increased Confidence)

Context	Mechanism	Outcome	Source
The group allows time for in depth discussions about behavior	Antecedents and consequences of behavior are considered in greater detail	Learning about behavior increases confidence in behavior management	Hayes and Stringer 2016 Grahamslaw and Henson 2015
The problem solving process allows professionals to consider behavior from various perspectives	Participants become more aware of their ability to influence behavior	Self efficacy and confidence is increased due to understanding of own influence in changing behavior	Turner, 2014 Hayes and Stringer 2016 Nugent et al 2014

## 2.24 Outcomes Theme: Generation Of Strategies

The theme 'Generation of Strategies' as an outcome of group consultation is highly referenced in the majority of studies (Turner, 2014; Nugent et al, 2014; Evans 2005; Brown and Henderson, 2012; Hayes and Stringer, 2016). Hayes and Stringer (2016) report some of the data from teacher's perceptions of the usefulness and value of Farouk's teacher consultation group approach. Key benefits include not only the strategies developed for the pupil being discussed, but the enhancing of teacher's behaviour management skills and hence generalisation of strategies that can be used with other target pupils. The generalisation of strategies is also reported as an outcome by Grahamslaw and Henson (2015). The structure of the problem solving process is also highlighted by Grahamslaw and Henson (2015) as being a potential mechanism that supports the development of strategies, evident in qualitative participant responses such as *"Summarise and question part encourages me to really think and*

*question my own understanding and to look for my own solutions*" (Grahamslaw & Henson, 2015 p119). This mechanism is further highlighted by participant comments reported by Evans (2005), for example " *We've discussed this in such detail. I really think I can go away and try it now*" (Evans, 2005, p140). This indicates that the exploration enabled by the consultation group process supports participants in focusing on specific details within strategies and hence empowering participants to feel confident to try new ideas. Nugent et al (2014) and Evans (2005) report participants answers on a 1(low)-10 (high) likert scale to the question, 'how confident do you feel in devising a plan of action for the target child following the consultation group'. A mean of 8.4 and 9.2 respectively across participants was reported. Nugent et al (2014) also report potential mechanisms that support the generation of strategies, such as sharing skills and experience between group members, which leads to new ideas and perspectives. For example, one participant commented that, "*People made suggestions that were really helpful and they came from a totally different perspective than from where I could have come*". Nugent et al (2014, p266). A full account of the CMOCs that have been extracted from the research within the outcome theme 'Generation of Strategies' can be found in appendix 2.5 (Initial Program Theory).

## 2.25: Outcome Theme: Reducing Isolation and Stress

Brown and Henderson (2012) highlight a contextual factor that is relevant to participants levels of stress and how the consultation group may be pivotal in reducing feelings of isolation, that lead to teacher stress and burnout. Brown and Henderson (2012) comment that increased demand on teachers is resulting in less informal time for sharing and discussion, therefore the structured time can be beneficial in terms of reducing feelings of isolation within the school environment. This contextual factor is further highlighted by Newton (1995), who comments that school staff can find meeting the demands of challenging pupils somewhat debilitating, attributing this to additional



time pressures due to government initiatives. Therefore, Newton (1995) suggests that as a result, school staff have little time for engagement in joint working to solve problems. Newton (1995), Nugent et al (2014) and Bozic and Carter (2002) all report that participants valued the time to share similar experiences and difficulties with colleagues, which resulted in them feeling less isolated with the problem. Newton (1995) contributes a qualitative piece of feedback from an EP facilitator, who reflects that;

*“A troubled teacher able to talk through a major and threatening problem in safety. Realisation that her problem is not unique. Recognition of her efforts and successes however minor and encouragement to enable her to carry on.”* (Newton, 1995, p13). A full account of the CMOCs that have been extracted from the research within the outcome theme ‘Reducing Isolation and Stress’ can be found in appendix 2.5 (Initial Program Theory).

## 2.26 Outcome Theme: Collaboration and Sharing

Jackson (2008) highlights the mechanism that may be triggered by ensuring membership to consultation groups is voluntary, suggesting that resistance may occur if participants view the group as being an instruction or remedial course of action. Jackson (2008) also suggests that the process is more likely to be collaborative if membership is voluntary. Hayes and Stringer (2016) report a potential mechanism in building collaboration and sharing within the whole organisation (school) as an outcome of group consultation. In referring to an identified theme of ‘sharing’, derived from thematic analysis of participant answers to questionnaires, Hayes and Stringer (2016) report that, *“Within the groups, sharing occurred between the team members. This includes the sharing of information, strategies, problems and feedback, which helps to foster a sense of collaboration among the group. Through this sharing, learning occurs within the team, which could then spread throughout the school”* (Hayes &

Stringer, 2016, p153). Grahamslaw and Henson (2015) also highlight some contextual factors that may contribute to collaboration and sharing, for example participants made reference to elements such as;

*“Being able to speak without judgement”*

*“a sense of everyone’s opinion being valid and valued”*

*“interaction with each other in a safe environment”* (Grahamslaw & Henson, 2015, p119)

Evans (2005) also asked participants about their perceived benefits in terms of working in co-operation and partnership with others. This question was answered via a likert scale 0=not at all, 10=enabled, ‘to what extent were you able to benefit from the skills and experience of others?’ An overall mean rating of 9.2 for this question is reported by Evans (2005), suggesting that collaboration and sharing of information, ideas and skills was of high importance to participants in terms of outcomes. Furthermore, Evans (2005) gives some direct examples of how peer-support and shared responsibility developed as a result of the consultation group, reporting that;

- *‘Schools loaning resources or materials, discussed during the group session, to another school within the same consultation group.’*
- *‘Teachers arranging to visit another school within the consultation group to observe a particular approach (for example, the operation of a paired reading project).’ (Evans, 2005, p141)*

A full account of the CMOCs that have been extracted from the research within the outcome theme ‘Collaboration and Sharing’ can be found in appendix 2.5 (Initial Program Theory).

## 2.27 Outcome Theme: Reflection and Self Awareness

Opportunity for 'deep' reflection is also highlighted in a range of the current literature as an outcome for participants (Hayes and Stringer, 2016; Nugent et al, 2014; Bozic and Carter, 2002). One mechanism is specifically referred to by Bozic and Carter (2002), which relates to the theory of attributions. The context is described by Bozic and Carter (2002), who suggest that on the basis of research conducted by Miller (1996), there is evidence to infer that many teachers attribute responsibility for finding solutions to problems with challenging pupils to themselves. It therefore follows that if finding solutions to problems fails and teachers are isolated from each other, they may start to experience a sense of failure (Bozic & Carter, 2002). The mechanism of sharing difficulties and problems that is provided by group consultation therefore provides reassurance to participants that the difficulty is not a result of their own shortcomings or failings and hence their sense of self blame is reduced, (Bozic & Carter, 2002). Evidence for this mechanism in action is provided by Bozic and Carter (2002) through their reporting of qualitative comments made by participants;

*"Helped me realise it is not just me facing these problems — more confident in myself. Reassuring to hear others' experiences."* - (Bozic & Carter, 2002, p198). A full account of the CMOCs that have been extracted from the research within the outcome theme 'Reflection and Self Awareness' can be found in appendix 2.5 (Initial program theory).

## 2.28 Outcome Theme: Hindering aspects/difficulties encountered

Jackson (2008) provides commentary on many of the contextual features of consultation groups that may be a help or hindrance to outcomes for participants. For example, Jackson (2008) discusses the impact of the regular location or space given to the group, suggesting that the wider staff body may attribute the nature of the group being 'irrelevant' to their practice if the group is always held in the SEN department. Jackson (2008) also considers the frequency of the group,

suggesting that if too much time is left between sessions, a sense of cohesion is not developed between participants and this can impact on willingness to share. Turner (2014) specifically looks at the impact of consultation groups on LAC, and reports one of the hindering factors highlighted by participants, that a 'one off' session related to a LAC child is insufficient, because strategies often need regular adjustment due to the ever changing circumstances of the child's situation outside of the school environment. The structure of the consultation group process is highlighted by some of the current research as being positive in terms of generating strategies as previously highlighted. However, both Nugent et al (2014) and Grahamslaw and Henson (2015) report comments from participants that suggest if the process is too rigidly adhered too and inflexible dependent on the needs of the group, the natural flow of ideas and conversation can be hindered. A full account of the CMOCs that have been extracted from the research as highlighting potentially hindering factors can be found in appendix 2.5 (Initial Program Theory).

#### 2.29 Limitations of current research:

Hayes and Stringer (2016) highlight the potential value in audio recording sessions in order to note how some of the proposed mechanisms are functioning within the group. However, none of the research considered uses audio recordings as a way of analysing the group process and interactions within sessions.

A number of studies use structured and semi-structured interviews or focus groups to gather data from participants (Turner, 2014; Brown & Henderson, 2012), often conducted by those who led the intervention. The 'participant researcher' design is typical of research carried out in the field and is consistent across the studies included in this review, (Evans, 2005; Nugent et al, 2014; Guishard, 2000; Hayes & Stringer, 2016; Brown & Henderson, 2012), meaning that the researcher leading the study was also involved in the facilitation of the intervention. This creates the possibility of demand characteristics i.e. the way

participants responds within interviews and other self-report measures may have been affected by the 'participant-researcher' element of these studies. This highlights a need for research that attempts to eliminate researcher bias.

Many of the quantitative elements of the above studies rely on self-report measures (Bozic & Carter 2002, Turner, 2014). Although self-report measures are widely used in educational research (Kazvin, 2005), validity is threatened because they are heavily reliant upon the honesty of the respondent (Martens, 2005). Participants' responses may be influenced by a variety of extraneous factors including the motivation of the respondents (Robson, 2011). Additionally, self-report data may be affected by the biases associated with social desirability (Dunsmuir et al., 2009). For example, the Nugent et al (2014) study reported that data was collected at the end of each session by the facilitating EP and therefore participants may have felt a lack of anonymity and been reluctant to give lower ratings.

Qualitative methodologies within the current body of research often utilised a thematic analysis of either interview data or answers to written open questions as part of a questionnaire (Bozic & Carter 2002; Nugent et al 2014). The themes extracted from the data were often only analysed by the author (Hayes & Stringer, 2016), rather than being compared or discussed with the ideas and interpretations of other colleagues and/or shared with participants as part of a cyclical refinement process. This increases the risk of bias (Robson, 2011), however in practice-based research, the effect of this can be recognised but accepted as being difficult to control (Robson, 2011).

The majority of the consultation groups (summarised in appendix 2.2) were focused on either the behaviour or SEN of children, with a different 'case' or child being discussed within each session (Guishard 2000; Nugent et al, 2014; Bozic & Carter 2002; Brown & Henderson 2012). Turner (2014) examines the Circle of Adults intervention in

relation to a specific demographic of children (LAC), however each group is a 'one off' intervention and therefore the effects of repeated consultation sessions around the same child are less well known.

The largest sample examined was by Nugent et al (2014), who evaluated outcomes from 75 schools in Northern Ireland, however the contexts of the schools involved were all reportedly very similar (small, rural locations across the locality) and therefore wider extrapolations to larger and more urban schools cannot be made. Other studies use a case study approach with 1-4 schools (Turner, 2014; Newton, 1995; Hayes & Stringer, 2016; Bozic & Carter, 2002). While the case study approach has been frequently critiqued due to difficulty in transferring the findings from the singular to more general contexts (Cohen et al, 2000), its advantage is that it supports a richer understanding of factors that contribute to findings.

Variations in the way each of the reviewed group consultation projects were implemented may also have impacted on findings, for example Nugent et al (2014) calculated the percentage of participants who either strongly agreed or agreed with statements about the three main effects of group consultation to all participants. As each group had more participants than sessions, it is likely that many of the participants did not assume the role of problem presenter. Participants views may therefore have been affected by their experiences and role within the group, for example respondents may or may not have had the opportunity to be the 'problem presenter'. Many studies reviewed (Bozic & Carter 2002; Hayes & Stringer 2016; Evans 2005, Brown & Henderson, 2012) do not provide detailed information about how the intervention was implemented. This suggests that future research needs to include important contextual information from individual participants in terms of their role and individual experiences of the group consultation process.

Evans (2005) also posits the notion that findings related to the use of group consultation as a method of generic service delivery are often context specific. Therefore using a method of evaluation that acknowledges and aims to understand contextual influences is important.

### 2.30 Summary of the RS

The current review sought to discover what the existing literature says about features of the contexts, mechanisms and outcomes of EP led group consultation in schools, that adopts a problem solving approach. It is acknowledged that the Initial Program Theory has been developed by a single researcher, which may impact upon the validity of the theory. However, in order to ensure a rigorous process, a systematic methodology was adopted. This includes a systematic search for literature of the outlined databases and the application of Gough's (2007) Weight of Evidence model to ensure studies that were of higher quality (peer reviewed) and relevance and relevance to the current research context were drawn upon more heavily. It is also relevant to comment that the development of the Program Theory is an iterative process (Pawson & Tilley, 1997), which allows initial theories to be refined, refuted or accepted within a cyclic process of data collection and analysis. Therefore, any CMOCs that are part of the Initial Program Theory may be developed and refined following further investigation as part of the RE.

The present study aims to test the Initial Program Theory, through a process of data collection and analysis that aims to refine current and elicit new CMOCs in order to gain an in-depth understanding of an EP led group consultation intervention.

### 2.31 Aims, context and rationale for the current study

The overarching message from the available literature is that group consultation leads to positive outcomes for school staff (Brown & Henderson, 2012; Nugent et al, 2014; Grahamslaw & Henson, 2015; Evans, 2005; Jackson, 2008); which suggests it is worthy of further study. However, the literature review has highlighted gaps in the existing research in terms of research that examines the context and mechanisms with EP led consultation groups, which leads to the outcomes observed. Consultation groups have often been researched in relation to children/young people with SEN or SEMH difficulties, however little work has been done on the use of EP led consultation groups adults supporting a LAC, with the exception of Turner (2014), who explored the use of CoA. The mechanisms that may be useful for specific demographics of children/young people such as LAC have not been considered. All of the current research is based on group consultation involving problem solving around the needs of a different child within each consultation session, but none of the literature has considered the outcomes when the consultation is centred around the same child over successive sessions. Furthermore, the majority of research has been conducted using a 'research practitioner model', which creates the potential for demand characteristics and the possibility of respondent bias within the results and outcomes.

The current study therefore proposes to adopt a Realistic Evaluation approach to iteratively 'check out' and categorise program theories with participants, in an attempt to enhance construct validity. Therefore, in order address the gaps identified in the existing research, the current study aims to investigate the following:



## 2.32 Research questions:

The aim of this study is to address the following research questions:

**Main question 1:** What are the context, mechanism and outcome configurations (CMOCs) that stem from EP facilitated group consultation with adults supporting a LAC?

Sub question- How does participating in a consultation group impact on the confidence of adults working with a LAC in school?

Sub Question- Which CMOCs are perceived to be the most critical and important elements of group consultation in the current context?

## 2.33 Contribution to research and knowledge

Through use of RE, it is envisaged that this study will extend existing group consultation research by being the first to consider group consultation in schools through CMOCs, and therefore possibly one of the first to attempt to identify the specific CMOCs for EP led consultation groups around the needs of a LAC in such a high level of detail.

This study also seeks to contribute to the research base by enhancing understanding of how EP led group consultation supports adults working with LAC to improve outcomes for the child/young person.

It is hoped that research findings will therefore be used by the EPS in which this study took place to develop an understanding of how and why the consultation group may have been helpful or otherwise to the professionals involved and inform future practice.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a description of the current research in terms of its overall aims and purpose. An account of the research design and process is given, together with an outline of the epistemological perspective and methodology adopted. The chapter also discusses the ethical considerations within the research, the potential threats to its reliability and validity and how the researcher aimed to reduce the impact of these threats.

### 3.2 Research Aims and Purpose

The current research is concerned with exploring and evaluating an EP led consultation group in a UK primary school. The group provides support for a team of adults working at a school who are supporting a 'looked after child' (LAC) identified as being at risk of exclusion due to challenging behaviours. The aim of the current research is to attempt to understand how the consultation group works in supporting the team of adults and what contributes to the intervention outcomes.

The research has been commissioned/requested by the Local Authority (LA) in which the researcher is employed as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP). It is therefore planned that outcomes of this study will be fed back to the Local Authority and used to inform the future development of consultation groups with adults supporting LAC with challenging behaviour in this context.

### 3.3 Ontology and Epistemology

The nature of reality (ontology) is subjective to the individual's philosophy and perspective on conceptions of social reality (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Taylor and Medina (2013) explain that ones

view can consider the nature of reality a result of inner cognitive processes, or one that is external and objective. Furthermore, the way in which one views the construction of knowledge and truth is dependent on epistemological positioning. Within research, the views held by the researcher regarding how knowledge and truth is constructed therefore has an influence on the actions and decisions taken in terms of methods used to gather and analyse data (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011).

Evaluating an intervention within the social world can be complex and how it is undertaken is influenced by the epistemological position adopted. 'Positivist' and 'Interpretivist' positions will now be discussed in relation to the evaluation within the social sciences. A third paradigm 'Critical Realism', which is adopted by the current research will then be explained.

### 3.4 Positivism

The view of the positivist is that a scientific truth can be obtained through the control of impacting variables in order to determine causality (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). Ryan and Smith (2009) reflect that although a diverse range of methodologies have been adopted within social science research over the last century, government policy still tends to be rooted within the rhetoric and assumptions of the positivist position. Ryan and Smith (2009) further comment that the randomised control trial (RCT) continues to be held as the 'gold standard' in terms of reliability within educational and psychological research. The assumptions that underpin the positivist epistemology are summarised by Cohen (2003) as;

- □ That the social world is similar to the natural world and can have the same principles applied to it

- ☐ That the world is objective and exists independently of those that 'know' it
- ☐ That the researcher is wholly objective and therefore unbiased and neutral in relation to the findings
- ☐ That everything can be measured
- ☐ That the natural world is governed by rules which can be generalised
- ☐ That the natural world can have predictions made about it, and can therefore be controlled.

(Taken from Cohen et al., 2003)

However, the positivist stance has received critique in terms of the methodologies it employs to try and evaluate the social world. For example Kuhn (1962) suggests that researchers are not culturally, historically or value neutral and therefore any research involving humans and the social world is subject to bias, which is often ignored by those adopting a positivist epistemology.

Positivist research has further been criticised for the high levels of control used, which ignore the subtleties or heterogeneity of participant groups that can yield very different results when research is replicated (Concato, Shah & Horwitz, 2000; Pawson & Tilley, 1997).

### 3.5 Interpretivism

Criticisms of positivism, particularly in its application to the social sciences resulted in the development of interpretivism as an alternative paradigm. The epistemological assumptions underpinning interpretivism are at the opposite end of the spectrum to the positivist stance. Explorations of truth within this paradigm considers the experiences of individuals and reality is given meaning via human interpretations (Goodman, 1978; Molder, 2010). Interpretivists argue that the social world has different characteristics to the natural world

and that it cannot be measured via reductionist scientific methods. Moreover, the interpretivist paradigm argues that human action is only meaningful, and therefore should be interpreted, within its social context (Cohen et al, 2003). Furthermore, the interpretivist posits that two researchers could measure and observe the same social context at the same time and generate different sets of hypothesis. In addition, the interpretivist paradigm recognises and accepts that a researcher is influenced by their own constructs of the world and personal experiences of human behaviour, (Scott & Usher, 1996). The Interpretivist view therefore reduces interpretation of meaning to the individual and supports the notion that essentially, a shared truth does not exist (Sayer, 2000).

### 3.6 Critical Realism

A third paradigm, 'Critical Realism', developed during the 1980's, positioned itself away from either the positivist or interpretivist views, (Robson, 2002). Bhaskar (1989) developed the philosophical position of 'Critical Realism' (CR), (Archer et al., 1999). CR assumes that an external 'reality' exists, which is independent from human conception and interpretation and there are unobservable mechanisms which impact on the observable reality (Bhaskar, 2002).

Morton, (2006, p2) states that, *'A central idea of 'Critical Realism' is that natural and social reality should be understood as an open stratified system of 'objects' with causal powers'*. From a realist point-of-view, a researcher interested in explaining the nature and outcomes of an intervention or social program must therefore be interested in the contextual influences of the social world. A middle ground is therefore offered by the realist approach, which aims to invent and test theories through a process of data collection and analysis, using methodologies that are considered a 'best fit' in discovering the mechanisms of an intervention that produce outcomes within a particular context. CR is argued by its proponents to afford an optimal epistemological position

underpinning research designed and conducted by educational psychologists, acknowledging the complexity of reality and “*that any particular set of data is explicable by more than one theory.*” (Kelly et al., 2008, p.25).

Within an experimental framework, the CR epistemology permits and encourages the researcher to examine not only the outcomes of an intervention but also what may have caused them. CR epistemology can also facilitate a richer understanding of why interventions that are identical in nature operate ‘differently’ across contexts. Developing insight into contextual influences may hold crucial information as to why programme outcomes are not consistent across trials (Astbury & Leeuw, 2010).

The CR epistemology, was adopted for the proposed study, because as an evaluative model, RE offers an alternative to Positivist and Interpretivist methodologies in its intent to focus on the explanation of how and why an intervention produces particular outcomes (Pawson, 2013). Neither Positivist or Interpretivist methodologies are able to satisfactorily meet the aims of the proposed evaluation because they do not account for contextual features and mechanisms that interact to enhance understanding of “*why a program works, for whom and in what circumstances*” (Pawson & Tilley, 1997, p. xvi). The CR perspective, however, allows consideration of such influences.

In the current study, there was a need in order to add to the current research to understand ‘why’ and ‘how’ group consultation may be an effective intervention, rather than attempting to prove it works. The current research also aims for a shared understanding, which contrasts with the interpretivist stance that implies knowledge can only be understood through individual experience.

### 3.7 Chosen methodological framework

Much of the current research literature has a focus on the outcomes of group consultation, applying pragmatic mixed methods approaches that attempt to consider outcomes from the perspective of the individual participants and report some quantitative data to measure pre and post effects of participation. However, such frameworks can be criticised for ignoring the effects of context (Cohen et al, 2003) and do not attempt to gain an in depth understanding of the intervention in terms of how and why participants are reporting specific outcomes.

Realistic Evaluation (RE) is an approach underpinned by CR and has an overarching aim of capturing the complexity of the social world. Therefore, rather than attempting to make predictions about what makes group consultation work as an effective intervention for adults working with a LAC, the RE will attempt to explain 'why' and 'how' the group consultation works within a specific context. The study aims in particular, to identify the psychological mechanisms that are triggered by engaging in the consultation group, in line with a CR epistemology (Bhaskar, 1989). In support of this aim, the perspectives of school staff and the facilitating EP will be considered, in order to generate insight into the context and mechanisms of the consultation group and the outcomes for the adults and the child in question.

Alternative emancipatory approaches to the RE, such as Action Research (Reason & Bradbury, 2001), or Appreciative Inquiry (Bushe, 2013) would have been a useful approach to gain deep insight into the group consultation process, however, within the current research an attempt was not being made to influence change within the intervention as it developed in real time.

### 3.8 Research Design and Methodology

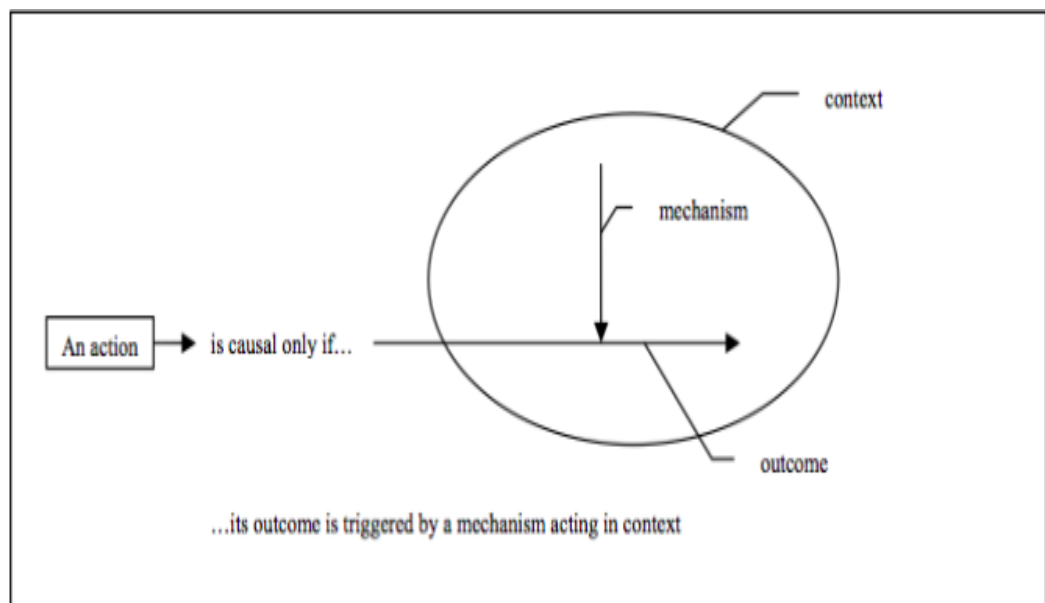
### 3.9 Realistic Evaluation

A RE develops theories by drawing out evidence from the data iteratively to test out the hypotheses raised in the Realist Synthesis (RS) to ultimately accept, reject or refine elements of the programme theory. This view of causation is different to a more traditional, linear  $X \rightarrow Y$  approach as it draws upon a system of 'generative causation' to provide a framework for programme specification development (Pawson and Tilley, 1997).

### 3.10 Generative causation and CMOCs in RE

Pawson and Tilley (1997) depict their theory of generative causation using the diagram displayed in figure 3.1

Figure 3.1: Generative Causation (Pawson and Tilley (1997))



(Pawson and Tilley, 1997, p.58)



In order to explain their theory, Pawson and Tilley (1997) use a metaphorical example of the ignition of gunpowder, which has the potential to explode given the right conditions, such as a sufficient amount of oxygen, enough gunpowder etc. A comparison is made from this example to the outcomes of social interventions or 'programs' that intend to produce change, suggesting that any potential outcomes of a social program depend on the correct conditions being in place. With this in mind, Pawson and Tilley (1997) suggest that theories about how interventions or 'programs' work are made up of a set of context + mechanisms = outcomes configurations (CMOCs).

In RE, theories are generated and tested through cycles of data collection and analysis, CMOCs are produced in an attempt to explain how a program works (i.e. produces successful outcomes) and, in particular, how a contextual feature supports a specific mechanism to trigger an outcome. A complete set of CMOCs is called a 'program theory', which is refined and adjusted according to new findings and information that are gathered during the data collection and analysis phases of the research.

### 3.11 Definition of context in RE

In RE, a context refers to the setting in which the intervention is being implemented, as well as individuals' internal states such as motivation and personal constructs. The interpersonal relationships of participants are also crucial and are viewed as a relevant contextual factor. As Pawson and Tilley (1997, p.216) state; "*Context refers to the spatial and institutional locations of social situations together, crucially, with the norms, values, and interrelationships found in them.*"

RE therefore recognises the complexity of implementing a program within a social context and that it may hold different meaning and value for the participants. RE therefore aims to explore the contextual features through developing a deep understanding of multiple viewpoints of those involved. For example, a consultation group may

be experienced differently by group members due to differences in the contextual features highlighted above.

### 3.12 Definition of Mechanism in RE

Any of the contextual features that are relevant to the implementation of an intervention may trigger a mechanism that in turn produces an outcome. To use Pawson and Tilley's (1997) metaphorical example of the gunpowder explosion, the interaction between the prevailing atmospheric conditions (context) and the chemical composition of the gun powder (mechanism), determine whether it explodes or not (outcome).

However, the RE recognises that a program may have different effects or outcomes for the individuals involved and therefore mechanisms may be individual to specific participants for a reason that is personal to them. Bozic and Crossland (2012, p. 8) state that scientific realists hold the understanding that, '*programs do not work the same way for everyone*'. Therefore, the outcomes of the program will be a reflection of the differing combinations of context and mechanisms for an individual (Soni, 2010).

### 3.13 Definition of outcome in RE

RE assumes that there will be a variety of outcomes, some which are intended by the design of the program and others that are not intended and a result of the program implementation within a specific context (Soni, 2010). Outcomes within RE are not viewed in the same respect as one may expect from a positivist stance, in which outcomes are the main focus and centre point of inspection. The outcomes in a RE are embedded in the holistic program theory and are seen as integrated into the generated theories, alongside contextual features and mechanisms, (Pawson & Tilley, 1997).

### 3.14 Rationale for adopting an RE framework

The aim of this study is to strive for a shared understanding of why the group consultation process works within an individual context and how (in what ways) does participating in the group support a team of educational professionals in their management of a LAC. The RE framework offers the opportunity to explore contextual factors that may be hypothesised to impact on the unique mechanisms of an intervention, whilst also accounting for developing understanding of truth (Bhaskar, 2008). Developing understanding of the '*mechanisms of explanation*' (Pawson & Tilley, 1997, p.55) will also lead to supporting the EPS in generalising (to some extent) in terms of implementing the group consultation intervention in other similar settings.

In summary, the adoption of a RE framework in this study will support the researcher to identify mechanisms necessary for the successful implementation of a group consultation intervention in a UK primary school. It is the view of the author that the project aims will be fulfilled by adopting a RE framework, which accepts that our view of reality can change based on the development and testing of theories as part of a cyclic process (Pawson, 2006).

### 3.15 Qualitative vs. Quantitative data

Within the RE methodology, Pawson and Tilley (1997) promote flexibility in the methods used to collect data, based on the most appropriate means to draw out the context, mechanism and outcome configurations. Howitt and Cramer (2008) report some of the features that distinguish qualitative and quantitative methods, explaining that the qualitative researcher is concerned with the individual's point of view in order to obtain a rich description of subject matter. Furthermore, it is argued by Howitt and Cramer (2008) that quantitative researchers may fail to appreciate the characteristics of the day-to-day social world, which therefore become irrelevant to their findings. McEvoy and

Richards (2006) also argue that *‘the strength of qualitative research methods within a critical realist framework is that they are ‘open-ended’ and able to ‘illuminate complex concepts and relationships’ (p.71).*

As the objective of the current research was to examine what context, mechanism and outcome features stem from the EP led consultation group and how it may impact on participants, the researcher believed that obtaining qualitative data would provide rich descriptions of individual experiences in order to both refine and elicit CMOCs. The current research therefore aims to capture the complexity of the intervention within it’s natural setting.

Within the context of the proposed RE, the researcher therefore proposes that a case study design will support answering the research questions through enabling an in depth investigation into ‘what works and how’ within a real world setting.

### 3.16 Case study designs

A definition of a case study design is provided by Yin (2009, p.18), *“an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context”*. Pawson and Tilley (1997) advocate case study designs as an appropriate methodology within the RE framework, because the focus is on a program within its real life context. Compared to studies that have large sample sizes, case studies allow for thorough and deep levels of inquiry, which can often be omitted when the sample size is large and the study is outcome focused (Banyard & Grayson, 2000).

Despite this being a relative strength of the case study design, the concept that research designs can be categorised in terms of robustness exists within research literature. Systematic reviews and Randomised Control Trials (RCT’s) are seen as the ‘gold standard’ in terms of robustness within research (Robson, 2011). Case study

designs are seen as being towards the lower end of the scale in terms of validity due to a potential lack of rigour and ability to generalise results to the wider population (Noor, 2008).

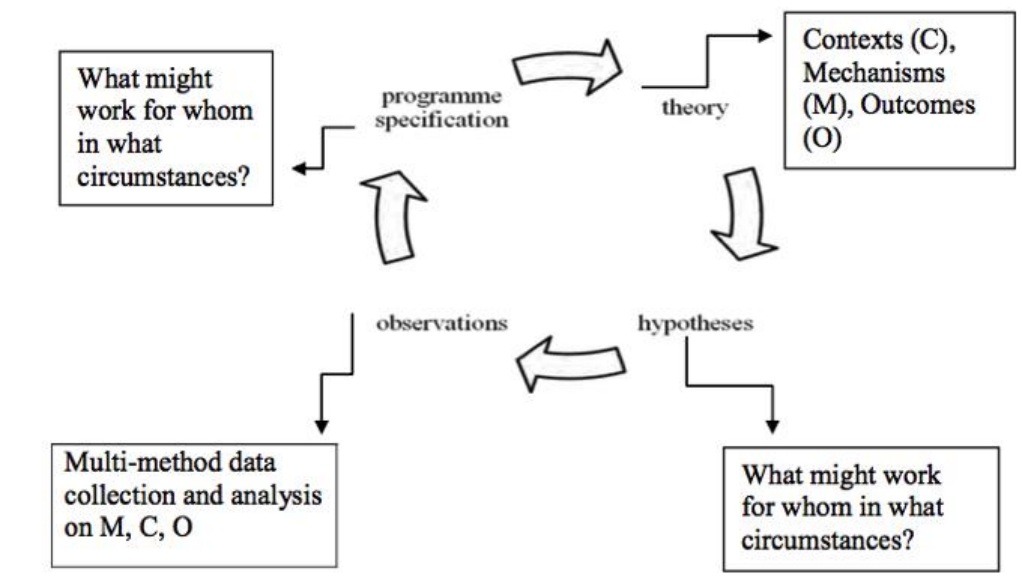
However, a case study design does allow for the triangulation of various sources of data such as interviews, observations and questionnaires (Robson, 2011). The triangulation of various data sources increases the validity of the methods because weaknesses in individual methods are counterbalanced when each source is given equal relevance (Flick, 2006). Furthermore, the replication of (RCT's) has shown that the results are not always the same or similar across contexts and this may be a result of ignoring specific factors that impact on the success of particular social intervention program (Concato, Shah & Horwitz, 2000). The current case study will therefore seek to develop a set of specific CMOCs that are clearly traceable to the data collected, procedures will also be outlined to aid replication in different contexts. The EPS are the main stakeholder to this research and may wish to use the CMOCs developed as part of this study to inform the implementation of future group consultation interventions in different schools and settings. Potential threats to the validity of this case study will be discussed further in section 3.37, along with a summary of how the researcher aimed to reduce the threats.

### 3.17 Designing a Realistic Evaluation

As discussed in Chapter 2, initial CMOCs are developed through a Realist Synthesis (RS), as relevant data is extracted from the existing literature (Pawson, 2006). The RS is used to identify gaps in the current research and to develop the Initial Program Theory. The program theory is tested using a range of appropriate data gathering tools in order to see whether the identified theories apply to the social program in question (Pawson & Tilley, 1997).

Figure 3.2 below illustrates the RE evaluation cycle, depicting the journey starting from the generation of theory elicited from a program or intervention based on the RS. This is followed by the inquiry stage, during which data is collected through methods derived to support the refinement of theories. Within RE the analysis of data is therefore both a deductive and inductive process, with the aim of exploring CMOCs that emerge to support current theories, while also being open to new CMOCs that emerge inductively from the research, (Soni, 2010).

Figure 3.2: The RE evaluation cycle



(Pawson and Tilley, 1997, p.85)

Within RE, data collection tools are required to be relevant and appropriate to enable the researcher to refine the Initial Program Theory. The aim of data collection and analysis is to refine the program specification through an iterative process of adding to, deleting or finding evidence to support existing CMOCs. Once this refinement process has occurred, the participants of the program are asked to contribute or comment on the program theories to support refinement.

Thornberry (2012) suggests that the data gathering within a RE should be constructed with a view to checking whether the program is working as anticipated. The views of the program designer, implementer and various participants should therefore be incorporated. In relation to the current study, this therefore equates to the EP who designed and facilitated the consultation group, the group members, including teachers and support staff and the Head Teacher at the school, who supported the implementation of the group. With this in mind, a case study of the group consultation intervention, that employs qualitative data collection and analysis to gain a rich and deep understanding of perspectives and experiences, was felt to be the most appropriate design for this study.

### 3.18 Research Design and Procedure:

In order support the aims of the present study, a case study employing a RE was chosen as the most suitable design and methodology. The present study aimed to address the following research questions:

Main question 1: What are the context, mechanism and outcome configurations (CMOCs) that stem from EP led group consultation with adults supporting a LAC?

Sub question- How does participating in a consultation group work to support the confidence of adults working with a LAC in school?

Sub Question-Which CMOCs are perceived to be the most critical and important elements of group consultation in the current context?

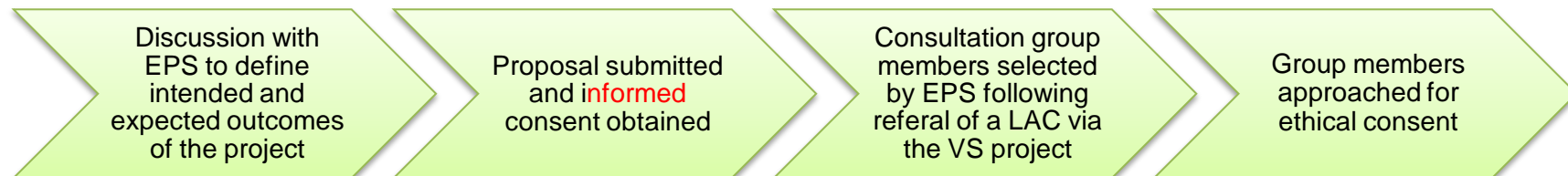
The consultation group was facilitated by an Educational Psychologist, who adopted a problem-solving process. A case study design was used with data collected through a combination of observations, semi structured interviews, a Realist Interview (RI) and a focus group with participants. The rationale underpinning the choice of these methods is described below in sections 3.25 and 3.28. A timeline for research activities can be found in appendix 3.1



### 3.19 Procedure-preliminary phase

Figure 3.3: Design and data gathering procedure (preliminary phase)

Preliminary Phase:



### 3.20 Identifying a school and liaising with stakeholders

The Virtual School (VS) is a team working within the researcher's local authority (LA), who support all of the children and young people within the LA who are 'looked after'. The VS works with schools, to monitor, challenge, support and provide intervention to ensure good educational outcomes for children in care. The team of specialist teachers for Looked After children (LAC) provide schools with advice and information about individual looked after children.

The VS commissioned the EPS to put together a small team of EP's to support the needs of individual LAC. Each child receives the support of an assigned EP to conduct some systemic and/or therapeutic work with, or on behalf of the child. The systemic work involves the EP facilitating a consultation group, based on principles from problem solving models of consultation.

Together with the Virtual School the EPS have developed the 'Social and Emotional Wellbeing Team'. The Social and Emotional Wellbeing Team for LAC is made up of four EP's from within the Educational Psychology Service. Following referral, children will be allocated to one of four psychologists if they meet the criteria for involvement.

### 3.21 Criteria for involvement:

Referrals for the Social and Emotional Wellbeing Team are considered by the VS 'High Needs Panel', who meet once every half term. The VS High Needs Panel consists of representatives from the EPS and the VS.

Involvement is based on the need of each individual child or young person, and allocated depending on the capacity of the EP's involved.

The current research is based on the work of one of the four EP's involved in the project, who identified a school supporting a LAC, that may benefit from a group consultation intervention, facilitated by the EP.

### 3.22 Participants

The consultation group took part in a one-form entry primary school in the Midlands, UK. The group consisted of adults who worked closely with a LAC and an EP facilitator. Participant demographics can be found in table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Participant information

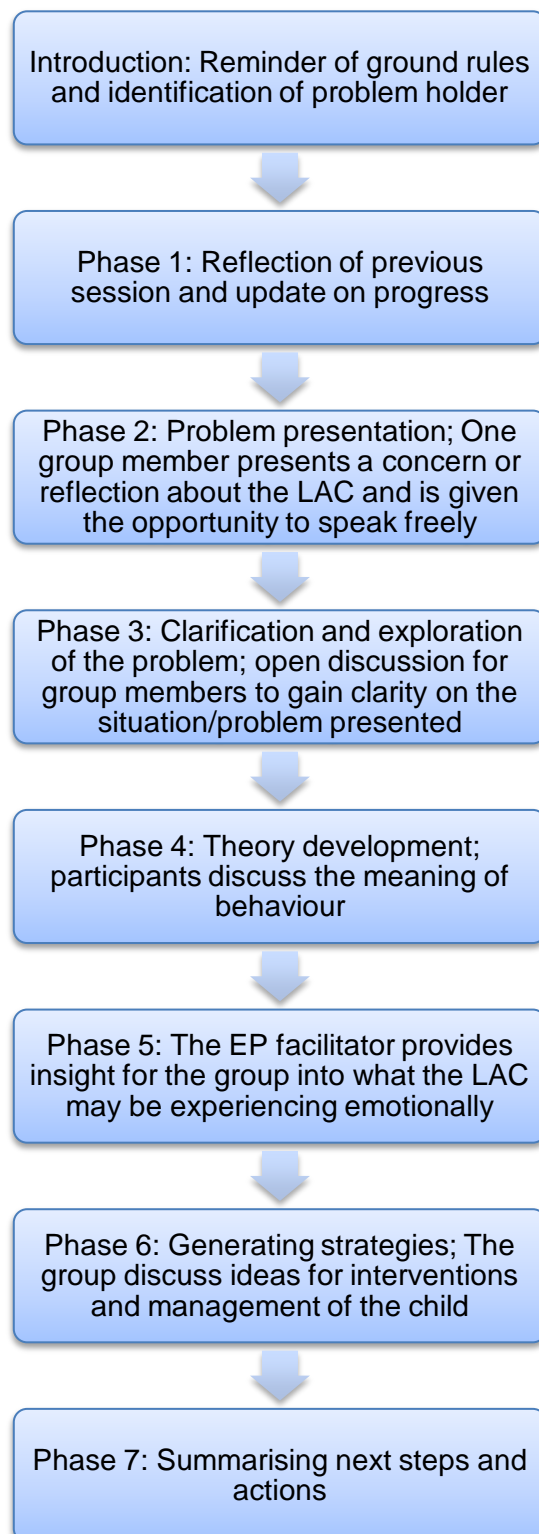
Participants Reference	Age/Gender	Role
L	27/Female	Reception/Year 1 teacher
C	25/female	Teaching assistant
D	31/Male	Class teacher
Z	47/Male	Class teacher
H	52/Male	Head Teacher
EP	34/Female	Facilitator

### 3.23 Group Consultation Process

The group consultation aimed to build the confidence, strategies and network of support for the adults working with the LAC. The consultation focused on the same child each week, a total of 5 consultation groups were held that lasted for approximately 1 hour. The consultation process was bespoke to the current context and was created and defined by the EP facilitator based on various models of problem solving consultation and is outlined in figure 3.4. During each session, the EP facilitator used the consultation process flow diagram

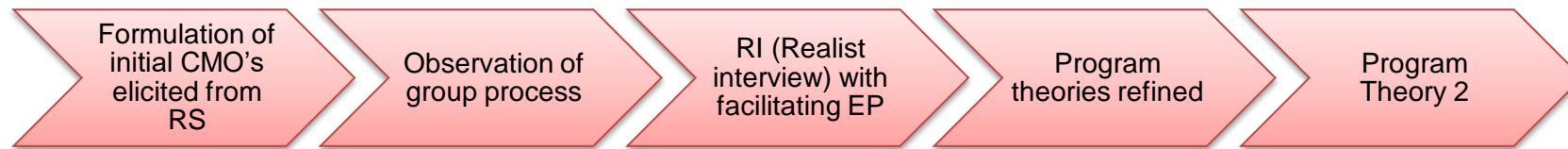
depicted in figure 3.4 to complete a checklist, ensuring each phase of the process was included.

Figure 3.4: The problem solving group consultation process –(Taken from the Local Authority group consultation process)



### 3.24 Procedure-Evaluation cycle one

Figure 3.5: Design and data gathering procedure: Evaluation cycle one



### 3.25 Evaluation cycle one (data collection):

#### *Formulation of initial CMOCs:*

Chapter 2 presents a Realist Synthesis of literature related to EP led group consultation and problem solving in UK school settings. Within chapter 2, the process of eliciting initial context, mechanism and outcome configurations is presented and organised based on outcome themes. The Initial Program Theory is presented in tabular form in appendix 2.5.

The Initial Program Theory formed a starting point for the analysis of data obtained through an observation of the group 'in action' and a Realist Interview (RI) with the EP facilitator.

#### *Observation of group process*

The researcher conducted an observation of the group session 'in action', which was audio recorded, transcribed and analysed for evidence of the CMOCs in operation, this process is described in section 3.26. The purpose of the observation was to gather data that informed the development of the program theory through an ethnographic understanding of the real world context of the intervention (Robson, 2011). Howitt and Cramer (2008) posit that observation gives the researcher the opportunity to gather richly detailed data, which is synonymous with the purpose of the current research in developing an in-depth understanding of how the group consultation works within the context being investigated. Participants were therefore asked for the group to be audio recorded and the recording was transcribed by the researcher. All participants were aware of the purpose of the observation as it was overtly described by the researcher both upon gaining participant consent for the project and again before the session commenced (see appendix 3.2). The analysis of transcription data from

the observation was analysed as described in section 3.26 and was used as part of an iterative process within evaluation cycle one to refine existing and elicit new CMOCs.

#### *Realist Interview (RI)*

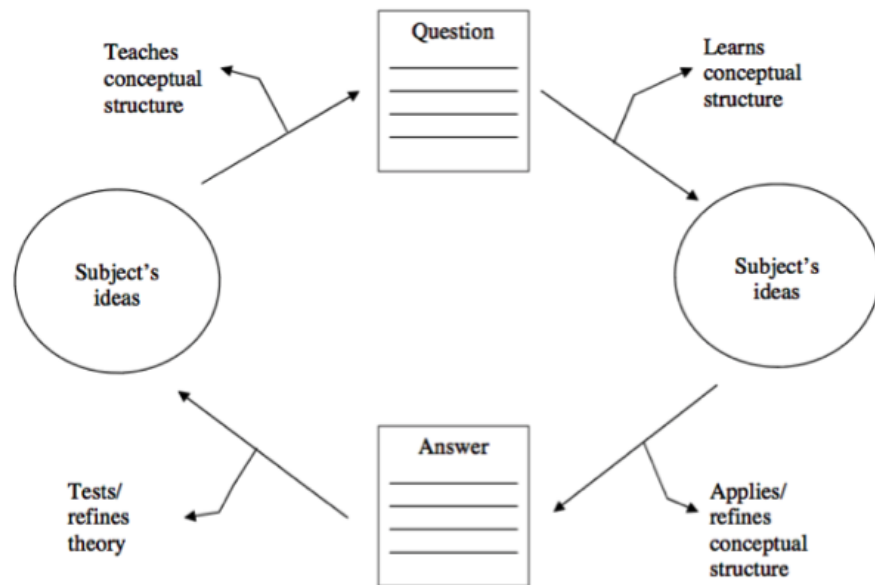
A Realist Interview (RI) with the Educational Psychologist facilitating the consultation group was then undertaken. Pawson and Tilley (1997) describe the content of an RI, highlighting that an RI is a way of inviting participants to understand the researcher's theory. The researcher shares their theories with the participant and welcomes the participant view in order to refine the structure. The RI was therefore conducted with the EP facilitating the consultation group in order to collaboratively refine the CMOCs and discuss the Initial Program Theory and to check the researcher's interpretations and understandings of elements of the observation.

Moreover, participants are asked to contribute ideas related to the 'unknown' elements of the theories, for example the 'hidden' mechanisms that may not have been defined or highlighted as part of the RS or RE to that point.

The RI process contains two essential elements: The 'teacher-learner function' and the 'conceptual refinement process' (Pawson & Tilley, 1997, p. 165). This is presented by Pawson and Tilley (1997) diagrammatically as displayed in figure 3.6.



Figure 3.6: Structure of the Realist interview



(Pawson & Tilley, 1997, p.165)

Figure 3.6 displays a cyclical process, which enables the researcher and participant to engage in continual refinement of the CMOCs within the program theory. The participant within an RI should not have to guess the researcher's aims, the theoretical grounds that are being explored should be clear and the participants should understand the concepts, so that he/she is able to contribute and refine existing and generate new theories that are relevant to the context (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). The Initial Program Theory and the questions for the RI were presented to the EP facilitator in advance of the RI. Within the RI, the EP was asked to review the Initial Program Theory. The researcher initiated some discussion around the CMOCs and asked for feedback on the clarity and relevance of this to the case study context. Appendix 3.3 provides a record of the questions that led to discussions within the RI. The EP gave written consent to take part in the interview and for the

interview to be audio recorded (Appendix 3.4). The data was transcribed and analysed as described in section 3.26.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) suggest that any form of interview within research can be at risk of bias and low reliability due to the social context, therefore an outline interview plan was developed by the researcher and shared with the participant in an attempt to limit these threats (appendix 3.3). A further threat to the validity of the RI was the 'dual role' of the position of the researcher, as the EP was a member of the service and had an interest in the outcomes of the research. The researcher remained aware of their role/affiliation to the service and attempted to address this through maintaining the 'teacher-learner' function of the interview, allowing and enabling theories to be explored throughout the conversation and using active listening skills to reflect back and clarify discussion points.

### 3.26 Evaluation cycle one (data analysis)

#### *Analysis of observation and RI transcripts*

The audio recording of a group observation and RI with the EP was transcribed verbatim by the researcher. The transcripts were then analysed systematically for evidence of each individual CMOC (see an example in appendix 3.7). In order for the analysis process to remain iterative and inductive, the transcript was also read by the researcher with a view to eliciting new themes or theories evident in the observation and RI data.

Appendix 3.7 presents a data table outlining each CMOC and evidence found to support each CMOC within the observation and RI transcripts. To ensure traceability and replicability of the analysis, the transcripts were also coded using a number to identify the exact extract pasted into the table (see table 3.2 below). CMCOs with little or no supporting evidence, or refinements were highlighted in yellow (see extract below and full analysis table in appendix 3.7) but retained at this point, to allow these to be compared with data collected in evaluation cycle 2.

Any New CMOCs elicited from the inductive analysis were highlighted in orange. Table 3.2 illustrates this process, linked to the outcome theme 'Increased Confidence'. Program Theory 2 (Appendix 4.1) was then created, based on potential refinements and the elicitation of new CMOCs. A full account of refinements made to CMOCs following evaluation cycle one can be found in appendix 4.2.

***N.B:*** Data files 1-2 contain full transcripts of observation and RI

Table 3.2 Extract of data analysis of observation transcript and RI transcript

Context	Mechanism	Outcome	Evidence in Observation Transcript RI with EP New CMO'S are highlighted in Orange	Theme	Ref no in transcript (See data files)
The group allows time for in depth discussions about behavior	Antecedents and consequences of behavior are considered in greater detail	Learning about behavior increases confidence in behavior management	<p>P2 L56-P3 L24 Discussion related to a biting incident with child results in participant reflecting on better way to manage behavior in future</p> <p>P4 L59-P5 L38 Reflecting on behavior in different environments evolves into understanding of the impact of consistency on the child's behavior in general and this leads to comments related to providing a consistent environment</p>	Confidence	1

### 3.27 Procedure –Evaluation cycle two

Figure 3.7:Design and data gathering procedure: Evaluation cycle two



### 3.28 Evaluation cycle two (data collection):

#### *Semi structured interviews with participants*

The semi-structured interviews with participants were designed to encourage them to speak openly about their experiences of the group consultation process and its context and outcomes, from which data was derived to address the research questions (see appendix 3.6). The interviews were recorded and transcribed (<sup>1</sup>an example can be found in appendix 3.7) and then analysed using Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). An account of the thematic analysis procedure can be found in section 3.29.

Yin (2009) describes interviews as essential data sources in case study designs. Furthermore, Yin (2009) suggests that semi-structured interview can be both targeted and insightful, which was the foundation for the researcher's choice of interview method, to enable discussion both related to existing outcome themes and CMOCs, and to provide opportunity to elicit new themes and theories. Pawson and Tilley (1997) support this in suggesting that the semi-structured interview is useful within the RE framework because they can elicit both specific and more open answers to questions that relate to the program theory under scrutiny. Prior to the individual semi structured interviews, formal consent was gained for both participation and audio recording of the interview (appendix 3.2). Diefenbach (2008) discusses some common threats to the quality of interview data, in particular the power imbalance of the interviewer/interviewee, which may impact the responses of the interviewee due to unconscious processes that encourage the interviewee to conform within the confounds of their professional constructs and norms. An explanation was therefore given at the beginning of the interview (appendix 3.6) as to the role of the researcher and the purpose of the interview, in order to encourage

---

<sup>1</sup> N.B: Data files 3-7 contain individual participant transcripts

honest and open expression of views and in an attempt to avoid participants providing answers that they may have believed the researcher wanted to hear. Furthermore, participants were aware that the researcher was not part of the consultation group and had not led the intervention, the participant-researcher dynamic was therefore less influential on participant responses.

### 3.29 Evaluation cycle two (data analysis)

#### *Thematic analysis*

Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that thematic analysis is a flexible method that supports the identification, analysis and reporting of patterns within data. Thematic analysis also allows the researcher to analyse data both inductively (to elicit new and emerging themes) and deductively (to conduct theory driven analysis), (Fereday, 2006).

Thematic analysis was therefore chosen as the most suitable method of analysis of the data taken from the semi- structured interviews because of the dual requirement to search for evidence related to the CMOCs developed in evaluation cycle one (deductive analysis) whilst remaining open to new and unexpected emerging themes (inductive analysis), as recommended by Miles and Huberman (1994).

Table 3.3 gives a description of the thematic analysis process used in the current research.

Table 3.3 Phases of Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p87)

Phase
1.Familiarising yourself with the data
2. Generating initial codes
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Producing the report

Howitt and Cramer (2008) highlight one of the criticisms of thematic analysis, being that a data set can be interpreted differently depending on the experiences of the researcher conducting the analysis. This is accepted as a limitation, however Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) comment that data extracts are an effective way of supporting an individual researcher's interpretation of a data set. Demonstrating how themes are supported by evidence directly from the data is therefore essential. Therefore, the method adopted in this evaluation ensures that each C, M or O links directly to evidence in the data set and a colour coding process was used to ensure each data extract clearly indicates its relevance to either the Context, Mechanism or Outcome within each CMOC. Each extract of data was also labelled according to its source from the relevant transcript, to ensure the analysis is transparent and traceable (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). This was recorded.<sup>2</sup> An illustrative example is given in table 3.4 below and in appendix 3.12:

Table 3.4 Example of data sources and coding from outcome theme 'Increased Confidence'.

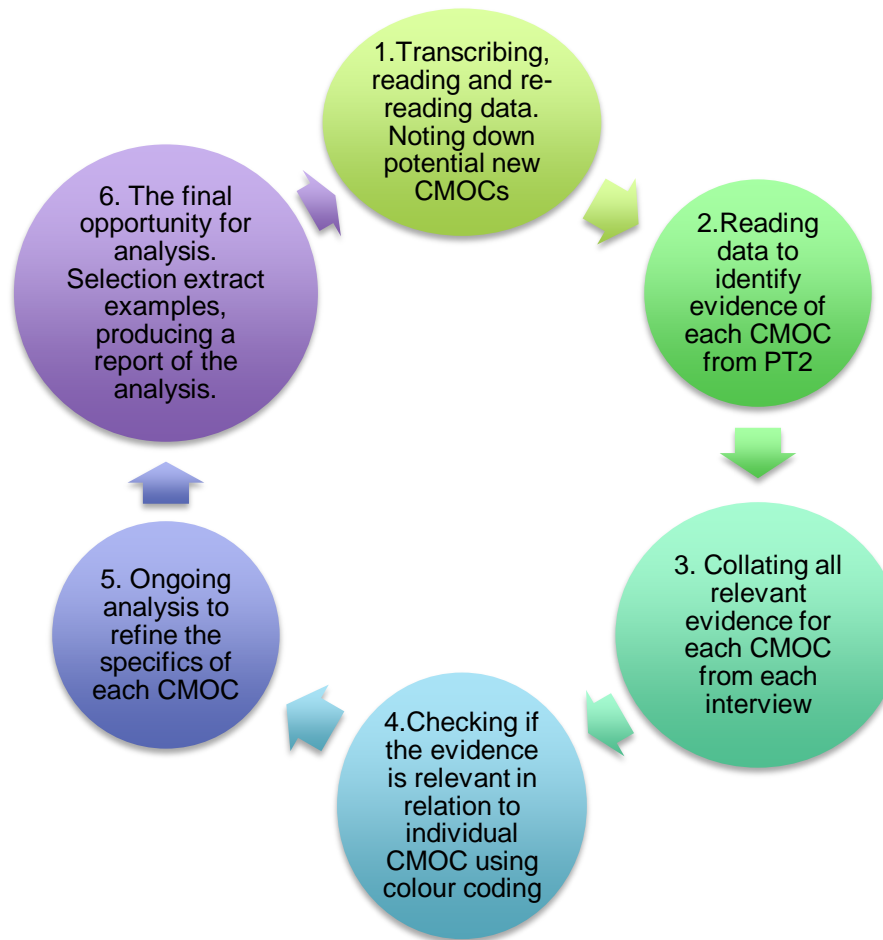
Context	Mechanism	Outcome	Data sources
The consultation group allows time for participants to have in depth discussion about the child's behaviour	The child's behaviours are considered in detail, deeper levels of thinking and learning about behaviour occur	Learning about behaviour increases confidence in behaviour management	Data file 3(D) P1 L35, P 7 L281)  Data file 4(C) P1 L67)  Data file 5 (H) P1 L46, P2 L77)  Data file 6(L) P4 L173)  Data file 7 (Z) P1 L 37, P1 L68, P3 L205)

<sup>2</sup> Data sources for all outcome themes are included in data files 12-16



Figure 3.8 provides an overview of each step in the TA process that follows the 6 phases presented by Braun and Clarke (2006) in table 3.3 (above), each phase is then described in detail.

Figure 3.8: The thematic analysis process



### Phase 1

Phase 1 in analysis of semi structured interview data with group participants was transcribing the audio recordings, reading and re-reading the transcripts to become familiar with the data. It involved reading the interview data inductively to search for any potential new CMOCs. Some new CMOCs were extracted, examples can be found in the data table (highlighted in orange) for participant C included in appendix 3.7<sup>3</sup>.

### Phase 2

Phase 2 was a deductive analysis that involved examining each interview script for evidence of existing CMOCs. The analysis was recorded in a table for each participant interview, using data extracts and a number code to pinpoint the extract in the relevant transcript. An extract from participant Z's data analysis table is included as an example in Table 3.5:

---

<sup>3</sup> *The data analysis tables for all other participants can be found in data files 8-11.*

Table 3.5 Example of participant Z analysis table

Context	Mechanism	Outcome	Theme	Evidence in transcript-Participant Z	Ref no In transcript
The problem solving process allows professionals to consider behavior from various perspectives	Participants become more aware of their ability to influence behavior	Self efficacy and confidence is increased due to understanding of own influence in changing behavior	Confidence	P1 L33: Again, finding out about how child reacted in different circumstances and environments... That's always the key to anything and ensuring that everybody was doing the same thing and again, well she was trying to play one off against the other but knowing that that's what she was doing	2

### Phase 3

Phase 3 involved cross referencing and collating evidence from the interview transcripts *across* participants, each outcome theme was presented in a table, with individual CMOCs next to the supporting evidence from the data set. Evidence of this process for each outcome theme is depicted using photographic evidence. An example is provided in appendix 4.3 for outcome theme ‘Generation and Implementation of Strategies’<sup>4</sup>.

### Phase 4

In phase 4, each piece of evidence for individual CMOCs was coded, to highlight its relevance to either the C, M or O using a colour coding process:

Where evidence is relevant to context, text is highlighted in orange

Where evidence is relevant to mechanism, text is highlighted in pink

Where evidence is relevant to outcome, text is highlighted in green

### Phase 5

Phase 5 was a reflective process that is exemplified in figure 3.8. It involved the scrutiny of each piece of evidence to consider its collective relevance to the CMOC and analysis in order to refine the specifics of each CMOC. Clear definitions and names for each CMOC were developed and changes were made across the whole data set. All individual changes were noted and recorded.

An example of the changes made to the outcome theme ‘Generation and Implementation on strategies’ are depicted in figure 3.8:

---

<sup>4</sup> *Thematic analysis and refinement process for each outcome theme is provided in data files 17-21.*

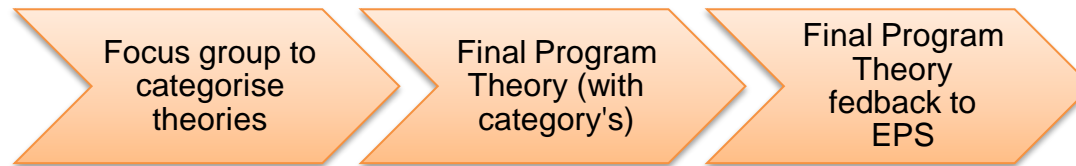
Figure 3.9 Examples of CMOC changes/refinements made to outcome theme 'Generation and Implementation of Strategies':

### Generation of strategies:

CMO	Context	Mechanism	Outcome	Changes made
1	The problem is explored in detail through a structured step by step process	The exact problem/s is explored and identified	The group is able to focus on specific and relevant targets and strategies	<p>This CMO will be removed because the evidence was more relevant/pertinent and representative of CMO 6, some examples of extracts:</p>  <p>So for example one participant here is discussing how the group come up with their own strategies and were able to agree these between themselves, which is relevant to the outcome in CMO 6 and the idea of ownership over strategies.</p>

### 3.30 Procedure- Evaluation cycle three

Figure 3.10: Design and data gathering procedure (concluding phase)



### 3.31 Evaluation cycle three (data collection)

#### *Focus group to categorise CMOCs*

Due to the complexity of social programmes, Pawson (2006) suggests that there are likely to be multiple CMOCs that are elicited within the RE. Therefore, in order to make the current findings accessible and useful for the LA, a categorisation process was used in an attempt to illuminate the most critical elements of the intervention.

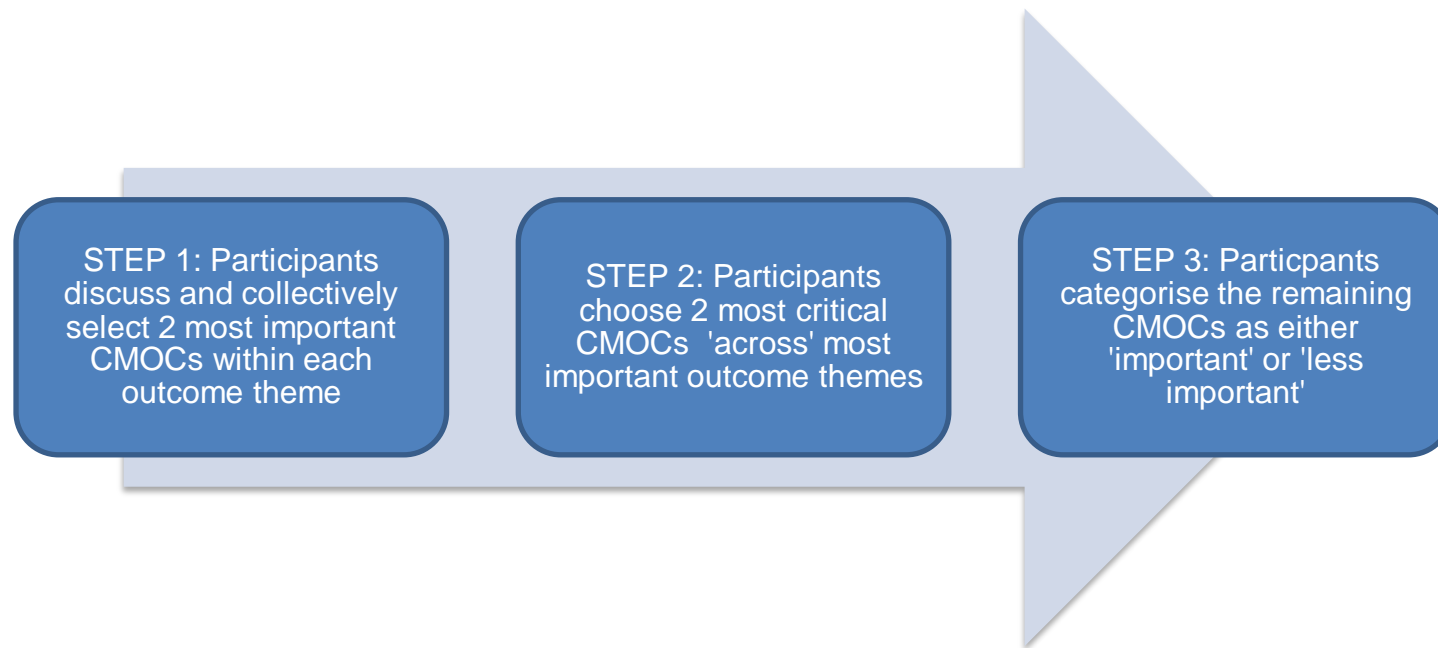
While focus group are viewed as an efficient means of gathering a large amount of data (Robson 2002), they are also recognised for having significant disadvantages, such as the potential imbalance of views to due to more dominant voices. The researcher therefore issued confidentiality guidelines and encouraged participants to be open and honest in their discussion, whilst listening to each other's viewpoints (see appendix 3.8). Participants were also provided with information about the purpose of the focus group, the process to be used and asked to indicate their consent verbally prior the group process beginning (See appendix 3.8).

The CMOCs were presented to participants as a group and the process depicted in figure 3.11 was followed. The focus group was considered to be an effective means of carrying out the categorisation process because participants had already taken part in lengthy interviews as part of the research process. Interviewing participants individually again would therefore have been impractical for both the researcher and participants. Furthermore, asking participants to rank the full data set in any order of importance or criticality would have been a lengthy process, therefore a 'categorising' process was used, as depicted in figure 3.11, to allow for variation in opinion between participants. However useful the focus group is in a practical sense, a further limitation found by Thornberry (2012) was that the enormity of the data set was overwhelming for participants in terms of ordering the theories.



As this was a concern within the current research, the above process was created in order to ensure CMOCs were presented initially within each outcome theme, so that participant's had a maximum of 6 CMOCs to consider at one time.

Figure 3.11: The categorisation process used with participants in the focus group



### 3.32 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for this study was first gained from the University of Nottingham ethics committee. (See appendix 3.9)

### 3.33 Consent

Once ethical approval was obtained, a consultation group centred around a LAC was identified by the EP service as being potentially suitable for the proposed research. The facilitating EP therefore sought permission from the LAC's social worker, as the child's legal guardian, for the researcher to make contact to obtain their fully informed consent to the participation in the research. The researcher was introduced via email to the social worker through the EP and information was sent about the project. This is included in appendix 3.10 and contains information related to safeguarding and data protection and a consent form.

Once social worker consent was gained for the research to take place, the Head Teacher of the school was approached for consent for the group to take place and weekly time/space for the group to meet was arranged. At this point, the EP also discussed the research with the Head Teacher and gained consent for him to be contacted by the researcher for further discussion. The researcher then spoke to the Head Teacher via email to discuss the research and explained commitment and requirements for participation in the research (appendix 3.11). Permission was gained from the Head Teacher, Social Worker and Facilitating EP for the researcher to attend the initial group session, to, share information about the research with staff participants and gain their written consent (see Appendix 3.2). The purposes of the research were explained orally to participants and via supporting information sheet (appendix 3.2). Individual participants were each given information related to the research, which included details about its purposes, method and timeline of the project. The activities and time

commitment required from participants was also outlined (see appendix 3.2). Informed voluntary consent was gained. The facilitating EP was also given a separate information sheet and asked to give their written consent to be part of the research (see appendix 3.4).

### 3.34 Right to withdraw

Participants were informed as part of the consent process that they could withdraw from the research at any stage, without specifying a reason. This was reiterated by the researcher in the initial group meeting, and again before the observation/interviews/focus group. The right to withdraw was also clearly stated in the participant information sheet (see Appendix 3.2).

### 3.35 Data storage

The data set was stored in a locked draw in the researcher's home and passwords were set up on files containing transcriptions, in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998, modified 2003) requirements. During the period of data analysis, the researcher and academic tutor were the only people who had access to data.

### 3.36 Confidentiality and Anonymity

All participants anonymity was protected by being given a code using a letter from the alphabet. The codes were used during transcription of all audio recordings to ensure none of the data contained identifiable features of either the setting or the participants. If the child's name was mentioned this was also anonymised within the transcriptions, and always referenced as 'child'. Audio recordings were made using a Dictaphone and deleted following transcription. The only personally identifiable documents that were stored securely were the consent forms.

### 3.37 Validity and Reliability

As the current research is not concerned with being able to generalise findings to the wider population, typical methods to assess external validity such as those applied to quantitative research are not applicable to the current study. Additionally, Bryman (2012) posits that the use of reliability and validity standards within quantitative research imply that there can be a singular and objective measure of social reality, which is not synonymous with the critical realist perspective or the qualitative methods used within the current RE.

The trustworthiness of qualitative research should therefore be assessed by different means, as suggested by Denzin and Lincoln (1994), who propose that four criteria should be considered when assessing the trustworthiness of qualitative research:

1. Transferability
2. Credibility
3. Dependability
4. Confirmability

Table 3.6 Addresses how the above criteria have been considered within the current study.

Table 3.6: Treats to the Trustworthiness and Applicability of the Research

Threat	Steps Taken to Minimise Threat
To the credibility of findings- Trustworthiness that parallels internal validity	<p>The researcher attempted to attempt to offer a balanced and triangulated view through the various methods of data collection and a clear audit trail has been presented throughout</p> <p>Pawson (2006) is clear that the RE framework views causation as being generative, CMOCs were developed by the researcher carefully over time and refined according to analysis of participant data. The reliability of CMOCs is enhanced through the researcher's collaborative approach to the development of the Final Program Theory, through the RI with the EP in evaluation cycle one and the focus group with participants in evaluation cycle three.</p> <p>The transcribing of data was completed within 2 weeks of data collection. The coding process during the analysis of data was shared with and checked by the researcher's supervisor.</p>
To the transferability (Applicability) of findings that parallels external	<p>This is not the aim of current RE. Critical Realist methodology seeks to optimise trustworthiness and relevance of CMOCs.</p> <p>By presenting a clear documentation of the methodology used, this study could be conducted again in other settings and subsequent findings have the potential of supporting the findings of the present study.</p> <p>Findings can therefore be added to the overall body of research and knowledge in relation to supporting LAC. I acknowledge the context specific nature of the findings and the Final Program Theory.</p>
To dependability (which parallels reliability)	<p>The researcher provided clear and detailed outline of the steps taken within the current research and clearly followed the Realistic Evaluation procedure.</p> <p>Interviews conducted asked participants the same questions and steps were taken to reduce the impact of more dominant voices being central to the outcomes of the focus group. All participants were presented with the same CMOCs within the focus group.</p>
To Confirmability (which parallels objectivity)	<p>I have undergone doctoral level research training and am supervised by a tutor who has previous research experience of Realistic Evaluation. The study processes and results were discussed within supervision in order to reflect on the researchers potential assumptions and bias regarding findings.</p> <p>Data contained in the transcripts was subjected to a systematic process of coding and categorisation according to contexts, mechanisms and outcomes. The coding process was checked by the research supervisor. Data triangulation was also used to reduce potential researcher bias.</p>

### 3.38 Chapter summary

Chapter 3 has outlined the methodology of the current study, with consideration to the epistemological position of the research. It has outlined the procedure used for data gathering and methods of data analysis. Ethical considerations, threats to validity reliability of the research have also been discussed.

Chapter 4 will present the Final Program Theory, as derived from data analysis within all three evaluation cycles.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter will present the findings of a Realist Evaluation of a consultation group that supported school staff in problem solving around the needs and presenting difficulties faced when working with a Looked After Child (LAC).

This chapter presents the Final Program Theory, developed as a result of data analysis to identify what works, for whom and in what context in respect of a group consultation intervention.

Evaluation cycle one included the analysis and interpretation of data of an observation of the consultation group 'in action', and data from a Realist Interview with the facilitating EP. This data was used to refine and inform the Initial Program Theory (Appendix 2.5), which was elicited from the RS in chapter one, the data analysis process led to the development of Program Theory 2 (appendix 4.1).

Evaluation cycle two included the analysis and interpretation of data from semi-structured interviews with the group participants. This led to the development of the Final Program Theory, following a focus group with participants in which the CMOCs were categorised in accordance with perceived importance to the success of the group consultation.

At each stage of the analysis, the theories were modified and refined in accordance with new evidence gained. The following chapter presents the Final Program Theory. Data extracts collected by the researcher from observation and interviews will be presented, as exemplar evidence to support CMOCs and to aid interpretation and transparency.

The primary aim to the Realist Evaluation was to understand what contributed to the effectiveness, or otherwise, of the consultation



group with staff supporting a LAC. This involved identification and reporting of the context and mechanisms that were perceived as influential to the group's outcomes.

## 4.2 Research questions

The aim of this study is to address the following research questions:

Main question 1: What are the context, mechanism and outcome configurations (CMOCs) that stem from EP led group consultation with adults supporting a LAC?

Sub question- How does participating in a consultation group work to support the confidence of adults working with a LAC in school?

Sub Question-Which CMOCs are perceived to be the most critical and important elements of group consultation in the current context?

Each of the research questions are addressed within the presentation of the final six outcome themes, which consist of context, mechanism and outcome configurations (CMOCs).

## 4.3 Presentation of findings

### 4.4 Findings from the Realist Synthesis

During the RS, six overarching themes emerged, which highlighted outcomes for participants in consultation groups in schools in the UK that adopted a problem solving approach. The development of these themes throughout the RS is presented in chapter two. The outcome themes were used to structure the deductive data analysis in the RE. For example, the analysis within both evaluation cycles involved searching the data for specific extracts to support either the context, mechanism or outcome feature of each individual CMOC. The initial themes are presented in table 4.1, the number of CMOCs within each theme identified as part of the RS and that are included

in the Initial Program Theory (appendix 2.5) are also included in table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Initial outcome themes

Outcome theme	Number of CMOCs identified in the Initial Program Theory (appendix 2.5)
Confidence	5
Generation of Strategies	5
Reducing Isolation and stress	4
Collaboration and sharing	8
Reflection and self awareness	3
Hindering aspects/difficulties encountered	11

The themes evolved throughout the RE. For example, during evaluation cycle one, the development of ‘Perceived Outcomes for the LAC’ emerged as a separate theme. Furthermore, the theme ‘Generation of Strategies’ was adapted to include ‘Generation and Implementation of Strategies’, based on evidence within the data set.

#### 4.5 Findings from evaluation cycle one

The Initial Program Theory formed a starting point for the analysis of data obtained through an observation of the group ‘in action’ and a Realist Interview (RI) with the EP facilitator. As a result of this process, some of the CMOCs were highlighted as potentially needing refinement or rejection based on a lack of evidence or contextual irrelevance. However, none of the CMOCs were completely rejected, because further analysis within evaluation cycle two may have provided further evidence for accepting, refining or rejecting CMOCs.

In order for this chapter to be succinct and focus on presenting the Final Program Theory, The key revisions and additions to the CMOCs as a result of evaluation cycle one are outlined in detail in appendix 4.2.

One key addition was the elicitation of a new outcome theme 'Perceptions of Outcomes for the LAC', which will be presented below, as further evidence supported the inclusion of this outcome theme in the findings from evaluation cycle two.

#### 4.6 Findings from Evaluation Cycle Two:

Evaluation cycle two involved conducting semi-structured interviews with participants and an inductive and deductive thematic analysis of the transcribed interviews. This process is outlined in chapter 3 section 3.29. Following a categorising process completed by participants in a focus group, the analysis concluded in the development of the Final Program Theory.

The following section presents the Final Program Theory, with extracts of evidence from the data to support the contexts, mechanisms and outcomes within each outcome theme. Some CMOCs had no evidence within the data set, or were irrelevant to the current context and were therefore rejected from the program theory, following analysis of data in both evaluation cycles. One outcome theme was also removed from the program theory, because no evidence existed within the data that participants had experienced a reduction in isolation and stress. Furthermore, the constructs being depicted within the contexts and mechanisms within the outcome theme 'Reduced Isolation and Stress' were parallel to some of those within other themes<sup>5</sup>.

---

<sup>5</sup> *A full account of the analysis process and rationale for removal of this theme can be found in data file 21.*

CMOC's are presented by theme in the following account and aim to provide a detailed portrayal of how the group consultation intervention works, according to a RE framework (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). CMOCs were also categorised by participants to determine the critical and most important features for the success of the intervention within the current context, in order for the findings to be useful to other settings. CMOCs are therefore presented below in tabular form, which indicates one of the four categories given by participants:

- Critical
- Most important
- Important
- Less important

#### 4.7 Final Program Theory: Outcome theme 'Increased Confidence'

Table 4.2 displays the three CMOCs for the outcome theme 'Increased Confidence' in the Final Program Theory.

Context	Mechanism	Outcome	Category
The consultation group allows time for participants to have in depth discussion about the child's behaviour	The child's behaviours are considered in detail, deeper levels of thinking and learning about behaviour occur	Learning about behaviour increases confidence in behaviour management	Most important
The problem solving process allows professionals to consider behaviour from various perspectives	Participants develop awareness of their ability to influence behaviour	Self efficacy is increased due to understanding of own influence in managing challenging behaviour	Important
An external facilitator supports the group using expert skills in consultation	The facilitator promotes joint exploration using a coherent process and	Participants identify success with the child and hence feel valued and gain confidence in	Critical

	asks 'exceptions' questions in a non challenging and supportive way	their expertise	
--	---	-----------------	--

The outcome theme of Increased Confidence includes CMOCs that were perceived to be critical and most important to the group consultation intervention.

Evidence to support the **Contexts:**

Within the observation data, the contexts within this outcome theme were apparent through several 'in depth' discussions that the group engaged in related to the LAC's behaviour, for example:

*A discussion related to control and why the child feels the need to control her environment (Observation transcript).*

Participants also gave examples of discussions they had which centered around the child's behaviour in terms of the depth of conversations related to her individual relationships within the school, for example:

*"There was no umbrella solution to all the places she went, they were bespoke and we all reported back different things." (Participant D)*

Furthermore, the depth of discussion was reported with reference to how to manage specific behaviours:

*"But while we were in the group someone said 'well actually she cant go completely cold turkey because its just going to go the other way, so that's something we discussed and we said that we would say to her 'oh its nice to see you child but you shouldn't be here'" (Participant C).*

Data also supported the contextual factor that the group consultation enabled participants to consider the LAC's behaviour from various perspectives, which reportedly supported the group's ability to understand their role within the approach. For example, this was evident within the observation:

*Participants spend time discussing and reflecting on the child's behaviour over the past week at the beginning of the session, which allows time for participants to gain each others perspectives (Observation transcript)*

This was also elicited from participant comments in the semi-structured interviews:

*"But I also knew that when she went to T's, she got that kind of care and when she went into class 1 she got that kind of care...so you got to see the bigger picture and then it made more sense of what you were doing" (Participant D).*

This was reported by participants in relation to considering other's perspectives on the LAC's behaviour, through sharing of information and the opportunity to liaise with other professionals:

*"Hearing different points of views and all the different strategies and the EP really helped her coming from a different background it helped because it brought a different perspective that I wouldn't have looked at" (Participant L)*

The role of the facilitator was also reflected on by participants as being a contextual factor that enabled exploration of the LAC's behaviour, particularly with reference to the EP facilitator's management of the process:

*"I mean I don't know I suppose for her its really really good management of people because what she did, she came to the school at the same time every week so it was consistent" (Participant D)*

Furthermore, the EP's 'expert' consultation skills are evidenced in the observation transcript, through the use of questioning and encouraging the identification of success with the LAC:

*"Are there any times when she has accepted an instruction from some one else" (Observation transcript)*

Evidence to support the **Mechanisms**:

Participants gave examples of how they formulated approaches to working with the child within the context of having in depth discussions as a group. For example:

*“We looked at what worked and what didn't work and that's how we formulated the approach we had with her because it was clear she wasn't going to respond to what other children would respond to” (Participant H)*

The learning that occurred about behaviour is also commented upon, with particular reference to understanding the LAC's controlling behaviours. This understanding about the child's need for control within some environmental situations then led to the adults understanding how this could be given within the boundaries of the school system:

*“And actually the more we let her be the more we got to know her because we understood about her controlling behaviour, which meant that you could adapt your strategies, but it wasn't out of a text book” (Participant H)*

This particular issue was also observed and is evident within the observation transcript:

*The facilitator focuses the group on a specific behaviour (control), which is then explored by all participants according to their own experience of this with child (Observation transcript)*

Participants also evidenced their learning through the process of group consultation when giving insightful hypothesis related to the LAC's presenting behaviours. For example:

*“Consistency of approach, which is definitely what she needed because that's what she hadn't had, barely had any consistency which is why she had regressed, she was an 8 year old but acting like a 4 year old. That's kind of where her maturity level stopped really” (Participant Z)*

Understanding the 'bigger picture' through exploring different perspectives also reportedly supported participants in understanding their role in terms of their personal influence and relationship with the child. This was evident in comments such as:

*“But because we had those meetings I knew that wasn’t the goal, I wasn’t meant to be the pastoral person to her and I wasn’t that person, like I say everything was a transaction” (Participant D)*

This also provided clarity for participants in terms of being able to see how the whole system was working around the child:

*“When you went to consultation you saw how the whole system worked, so my role was different but I knew my role, I knew my aims” (Participant D)*

The mechanism enabled by the presence of the EP facilitator was discussed by participants. This was often in relation to maintaining a coherent process:

*“We worked through the process and she didn’t straight jacket us, sometimes it did kind of wander off a little back but she did bring it back.” (Participant Z)*

However, participants also reflected on the EP’s use of questioning skills to guide the process and ensure the session led to outcomes:

*“I think the EP balanced it really well because she had specific questions to lead us on the right path and making sure we actually got something out of the meeting so we came up with targets and we went through how we were going to solve and what we were going to improve for child.” (Participant L)*

### Evidence to support the **Outcomes**

Participants reported increased levels of confidence within the semi-structured interviews. Firstly, the EP facilitator reflected on the way participants gradually started to understand their role within the support network for the child and perceived this to lead to increased confidence in supporting a LAC:

*“Yeh definitely, right at the beginning of the process they felt like everything was really child centre red and everything was coming from her and there was nothing they could do about it that she was just a wild child but by gradually acknowledging their role in being able to support her and their confidence in that and their self efficacy in supporting a child with those kind of needs” (RI: EP).*



Participants also reflected on the importance of the group in supporting them in feeling like they were 'doing the right thing' in terms of their management of the child:

*"For me personally its that knowing your doing the right thing, or at least knowing your not doing the wrong thing, because the last thing you want to do is the wrong thing and sometimes with a case like that its hard to know if your doing the right thing" (Participant D)*

It is also suggested within the data that having outside professional support for the approaches being used increased confidence for participants:

*"And it felt like the strategies were working and the professional is saying its a good idea so that was reassuring and built confidence in what we were doing" (Participant L)*

*"It was more about having the confidence to let her be and do her own thing.....I think the intervention gave us the confidence to do it" (Participant H)*

The identification of success with the child, highlighted through the questioning skills of the EP facilitator was also recognised as being a key factor in terms of increasing the confidence of participants when working with the LAC. An example of this is highlighted by one participant, who identified this as the most critical factor within the group process:

*"Do you know the biggest impact for me, so the number 1 impact was that it highlighted to me how far we had come. When you sit down and somebody highlights the progress by highlighting what was happening the week before or a few weeks before. It really highlighted how much the situation had improved each time....so yeh I needed those meetings to recognize we were getting somewhere". (Participant D)*

#### 4.8 Final Program Theory: Outcome theme 'Generation and Implementation of Strategies'

Table 4.3 displays the four CMOCs for the outcome theme 'Generation and Implementation of Strategies' in the Final Program Theory.

Context	Mechanism	Outcome	Category
The problem solving process is reflective in terms of individual participant and organisational factors relating to behaviour	Participants discuss the nature and meaning of behaviour, including the child's background and the systems around the child	Causal attributions for the behaviour begin to change and this influences individual and organisational strategies	Less important
A range of professionals attend the group consultation	Skills and experiences are shared, new and existing strategies are discussed	Learning about new interventions and strategies occurs, strategies are trialed with the child and potentially with other children in the future	Important
The problem solving process encourages participants to discuss and scrutinize their own strategies	Strategies are generated by all participants whom are part of the organization and will be involved in the implementation, everyone is clear on their role	Participants feel enabled and empowered to implement strategies, they have ownership over the strategy	Most Important
The sessions are regular and supported by an outside professional	The outside professional checks in each week how strategies have been implemented and if they have worked	Participants are more likely to implement strategies if they know they will be asked to discuss within the group	Most Important

Participants perceived two of the CMOCs within this outcome theme to be most important to the success of the group consultation. In

particular the presence of the EP facilitator in supporting the implementation of strategies and participants feeling they had ownership over the strategies being used, because they were relevant within the context of the school.

Evidence to support **Contexts**:

Participants reported that they valued the contextual factor of having a range of professionals attending the group, including the EP facilitator and the Teaching Assistant, who had been new to the role and was unfamiliar to the rest of the staff:

*“Well first it was nice just to talk together as professionals like not just the teaching staff and also the people who were looking after her in after school club and things like that and also the EP there” (Participant L)*

Participants also engaged in the scrutiny of strategies, in relation to how some strategies may or may not work within the context of the school environment. During the observation, substantial time was taken and allowed as part of the group consultation process to ‘problem solve’ how strategies could be embedded within the school context. This is also evident in the reporting of planning of strategies, for example:

*“So D would have had some things that he would put in place after the meeting so some aims, like some of them were 3 mornings a week she had to stay in registration because she was coming straight to my class, so we put a target in that she went to 3 and I think at first she was allowed to choose the days and then slowly build it up” (Participant L)*

Evidence to support **Mechanisms**:

The EP within the RI discussed the value in participant’s having time to reflect on the LAC’s behaviour in a way that developed their understanding of what the behaviour might be communicating. The EP reflected that this was particularly useful in helping participants understand why they were experiencing the LAC as being very controlling, and why she was finding relationships so challenging:

*“So it was just the being able to reflect on what is going on for child and trying to reframe their view of her behaviour and her motives for behaviour and why she was seeking control and why she had such difficulty developing social relationships because that was also a big issue” (RI-EP)*

Participants also commented on the value in sharing ideas and opinions about behaviour with other professionals, in order to gain different perspectives on the problem and to develop understanding of how the LAC was behaving with different people and in different settings:

*“So I would say something and then we could compare how she was in different settings, I feel like it gave us the opportunity to have a more honest outlook of how it was” (Participant D)*

Furthermore, participants identified that the strategies were developed by themselves, and that the EP facilitator was not directive in giving the group strategies to implement with the LAC:

*“So the fact we all sat and made the targets together” (Participant L)*

*“The EP didn’t come in and tell us what to do” (Participant H)*

The presence of the EP facilitator also provided the group with reassurance in relation to the strategies they developed and implemented:

*“And she was saying ‘its ok that she’s doing this and its ok to do this or that and see how she’s reacting’. That really helped” (Participant D)*

Evidence to support **Outcomes:**

The EP facilitator highlighted her view that participants ‘shift’ in attributions was important in them devising an approach to managing the LAC:

*“I think the change in attributions was one of the most important things” (RI: EP)*

This outcome was supported by comments made by another participant, who reflected that:

*“Well I think it opens your mind doesn’t it, so as a teacher you can have a very narrow view and I know with other children too you often have a range of opinions and I know the opinions for some people of how we were dealing with child initially didn’t think it was right they thought we should be telling her off” (Participant H)*

Participants also commented that the process was valuable in terms of new knowledge and ideas, particularly related to LAC and how this can support them in the future in managing another child that may present similar difficulties:

*“Yeh I mean for your own professional development it was great to see other peoples ideas and especially the EP’s side of it so all these strategies and things you can do because if we get a child again we have these ideas now that we could use...if it happened again we would be much better prepared” (Participant L)*

Comments related to strategies also included reflections related to the contextual relevance of strategies to the school environment:

*“Yeh so making the targets more structured around the school and what’s happening in the environment” (Participant L)*

*“Erm, they were quite pragmatic, it felt like its what was going to work for her and it had to be done in that way” (Participant H)*

One participant also commented on the value of group consultation in ensuring the group had time to think about developing strategies, which prevented a ‘firefighting’ approach to managing behaviour:

*“Eventually we sort of got our ideas together better but the consultation helped us think about what we were going to try and be able to talk it through rather than a firefighting exercise” (Participant L)*

#### 4.9 Final Program Theory: Reflection and Self-Awareness

Table 4.4 Displays the one CMOC for the outcome theme ‘Reflection and Self Awareness’ in the Final Program Theory.

Context	Mechanism	Outcome	Category
School staff feel a sense of failure due to self attributions for finding	The group have time for reflection on progress and success, successes are	Participants self esteem increases due to recognition of success	Most important

solutions	also highlighted by the facilitator.		
-----------	--------------------------------------	--	--

Following data analysis and refinements within the two evaluation cycles (see appendix 4.2 and 4.5). The previous CMOCs within this outcome theme were either rejected or moved based on insufficient evidence to support the CMOCs. The remaining CMOC will now be discussed.

#### Evidence to support the **Context**:

Participant's expressed how difficult they found managing the LAC, the extract below highlights the feeling of participants in relation to both the difficulty and feelings of failure related to supporting the LAC:

*"This is going to sound bad but the thing is with child is it was very hard, no matter what anyone says it was really really hard."*  
(Participant D)

*"You know you feel like your not making any difference its like your banging your head against a brick wall and whatever your doing with the best of intentions its frustrating and you can feel that you should be doing more."* (Participant Z)

The impact of managing the LAC in terms of the emotional labor is also highlighted by one participant, who reflects on this in terms of empathy for the child:

*"And you know it can become very wearing and emotionally draining because I mean the situation that she's come from you'd have to be made of stone to not empathise and you know imagine yourself and your own children in that kind of situation."* (Participant D)

#### Evidence to support the **Mechanism**:

Participants attributed their recognition of success to the group consultation, which suggests that this is an essential part of the group consultation process when working with a LAC. This element of the process was evident within the observation:

*C discusses the progress the child has made in the after school club and other join in with the positivity (Observation Transcript)*

*D starts to comment on how much the child's behaviour has changed and how much progress she has made as compared with when she first started at the school (Observation Transcript)*

Participants also noted the value in having time to reflect on progress and success with the LAC:

*"Being able to reflect every week about how far we'd come by comparing to the beginning and even the previous week" (RI: EP)*

### Evidence to support the **Outcome**

The impact of having time to reflect on progress within the process of group consultation was reportedly valuable to participants:

*"If you think about when she first started the change is amazing, you don't see it until we do this" ('this' meaning the group consultation- Participant D)*

Making a difference to the LAC was key to participants in terms of their perceived success of the group consultation intervention:

*"I think when you have meetings like this you realise the difference you are making" (participant Z)*

One participant highlights this as being the key outcome in terms of the impact the group consultation had for him as a participant:

*"Do you know the biggest impact for me, so the number 1 impact was that it highlighted to me how far we had come" (Participant D)*

#### 4.10 Final Program Theory: Collaboration and Sharing

Table 4.5 Displays the six CMOCs within the outcome theme 'Collaboration and Sharing' in the Final Program Theory.

Context	Mechanism	Outcome	Category
The group encourages specific time for collaboration and discussion between staff members in a safe and supportive context with an outside professional to facilitate	Participants are treated as equals and able to discuss difficulties with behaviour without judgment	Participants feel supported and are more likely to seek support, this may reduce stress and burnout	Most Important
The facilitator uses consultation skills to support and encourage exploration	In depth exploration of individual stories occurs	Understanding and tolerance between participants increases	Important
The group is supported by the senior management team	Regular times, an appropriate space and cover for teaching staff is allocated to support the running of the group	Participants feel valued and see the value in the sessions	Most Important
The group allows time and space for difficulties related to students who are LAC	Specific SEN related to LAC are discussed and professionals share knowledge	Participants gain knowledge and understanding of LAC students	Important
The group is the optimal size (not too large or small)	All members get a chance to contribute and share problems/roles	Participants feel their contributions are valued and the group is cohesive	Important
Membership is voluntary	Participants choose to attend and therefore are more likely to be motivated to engage	The group faces less resistance and functions with support and positivity	Less Important

The Final Program Theory within this outcome theme includes two CMOCs that were perceived to be most important to participants in terms of the success of the intervention. This suggests that collaboration and sharing is an integral part of the group



consultation process and will now be discussed with relevance to data extracts to support understanding of the context, mechanisms that led to outcomes related to collaboration and sharing.

Evidence to support **Contexts**:

Participants commented of the usefulness of having structured time to collaborate, particularly with the support of an outside professional, for example:

*“I think it was helpful that as members of staff we had the support of someone we could talk to who wasn’t here all the time and had a totally different angle on it than we do” (Participant C)*

The EP facilitator also commented on her use of empathy within the consultation, through acknowledging how difficult the situation could be in terms of managing the LAC as a way of providing support:

*“Yeh acknowledging what they’ve done and how difficult it is for them, I mean its not great to labour about how terrible something is but I think if you’re in that situation day in day out, for someone to say, I understand I’m sorry your having to go through that” (RI:EP)*

The EP facilitator also encouraged exploration of difficulties, which was evident in the observation through the EP encouraging one of the participants to explore an incident in which the LAC had bitten her (Observation transcript).

Some discussions within the group observation were focused on issues that would be specific to a LAC. These discussions focused on the specific needs of the child such as her need to be ‘babied’ (Observation transcript) and a discussion related to the LAC’s need for structure and consistency (Observation transcript).

In relation to the support of the senior management team as a contextual factor, the Head Teacher in the current context attended the group sessions and through conversations with the facilitating EP it was also evident that the Head Teacher at the school arranged cover for the Teaching Assistant in after school club while the

consultation group was running, which was an enabling factor in terms of the group meeting regularly.

In terms of membership, participants felt that it was a voluntary arrangement; one participant described his participation as:

*“yeh well I say for me it was more kind of that moral responsibility, that jiminy cricket” (Participant Z)*

### Evidence to support **Mechanisms**

Participants reflected on the atmosphere within the group in terms of feeling supported by both the EP and each other:

*“When we got talking it was just like a room full of friends or colleagues but it was quite relaxed it wasn’t too tense” (Participant C)*

This was further reiterated in relation to participants feeling that they could contribute to the discussion without feeling judged:

*“But also I think or hope that people feel free to say what they think and nobody is judged and nobody sits back and criticises, it’s about trust” (Participant H)*

Individuals within the group were also encouraged to share their experiences and tell their stories of interactions with the LAC, for example the observation data elicits several occasions in which the EP facilitator asks group members to share concerns and give their perspectives. For example the observation transcript (P2 L22) provides evidence of a lengthy discussion led by one participant after being prompted by the EP into the concerns related to the LAC’s engagement with school work.

Some logistical factors were also a mechanism in ensuring the group continued such as an appropriate space and time being

allocated (with the support of the Head Teacher), which was recognized by participants:

*“We used the staff room so we were in a nice private space where we could talk about it and we wouldn’t be interrupted, that’s important because when your talking about a child you need a nice private space to have it” (Participant L)*

Participants also reflected on the value of having discussion that were specifically related to the issues faced by the LAC.

*“In the fact that you know basically all the standard rules go out of the window, you can just, you cant have normal school discipline because it just doesn’t work, if you try to have normal societal rules, because she hasn’t had that. Yeh she can’t cope with that” (Participant Z)*

In terms of participation, the structure of the process meant that the EP facilitator asked one participant to be the main ‘problem holder’ each week, which meant that this person would contribute more than others. However, a relatively small group (5 participants) enabled others to contribute, this process was also reflected upon positively:

*“So afterwards we all had a little bit where we contributed and there were certain bits where we were being led by questions to make sure we got to like...well there were bit that were more for say T or bits when they were talking about her being in my class, so everyone had chance to talk through their idea and opinion” (Participant L)*

Also in relation to participation, comments that highlighted commitment to the group consultation were evident:

*“I mean it is but I think you find with teachers that they will give up the time, particularly someone like child where everyone had a lot of investment in, they were quite happy to give up there time” (Participant H)*

Evidence to support **Outcomes:**

Outcomes within this theme were relevant to participants gaining a sense of collaborative practice, which is integral to group consultation as an intervention. This was particularly relevant for one participant who was not part of the teaching staff, evident in the reflection provided as an example below:

*“Just being able to communicate those stressors and how I was feeling, it made me feel like part of the team and you know whenever you go to a new place you feel like a bit of an outsider and that really made me feel like erm, well it just grew relationships, it was nice I could talk to them more and it was positive” (Participant C)*

This may indicate that group consultation may be particularly useful when a staff body is disjointed, or the organisation is larger than the current context.

Collaborative practice was also highlighted by the EP facilitator, who provides an example of when the group worked together to ensure that the Teaching Assistant was able to get a break during the day, because a shared understanding of the intensity of her role was acknowledged by participants:

*“Well strategies that came out of that was giving C a bit of a break and that’s something that the class teacher came up with that.....and that was something that came from him acknowledging the pressure on C” (RI:EP)*

The EP also acknowledged the emotional support that participants provided for each other throughout the process:

*“For the others to acknowledge how difficult it was for her I think was really useful for her” (RI:EP)*

This was also acknowledged as an important outcome of the group consultation by participants:

*“So yeh definitely to off load” (Participant Z)*

*“I mean the strategies and talking about what’s helped it probably was that for half the time and the other half was the emotional offloading and you need that” (Participant Z)*

Participants reflected on their learning in relation to specific issues for LAC. This was with particular reference to attachment difficulties, for example:

*“I learnt an awful lot about the troubles and the attachment disorder itself and what happens and the things that work and those that definitely don’t” (Participant Z)*

This was also highlighted by one participant as being a direct result of collaborative practice in terms of learning from the skills and experience of other professionals in the group

*“So obviously the attachment and things but actually child was a new one to me I haven’t really worked with children with attachment difficulties before whereas someone else had so they gave their point of view and I gave mine from a different angle”. (Participant C)*

#### 4.11 Final Program Theory: Hindering Aspects and Difficulties Encountered

Table 4.6 Displays the three CMOCs within the outcome theme ‘Hindering Aspects and Difficulties Encountered’ in the Final Program Theory.

Context	Mechanism	Outcome	Category
The LAC is in a temporary care placement	The home circumstances of the child change rapidly due to a break down in care placement	Participants feel frustrated because they do not feel they have had enough impact	Most important
The group requires participants to give up an hour of time each week	Participants have a range of pressures on their professional time	Participants see less value in having structured time to discuss one child	Less important
The child is LAC and has difficulties in his/her care placement	Foster carers or social workers do not attend the group	A joined up approach and strategies being used at school are not transferred to the home environment	Less important

In order to ensure the current research supported a balanced view of the group consultation intervention, participants were specifically asked both in the RI and semi structured interviews about contextual factors that they felt hindered the success of the group (See interview scripts in appendix 3.6 and 3.3). Participants identified the hindering factors outlined in table 4.6, the contextual factors were logistical and individual to the current context in terms of being either relevant to the LAC or to the length of the group consultation sessions. Furthermore two of the mechanisms within the 'Hindering Factors' outcome theme are explicitly relevant to the current context in terms of the situation of the LAC's care placement.

#### Evidence to support **Contexts**

The contexts within this theme identify elements that are evidenced through the factual circumstances related to the running of the consultation group. While the group was taking place, the LAC had just been taken into care and was residing with family members in a temporary care placement. The LAC had difficulties relating to the care placement that eventually (following the end of the group consultation sessions) broke down and the LAC was moved to another county to start a foster care placement. This was discussed by participants, who highlighted their frustration that she was moved, because they felt therefore that the positive impacts they were starting to see would not continue (see evidence to support outcomes).

The other contextual factor within this outcome theme relates to the time taken for the group consultation sessions. Each session lasted for approximately one hour and were offered on a weekly basis.

#### Evidence to support **Mechanisms**

The time pressures on school staff were commented upon and this was discussed in relation to the group consultation adding additional

time pressures, with particular reference to the amount of time spent discussing one specific child:

*"It was an awful lot of time, you know time in school is really tight and when your spending time on the one individual....but then you've got the other 29 to sort as well so it seemed to me very time consuming and maybe, I felt maybe it could have been truncated"* (Participant Z)

Participants also discussed the LAC's care placement and were therefore aware of the difficulties the LAC was facing:

*"I mean we know she wasn't in a good place at home things weren't working but how drastic to move her away"* (Participant Z)

The EP facilitator also discussed the LAC's care placement and suggested that:

*"Erm well one of the things I wished we'd been able to do and when we do this in the future I would like to get the carer involved"* (RI:EP)

The EP facilitator suggested that this would have been helpful to the process and potentially to the LAC, because it would have further encouraged collaboration between home and school and promoted 'joined up thinking':

*"In terms of sharing concerns, all being on the same page, and having a forum, if there had been some more joined up thinking between home and school and that support I think that would have helped".* (RI:EP)

Participants also reported seeing the value in having the LAC's Carer at the group consultation, while acknowledging how the dynamic of the group would change, one participant commented upon how it may have been useful for the Carer to see how things were working in school. This appears to be born out of a sense of empathy for the Carer:

*"I suppose the dynamics would have been different but sometimes if you see something working and see things working.... I don't know if it would have made a difference but sometimes you cant see the wood though the trees can you, but sometimes people can realise things. It couldn't have been easy for them"* (Participant Z)

Evidence to support **Outcomes:**

Participants reported seeing less value in the 'chat' around the LAC's issues and behaviours than in the time given within the process for generating strategies. One participant also recommended that the sessions would have been more valuable if they had taken about thirty minutes and been more focused on strategies:

*"Ideally I think about 30 minutes and really focus, not so much of the chat and just actually get down to what works and what doesn't, it was definitely useful all the things that came out of it but it needed to be more punchy" (Participant Z)*

The most important outcome within this theme (as categorised by participants) was the frustrations felt due to the LAC being moved to another school due to a breakdown in the care placement.

Participants reported that they felt they were making a difference for the LAC and that because of the LAC's move, the progress made was less significant, for example one participant commented that:

*"I suppose just because I feel like its not gone anywhere because of how its ended but that's not the fault of the group" (Participant C)*

Other comments were also made about how the staff body collectively felt about the LAC being moved:

*"From when she started to July we just saw a massive difference and we were having a chat among ourselves earlier the staff and we were saying 'this was her chance you know, if she cant make it here then she wont make it anywhere', she was making it here and so when she's been moved" (Participant Z)*

A feeling of helplessness was also reflected by one participant, who commented that:

*"We all felt we were making a difference to her and we knew we had a couple of years to really get her back on track but she's going to be in a difficult situation for the rest of her life" (Participant H)*



#### 4.12 Final Program Theory: Perceptions of Outcomes for the LAC

The data obtained from the observation of the group consultation and the RI was analysed using both a deductive (to search for CMOCs outlined in the Initial Program Theory) and inductive (to search for new CMOC's) approach. As a result of inductive analysis, a new CMOC was elicited. The outcome for this CMOC was directly related to participant's perceived outcomes for the LAC, therefore not appropriately placed within any of the existing outcome themes. A new outcome theme was therefore included. Through inductive analysis of data in evaluation cycle two, one further CMOC was elicited and included in the Final Program Theory.

Table 4.7 Displays the two CMOCs within the outcome theme 'Perceptions of Outcomes for the LAC' in the Final Program Theory.

Context	Mechanism	Outcome	Category
Meeting regularly as a group ensures a consistent approach is developed	Discussions related to the child's behaviour in various contexts around school lead to adult understanding of the child's needs	The child feels supported, understood and accepted	Most Important
The group encourages participants to be collaborative in their approach to managing a LAC	The group develop an approach that focuses on the child developing feelings of safety and security in the school environment, with specific targets that aim to build relationships	The child develops school connectedness, begins to trust adults and the school environment	Critical

The CMOCs within the outcome theme 'Perceptions of Outcomes for the LAC' were categorised by participants as being 'critical' and 'most important' to the success of the group consultation. Which suggests that aside from finding the process personally or

professionally helpful, participants measured the success of the intervention through their interpretations of being successful in supporting the child. Extracts of evidence to support the contexts, mechanisms and outcomes within this outcome theme will now be presented.

#### Evidence to support **Contexts:**

Consistency and collaboration were discussed by participants in relation to the group consultation being a platform for ensuring each group member was approaching the child in the same way with regards to various strategies. Participants gave examples of how they collaborated in terms of the discussions the group had to ensure the approach taken was consistent:

*“We all discussed here but we all had different opinions on that ....so that’s something we discussed and we said that we would say to her ‘oh its nice to see you child but you shouldn’t be here’ and that’s something we really used” (Participant C)*

Participants also commented on the lack of collaboration before starting the group consultation, suggesting that ‘it wasn’t working’ before and highlighting that the group consultation helped with ensuring staff were communicating:

*“Before it wasn’t working, there was no communication in the right places so yeh definitely helped in that case” (Participant C)*

Comments were also made that suggested participants attributed success with the LAC to the group consultation in terms of it’s enabling of a consistent approach to managing behaviour:

*“Ok so we would all walk in the room on totally separate pages but we would always leave the room on the same page and then be able to put a plan in place so for rewards or anything we would always have that when we left the room” (Participant C)*

*“Then we started having that consistent message that was coming from everybody and erm, that’s where it started to work.”  
(Participant H)*

#### Evidence to support **Mechanisms**:

Participants gave examples of occasions in which the LAC’s behaviour was discussed in terms of how she presented with different people and in different environments within the school, or at the after school club.

*“Because she was so different in 3 different places one rule book didn’t really apply, we all reported back different things. Even when she was dealing with the Head, the relationship she had with the Head was very different to the one she had with me” (Participant D)*

Other comments also suggest that participants found the group consultation helpful to ensure everybody was informed about what was happening and everybody knew how to approach the LAC’s challenging behaviours:

*“But I think it helped that we had the meetings so we all know what to put in place and how to be around her and knew you know what was best and what we were all doing” (Participant L)*

Further to developing a consistent approach, participants also commented on their principal aims within the approach, which was supported by the EP and focused on helping the LAC to develop relationships within the school:

*“We wanted her to know that people can be nice and you can trust people, more than anything that’s what we wanted her to learn. It’s that trust, trying to ensure that she trusted us enough to learn to want to do stuff.” (Participant Z)*

Supporting the LAC in building relationships was one of the key strategies and the EP facilitator reported that targets related to learning were secondary to targets that aimed to support the LAC socially within the environment:

*“So the good thing about this school is that they were really good at putting aside the academic targets and saying her targets are to feel safe in school and to develop friendships” (RI:EP)*

Supporting the LAC to feel safe was also consistently highlighted by participants. This was another aim of the approach the group discussed and was linked to building relationships through trust:

*“I would say everybody realised she needed a safe place and even if it was sometimes difficult to be in class 3, we made it so she had a safe place” (Participant D)*

Evidence to support **Outcomes:**

Participants reported their perceptions of outcomes for the LAC in relation to well-being, a sense of belonging, trust and safety. There were also some attributions made in relation to the LAC's progress in terms of suggesting that her behaviour was improving because she was starting to feel emotionally safe and to trust the adults in the school, for example:

*“In the way she felt and her emotional well being around school and she was slowly starting to do things when she was asked so there was progress” (Participant H)*

*“So she was able to get her own little head around how to behave and what was expected of her, the majority of the time because it was consistent she was able to meet that consistency and I think it made her clam and peaceful” (Participant L)*

Participants also suggested that a consistent approach.....

*“And I guess what children need is consistency and if they are getting a consistent message that their is no pressure and she was starting to get that message so yeh that's it” (Participant H)*

and the LAC beginning to trust the adults within the environment....

*“Well I think she began to trust us and to trust adults.....but I think she started to feel part of the school instead of like an outsider” (Participant H)*

...supported the LAC in building relationships and hence a sense of belonging within the school:

*“like her school connectedness, because the change in that was huge and I think that has a massive impact on children” (RI:EP)*

*“It gave her a sense of belonging” (Participant D)*

Participants reported how they perceived the LAC’s desire to be a part of the school:

*“Yeh she was getting there wasn’t she, she really wanted to be part of it she dipped her toes in and it was very small but she wanted to be part of it” (Participant H)*

Furthermore, participants felt that her ‘progress’ was attributable to her developing a sense of connectedness with the environment:

*“So the school became her safe place and because she felt connected she was able to make progress, yeh”. (Participant D)*

#### 4.13 Chapter Summary

Through adopting a Realistic Evaluation approach to this study, insight has been gained into some of the key mechanisms that contribute to successful (or non successful) outcomes for participants attending a weekly consultation group facilitated by an EP. An understanding has also been gained of the key contextual features that promote/support these outcomes.

The results indicate that the two most critical factors were related to the increased confidence of participants and their perceived outcomes for the LAC. The following chapter will now discuss these findings, including the key contexts, mechanisms and outcomes derived from the study and implications for research and practice.

The Final Program Theory is presented in table 4.8 below. CMOCs have been presented within each outcome theme and placed in order according to the category given by participants. Each CMOC has been given a number, in order to support the organisation of the discussion related to each CMOC in chapter 5.

Table 4.8: Final Program Theory

ID number for discussion	Context	Mechanism	Outcome	Outcome Theme	Category
1	The group process encourages participants to be collaborative in their approach to managing a LAC	The group develop an approach that focuses on the child developing feelings of safety and security in the school environment, with specific targets that aim to build relationships	The child develops school connectedness, begins to trust adults and the school environment	Perceptions of Outcomes for the LAC	Critical
2	Meeting regularly as a group ensures a consistent approach is developed	Discussions related to the child's behaviour in various contexts around school lead to adult understanding of the child's needs	The child feels supported, understood and accepted	Perceptions of Outcomes for the LAC	Most Important
3	An external facilitator supports the group using expert skills in consultation	The facilitator promotes joint exploration using a coherent process and asks 'exceptions' questions in a non challenging and supportive way	Participants identify success with the child and hence feel valued and gain confidence in their expertise	Confidence	Critical
4	The consultation group allows time for participants to have in depth discussion about the	The child's behaviours are considered in detail, deeper levels of thinking and learning	Learning about behaviour increases confidence in behaviour management	Confidence	Most Important

	child's behaviour	about behaviour occur			
5	The problem solving process allows professionals to consider behaviour from various perspectives	Participants develop awareness of their ability to influence behaviour	Self efficacy is increased due to understanding of own influence in managing challenging behaviour	Confidence	Important
6	The sessions are regular and supported by an outside professional	The outside professional checks in each week how strategies have been implemented and if they have worked	Participants are more likely to implement strategies if they know they will be asked to discuss within the group	Generation and implementation of strategies	Most Important
7	The problem solving process encourages participants to discuss and scrutinize their own strategies	Strategies are generated by all participants whom are part of the organization and will be involved in the implementation, everyone is clear on their role	Participants feel enabled and empowered to implement strategies, they have ownership over the strategy	Generation and implementation of strategies	Most Important
8	A range of professionals attend the group consultation	Skills and experiences are shared, new and existing strategies are discussed	Learning about new interventions and strategies occurs, strategies are trialed with the child and potentially with other children in the future	Generation and implementation of strategies	Important
9	The problem solving process is reflective in terms of individual participant and organisational	Participants discuss the nature and meaning of behaviour, including the child's background	Causal attributions for the behaviour begin to change and this	Generation and implementation of	Less Important

	factors relating to behaviour	and the systems around the child	influences individual and organisational strategies	strategies	
10	School staff feel a sense of failure due to self attributions for finding solutions	The group have time for reflection on progress and success, successes are also highlighted by the facilitator.	Participants self esteem increases due to recognition of success, a reduction in self blame occurs	Reflection and self awareness	Most Important
11	The group encourages specific time for collaboration and discussion between staff members in a safe and supportive context with an outside professional to facilitate	Participants are treated as equals and able to discuss difficulties with behaviour without judgment	Participants feel supported and are more likely to seek support, this may reduce stress and burnout and increase enthusiasm	Collaboration and sharing	Most Important
12	The group is supported by the senior management team	Regular times, an appropriate space and cover for teaching staff is allocated to support the running of the group	Participants feel valued and see the value in the sessions	Collaboration and sharing	Most Important
13	The group allows time and space for difficulties related to students who are LAC	Specific SEN related to LAC are discussed and professionals share knowledge	Participants gain knowledge and understanding of LAC students	Collaboration and sharing	Important
14	The facilitator uses consultation skills to support and encourage exploration	In depth exploration of individual stories occurs	Understanding and tolerance between participants increases	Collaboration and sharing	Important
15	The group is the optimal size (not too large or small)	All members get a chance to contribute and share problems/roles	Participants feel their contributions are valued and the group is cohesive	Collaboration and sharing	Important



16	Membership is voluntary	Participants choose to attend and therefore are more likely to be motivated to engage	The group faces less resistance and functions with support and positivity	Collaboration and sharing	Less important
17	The LAC is in a temporary care placement	The home circumstances of the child change rapidly due to a break down in care placement	Participants feel frustrated because they do not feel they have had enough impact	Hindering aspects/difficulties encountered	Most Important
18	The group requires participants to give up an hour of time each week	Participants have a range of pressures on their professional time	Participants see less value in having structured time to discuss one child	Hindering aspects/difficulties encountered	Less Important
19	The child is LAC and has difficulties in his/her care placement	Foster carers or social workers do not attend the group	A joined up approach and strategies being used at school are not being	Hindering aspects/difficulties	Less Important

			transferred to the home environment	encountered	
--	--	--	--	-------------	--

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

### 5.1 Introduction to discussion

The current chapter discusses the results presented in chapter 4. The CMOCs within each outcome theme and the specific features of the contexts and mechanisms found within the group consultation intervention, which lead to outcomes are highlighted. Additionally, consideration is given to the perceived importance of each CMOC according to the categorisation process completed with participants.

The main findings will now be discussed in relation to the CMOCs elicited from this study and with reference to the literature reviewed in chapter 2. The research questions will be addressed and limitations of the study will then be considered, including methodological constraints when making conclusions. Finally, implications for future research and professional practice in this area will be considered.

CMOC's have been given an indentifying number in table 4.8 (Final Program Theory), so that each CMOC can be clearly referenced within the discussion.

**Main research question 1:** What are the context, mechanism and outcome configurations (CMOCs) that stem from EP facilitated group consultation with adults supporting a LAC?

### 5.2 Final Program Theory-Outcome Theme; 'Perceptions of Outcomes for the LAC'

Two CMOCs were elicited within this outcome theme as a result of inductive analysis of the data sets in evaluation cycles one and two. Participants in the group categorised CMOC 1 as 'critical' to the success of the intervention and CMOC 2 as 'most important'.

#### *CMOCs 1 and 2*

The essence of the contexts of CMOCs 1 and 2 is the concept of having a group of adults who collaborate and form a consistent approach to

managing the LAC. Within the current research context, this triggered a mechanism that involved the adults developing an approach that participants perceived to be focused on the child feeling safe and supported within the school environment, which enabled the LAC to develop relationships within the school. This was evident when analysing the interview data, an example is given in the quotation below:

*“Definitely, we all felt we were making a difference to her and we knew we had a couple of years to really get her back on track....we wanted her to know that people can be nice and you can trust people, more than anything that’s what we wanted her to learn” (Participant Z)*

Participants also refer to knowledge around attachment theory in order to explain his understanding of the child’s need to trust adults and ‘be a part of the school’. As highlighted by Dann (2011) and discussed in chapter 2, some of the possible attachment characteristics when forming relationships can be very challenging for teachers. Therefore, as suggested by Dann (2011), building teacher appreciation of the underlying causes of such behaviours could be fundamental to the child’s success. Participant H attributes the LAC’s behaviour to attachment difficulties, based on some previous training the school received:

*“She was a classic case of attachment disorder really and I think she started to feel part of the school instead of like an outsider”. (Participant H)*

Research conducted by Jackson and Hojer (2013), as referenced in chapter 2, suggests that school is a highly important contributor to the overall well-being and success of looked after children and that a child who is unhappy or isolated in the school community is unlikely to make good progress in learning or social development. The perceptions of the adults within the current study align with the mechanism that when adults focus on an approach that supports the child in becoming a part of the school community through building relationships, the child is able to trust adults and the learning environment.

Dann (2011) and Edwards (2016) both discuss the importance of understanding the LAC's needs and behaviours that may be related to attachment trauma. The mechanism highlighted in CMOC 2 suggests that developing this level of understanding was an important element of the group consultation process and was achieved through discussions related to the LAC's behaviour within various contexts around the school. For example, participants discussed the importance of understanding the differences in the LAC's behaviour within various contexts in the school and how this led to the adults gaining an increased understanding of the LAC's behaviour. Participants perceived this to have a positive impact on the LAC, because she was then able to understand expectations.

Participants placed the highest importance on their perception that the approach they developed within the group consultation sessions resulted in the child developing a sense of connectedness and trust within the environment. This may have been perceived by participants as critically important to the intervention because perceiving positive outcomes for the child plays a role in increasing teacher efficacy (Edwards, 2016). This theory supports the notion highlighted by Edwards (2016), which suggests that feelings of competency when working with a LAC have an impact on well-being. Perceiving the child to be making progress may therefore be correlated to adult feelings of competency and hence why participants within the current study felt this CMOC was of critical importance.

**Sub question-** How does participating in a consultation group impact on the confidence of adults working with a LAC in school?

The following outcome theme supports theories related to answering the above sub question.

### 5.3 Final Program Theory-Outcome theme: 'Increased Confidence'

Three final CMOCs (CMO 3, 4 and 5) were elicited and refined through the RE process within the outcome theme 'Increased Confidence'. This theme was initially extracted from a review of current literature that examines group consultation and problem solving, the CMOCs within this theme were then refined as a result of data analysis in evaluation cycle one and evaluation cycle two. CMOC 3 was perceived by participants as 'critical' to the success of the intervention and will therefore be discussed first.

#### CMOC 3

The context of CMOC 3 is related to the consultation skills of the EP facilitator, which was highlighted by some participants as being a powerful part of the process, because it allowed time to reflect on success in terms of how much progress the LAC had made and hence increased confidence in the approach being taken:

*"Do you know the biggest impact for me, so the number 1 impact was that it highlighted to me how far we had come....It really highlighted how much the situation had improved each time"* (Participant D)

The use of 'exceptions' questions, which are questions the EP facilitator asked in attempt to draw out when strategies had worked with the LAC or when an interaction had been positive, were evident in the observation of the group 'in action' and during the RI with the facilitating EP.

Participants indicated that CMOC 3 was critical to their perceived success of the intervention. It could therefore be argued that the concept of recognising success, both for the LAC (as discussed in section 5.2) and in their own management skills was powerful for participants in building confidence in their professional ability to manage a LAC. Hayes and Stringer (2016) examine the perceived usefulness of the EP facilitator within group consultation and conclude that participants highly value the involvement of the EP with regards to managing the process and giving expert advice. However, in the

current study, CMOC 3 suggests that the determining mechanism in building confidence is through recognition of success with the LAC and this is powered by the EP's expert questioning skills, rather than giving direct expert advice. Hanko (1995) suggests that this is essential to the problem solving process because the role of a consultant is not to give advice or provide solutions, but to work together with the teachers to jointly explore the concern.

#### *CMOC 4*

Several authors within the current body of research refer to participants perceptions of increased confidence due to the group consultation providing time for 'deep thinking' around a child's behaviour (Brown & Henderson, 2012; Hayes & Stringer, 2016; Grahamslaw & Henson, 2015; Bozic & Carter, 2002). CMOC 4 aligns with this mechanism, suggesting that for participants in the current study, the contextual factor of allowing time within the group consultation process for in depth discussions about the child's behaviour, allows a space for participants to engage in detailed and deeper levels of thinking about specific behaviours, which leads to participants feeling more confident in their behaviour management skills. This was discussed and highlighted by participants within the interviews, suggesting that the time the group spent on working out the reasons were for the child's behaviour, led to adaptive strategies that participants felt confident with.

#### *CMOC 5*

CMOC 5 is indicative that participants in the current study perceived value in having a joint meeting to share perspectives, which led to an increased understanding of ways to manage the child's behaviour. The value in meeting as a group of professionals who have differing perspectives was also highlighted by Nugent et al (2014), who reported participant comments such as:

*‘It was great to listen to other teachers with a similar experience and to hear what worked for them’*

*‘People made suggestions that were really helpful and they came from a totally different perspective than from where I could have come.’*  
(Nugent et al, 2014, pp 266)’.

Participants in the current study also found sharing different perspectives valuable, evident in comments related to being able to gain a measure of how the whole system worked around the child and gaining an understanding of the bigger picture.

The contrast within the current research as compared to previous research is the difference in the context being investigated. The current research explores the perspectives of a group of staff in the same school, who are discussing the same child each week. Therefore, while the context of professionals sharing perspectives on behaviour within group consultation is consistently perceived as supporting adult understanding, the current research highlights the value of this when professionals in the group each have a relationship with the child and can give personal perspectives based on their own interactions with the same child.

#### 5.4 Final Program Theory-Outcome theme: Generation and Implementation of Strategies

Four final CMOCs (CMO 6, 7, 8 and 9) were elicited and refined through the RE process within the outcome theme ‘Generation and Implementation of strategies’. This theme was initially extracted from a review of current literature that examines group consultation and problem solving, two CMOCs (8 and 9) within this theme were then refined as a result of data analysis in evaluation cycle one and evaluation cycle two. CMOCs 6 and 7 were elicited from the data set in evaluation cycle one and were categorised as ‘most important’ by participants in the focus group. CMOC 8 was categorised as ‘important’ and CMOC 9 was categorised ‘less important’. The discussion below



will therefore consider each CMOC in order of perceived importance to participants.

### CMOC 6

CMOC 6 relates to the element of the group consultation process that allows participants to discuss and scrutinise strategies, which enables participants to have ownership of strategies. One element of this mechanism is that participants reported feeling clear about their role within the strategy being implemented, because joint decisions related to planning and implementation of strategies were being made.

Ultimately, evidence within the current research suggests that having ownership over strategies leads to a sense of empowerment in terms of implementation within the context, for example:

*“Erm, they were quite pragmatic, it felt like its what was going to work for her and it had to be done in that way ”. (Participant L)*

As this CMOC was elicited from the data within the current study, it is possible that this CMOC is specifically relevant to a context whereby specific time is given within the problem solving process for participants to generate their own strategies. Cherniss (1997) addresses the issue of teacher support for the implementation of new initiatives in schools and references previous research that suggests in order to increase teacher’s support for an educational intervention, teachers should be involved in the change process. Furthermore, Dougherty (1990) suggests that involving participants through a collaborative process can result in less resistance of implementation of new ideas. Perkins and Zimmerman (1995, pp570-571) define the concept of empowerment as *“a process by which people gain control, which usually involves participation with others to achieve goals”*. CMOC 6 may therefore highlight this psychological mechanism in action, because participants feel they have some control within the process of generating new strategies and are therefore empowered to implement them with the LAC.

### CMOC 7

CMOC 7 was also elicited from the current research data set and categorised as 'most important' by participants to the current context. This highlights the importance of the EP facilitator in supporting the regularity of sessions, which leads to participants being more likely to implement strategies because they are aware that they will be discussed each session. This was discussed by participants in the current study.

CMOC 7 is therefore an honest reflection from participants related to their motivation in terms of implementing strategies, in that they were perhaps externally motivated by the thought of someone 'checking in' and somebody giving affirmation to what has been put in place. This perhaps indicates that the hierarchical nature of the research context remained an influence over participant's perceptions and engagement in the intervention, despite the EP facilitator's attempts to emphasise the co-operative nature of the consultation process. This concept is highlighted by Hanco (1999), who reflects that the collaborative way of working within consultation groups often contrasts with institutions that emphasise judgment in perfection of performance.

### *CMOC 8*

Sharing expertise and learning about new strategies is a common thread within evaluation literature related to group consultation (Bozic & Carter, 2002; Turner, 2014; Nugent et al, 2014). CMOC 8 was extracted from the literature and the current study found evidence to suggest that participants valued the learning gained from sharing expertise with a range of professionals. Hayes and Stringer (2016) also report that participants highlighted a key benefit as being the ability of group members to transfer strategies when working with children who have similar difficulties. Transferring learning about the LAC current was also highlighted by participants within the current research, with specific reference to the new knowledge gained around attachment difficulties and how this could be used in the future, should the school encounter another child with similar presenting needs.

## *CMOC 9*

CMOC 9 was also extracted from the reviewed literature and supported by evidence in the current study. CMOC 9 relates to the deep level of detail in terms of the nature and meaning of the child's behaviour that the consultation group enables participants to engage in, for example one participant discussed the way the LAC interacted with him and was able to give a synopsis of his understanding of **why** the LAC was very defensive in her actions within relationships.

The outcome of such discussions, according to the literature (Grahamslaw & Henson, 2015; Evans, 2005) and evidenced within the current study is that the consultation group enables participants to plan and discuss detailed strategies that are relevant to the child's presentation. Evans (2005) indicates that qualitative data suggests participants valued having detailed discussion about strategies so that they had a clear plan.

## 5.5 Final Program Theory-Outcome theme: Reflection and Self Awareness

### *CMOC 10*

One CMOC was evident within this outcome theme following data analysis in evaluation cycles one and two. CMOC 10 was categorised by participants as 'most important' and highlights the context that school staff often feel a sense of failure when working with challenging children because they feel unable to find solutions. This was reflected upon in the current research by participants, who commented directly on how much difference it made to spend time reflecting on success with the LAC in terms of motivation to continue with strategies.

The consultation group therefore acts as an empowerment tool, through reflection on success and progress, which leads to a reduction

in self-blame. Within the RI, the EP facilitator also referred to this mechanism:

*'I mean even when I started working with them 2 weeks in there was a difference in what she had been like when she first arrived but being able to reflect on a weekly basis, about how far we'd come by comparing to the beginning and even the previous week. I think that's was really helpful to them' (EP)*

This is discussed by Bozic and Carter (2002), who posit that when school staff search for solutions and feel they have failed, a sense of low self-esteem around managing the problem occurs. However, Bozic and Carter (2002) suggests that participating in group consultation and problem solving can shift the view of a lack of success as being attributed to the difficulty of the problem rather than due to internal shortcomings. Bozic and Carter (2002, pp198) then suggest that, *"This is experienced as liberating, allowing teachers to regain the confidence to cope with their problems."*

#### 5.6 Final Program Theory-Outcome theme: Collaboration and Sharing

Six final CMOCs (11- 16) were elicited through the RE process within the outcome theme 'Collaboration and Sharing'. CMOCs configurations 11 and 12 were categorised by participants as being 'most important' and will therefore be discussed first.

##### *CMOC 11*

The concept of collaboration between group members with the support of an outside professional forms the context for CMOC 11. The current research suggests that an environment where participants do not feel judged triggers the mechanism of participants having support to discuss issues, which in turn leads to the outcome that participants feel supported by others with the problem situation. This links to Grahamslaw and Henson (2015) finding that being able to speak without judgement and feeling valued appear to contribute to peer

support and collaboration. This is particularly highlighted by one participant, who commented that:

*“But also I think or hope that people feel free to say what they think and nobody is judged and nobody sits back and criticises”. (Participant H)*

Brown and Henderson (2012) report that this can be a potential challenge for consultation groups, should the mechanism of support not be in place, and staff may feel they have a problem and fear of ridicule and exposure. Jackson (2008) further highlights this as a potential threat to the cohesion of a consultation group, naming the concept as ‘anxiety about exposure’, and suggests that encouragement, containment and modelling are required from the facilitator in the early phases of the group’s life.

#### CMOC 12

CMOC 12 refers to practical factors related to running group consultation in a school and was categorised as being ‘most important’ by participants. In particular, having the support of a senior manager (in the current case study the Head Teacher attended the group).

Having support from a senior manager linked with the mechanism that the group had appropriate time, location and cover for teachers and hence led to the outcome that participants see the value in the sessions. In the current study, Participants directly referred to the need for the support of the Head Teacher. Jackson (2008) discusses how having management structures present within the group might impact on anxieties related to exposure, as discussed above. The role of the Head Teacher or a senior manager is therefore important when arranging practicalities for the functioning of the group, but might potentially be a hindrance to the process (Jackson, 2008). However, within the current context, the presence of the Head Teacher in the group was viewed as positive by participants.

### CMOC 13

Sharing knowledge was a key theme found in the literature and a common occurrence in reported outcomes for participants (Hayes & Stringer, 2016; Evans, 2005; Grahamslaw & Henson, 2015). Within the current research, this knowledge was specific to the LAC, with participants discussing their growing knowledge of attachment needs and how this influenced the way they understood the LAC's behaviour.

While this knowledge was viewed by participants as important to the group consultation, it was not considered critical to its outcomes.

Before attending the consultation group, some of the staff members had received training around attachment from the LA and therefore this possibly influenced their perceptions. This may therefore have meant that knowledge of attachment was more critical to some group members than others and was categorised according to more dominant voices within the focus group. Limitations of the focus group process are discussed in section 5.13.

### CMOC 14

Participants rated CMOC 14 as important and relates to the support of the EP facilitator which encouraged group members to 'tell their story', and led to understanding and tolerance between group members.

Hayes and Stringer (2016, p147) discuss the concept that 'all models of consultation groups' are based on the premise of providing participants with a supportive structure where the problems encountered with a pupil can be discussed with their colleagues. Moreover, Farouk (2004) suggests that working within this structure can lead to positive changes in overall school culture, because staff become more accustomed to supporting each other. The extract below highlights this CMOC in action within the current study:

*"For someone to say, I understand I'm sorry your having to go through that and for one of the solutions, well strategies that came out of that was giving C a bit of a break and that's something that the class teacher came up with that". (EP)*

## CMOC 15

CMOC 15 highlighted the contextual factor of group size. Consideration of the size of a consultation group is discussed by Jackson (2008), who posits that between four and ten members ensures that participants do not feel overly pressured due to a lack of members, or that they do not get chance to air their views due to their being too many members. The group in the current case study contained five staff participants and one EP facilitator, which was highlighted by participants in the current study as enabling all participants to have a voice and share their ideas and opinions. However this is discussed within the context of having a clear process to the group consultation, so that discussion did not become a 'free for all' in terms of people talking over one another. For example:

*"So everyone had a chance to talk through their idea and opinion, but I think it was really good how she (EP facilitator) did it, with a main person (problem holder) because if we had all been throwing ideas it could have been messy". (Participant L)*

## CMOC 16

Jackson (2008) discusses the different potential outcomes of group consultation based on whether membership of the group is voluntary, or not. Jackson (2008) recommends voluntary membership, because resistance can occur when participants feel pressured or if they feel the group is a remedial course of action. Within the current context, members attended the group on a voluntary basis and is reflected in the commitment by participants who refer to their regular attendance as being a result of personal or professional interest and concern for the LAC.

## 5.7 Final Program Theory-Outcome theme: Hindering Aspects and Difficulties Encountered

Three CMOCs were elicited within the "hindering aspects and difficulties encountered theme. CMOC 17 was categorised by

participants as being 'most important', CMOCs 18 and 19 were categorised as 'less important' and therefore CMOC 17 will be discussed first.

### *CMOC 17*

CMOC 17 was elicited in evaluation cycle one and is therefore specific to the current study. It represents participants' frustrations that they 'couldn't do more' for the LAC, due to a change in the LAC's care placement at the end of the summer term, which meant she left the school and went to a different LA. Changes in care placement have been reported as being detrimental in terms of overall outcomes of LAC (Holland, Faulkner & Perez, 2004). The importance of continuity and stability in terms of community, education and health care of LAC have also been given attention by Jackson and Thomas (1999), who observe that government initiatives that have been embedded to monitor stability rates and the funding available to LAs in order to improve performance. Within the current research, as discussed above in section 5.2, one of the most critical outcomes for participants was a LAC developing a sense of connectedness and belonging within the school environment. It may therefore explain why participants felt very frustrated with 'losing' the child, when they could see progress being made.

CMOC 17 appears to reflect a wider issue related to LAC in terms of ensuring stability in a home care placement, but also in educational setting, because the educational setting can be an environment in which a LAC begins to form positive relationships.

### *CMOC 18*

CMOC 18 relates to the issue around the foster carer not attending the group. This was viewed as 'less important' by group members, however the EP and one group member felt that the foster carers attendance may have supported the LAC's care placement, by



supporting the foster carer both emotionally and practically with strategies to manage the LAC's behaviour at home. To the researcher's current knowledge, no research exists that explores the use and/or impact of a group consultation within a school attended by a LAC's carer and school staff. This may therefore be an area of focus for further research.

### *CMOC 19*

CMOC 19 refers to the impact of the time commitment to the group consultation. Within the current research, participants highlighted the time commitment to the group as being a hindering factor. Indeed, one participant observed that it would have been easier if the process were more concise. Having time to attend a consultation group, alongside other pressures on school staff is a recurring theme within previous research (Brown and Henderson, 2012; Bozic and Carter, 2002; Jackson, 2008; Evans, 2005; Guishard, 2000). Jackson (2008) further reflects that when setting up a consultation group in schools, it is essential to find the best possible time that does not put additional pressure on staff, because commitment to attendance is key to the consistency of the group and developing a cohesive and supportive environment (Jackson, 2008).

## 5.8 Summary of findings

The Initial Program Theory, developed from the Realist Synthesis of literature, contained 6 outcome themes (36 CMOC's) related to the use of group consultation in schools. Following evaluation cycle one, 4 new CMOCs were elicited, one of which was placed within a new outcome theme, 'Perceptions of Outcomes for the LAC'. Following evaluation cycle two, a further CMOC was elicited within the new outcome theme 'Perceptions of Outcomes for the LAC' and other CMOCs were collapsed/reduced and refined according to the researcher's analysis of the data set.

The Final Program Theory contained 19 CMOCs across 6 outcome themes. The CMOCs within each outcome theme were categorised by participants as 'critical', 'most important', 'important' or 'less important' in terms relevance to the success of the group consultation. 'Critical' contextual factors were highlighted by participants as;

- The group enabling participants to work collaboratively; and
- The EP facilitator attending the group.

Participants consistently highlighted contextual factors related to either the presence or expert skills of the EP facilitator as being 'most important'. Furthermore, contextual factors that relate to the consultation group enabling dedicated time for discussion, such as discussion of a specific behaviour or scrutiny of a particular strategy were considered most important. Contexts that might be considered 'out of participants control', such as the LAC's care placement and the support of a senior manager were also categorised as being important to the success of the group.

The Final Program Theory also highlights key mechanisms related to the intervention that were perceived by participants as 'critical' to the intervention such as;

- Developing a whole group approach to working with the LAC and;
- The skills of the EP facilitator in guiding exploration of the problem within a wider coherent process.

Additionally, participants categorised the following 'mechanisms within group consultation as being most important';

- The 'deep' exploration of the LAC's behaviour;
- Considering the LAC's behaviour from various perspectives;
- The collaborative generation of strategies;
- The EP facilitator asking for feedback on the effectiveness of strategies;

- Reflection on success;
- A non-judgemental approach/ethos to the group;
- A regular time and space to meet; the sharing of experiences/difficulties;
- The LAC's care placement remaining consistent.

The most critical CMOCs, as categorised by participants were within the outcome themes 'Perceptions of Outcomes for the Child' and 'Confidence'. Participants felt that the most pertinent outcome of the consultation group was their perceived sense that the LAC had developed a sense of belonging and connectedness to the school and to staff, which they attributed to the mechanism that the approach they developed was collaborative as a result of the group consultation process. Participants also felt that their confidence was increased through recognising their successes with the LAC, which was often enabled through the mechanism in which the EP facilitator used 'exceptions' questions.

Other outcomes identified as 'most important' to participants were;

- Ownership and incentive to implement strategies;
- Reduction in self blame in terms of managing the LAC's behaviour;
- Feeling supported by colleagues;
- Feeling valued;
- Feeling less isolated with the problem
- Feeling frustrated with the LAC's home circumstances.

In summary, this research intended to explore the context, mechanisms and outcomes of a group consultation intervention from the perspectives of the facilitator and participants within the group.

The purpose of the current study was to gain detailed insight and understanding of why group consultation may be an effective intervention when supporting a LAC in a school, who does it work for and in what contextual circumstances can it be effective. The study

employed qualitative data collection methods, in attempt to capture the context, mechanism and outcome configurations that were perceived by participants as being the most important to the intervention.

The study's limitations will now be considered, including the methodological limitations inherent within the RE process.

## 5.9 Limitations

The final program theories discussed within this chapter have been constructed through an iterative process using previous research literature, observation of the consultation group 'in action' and gathering the experiences and perceptions of the EP facilitator via a RI and a small sample of group members using interviews and a focus group discussion. As is the case with all research studies, limitations exist that will now be declared and discussed in order to assist the reader to contextualise the findings of the study.

## 5.10 Limitations to the Realistic evaluation (RE)

The high level of complexity within RE of social programmes is identified by Pawson and Tilley (1997) as being unavoidable. Pawson (2006) reflects that this complexity is often influenced by a plethora of contextual factors and as such a social program may never be completely understood. While this may feel frustrating for a researcher, the epistemological grounding of the present study within scientific realism makes the assumption that no methodological design would be thorough enough to gain a holistic account of every influencing feature of the group consultation. However, Pawson and Tilley (1997) argue that RE is more open about the presentation of 'provisional theory' than other epistemologies.

As a result of the complexity inherent in social programs, it has been suggested by Timmins and Miller (2007) that when using an RE framework in complex systems such as schools, significant difficulty can occur in clearly identifying contexts, mechanisms and outcomes and that some overlap can exist within and between each program

theory. Mechanisms may also be variable, depending on the ability of the various participants to identify and understand underlying psychological processes. For example, within the current study, some mechanisms identified across outcome themes could be interpreted as being, in essence, the same concept. This is illustrated within CMOC 2 where it is postulated that an important mechanism to the success of group consultation was the detail in which the child's behaviour is discussed within the process, which appears very similar to the mechanism given in CMOC 4, which relates to the level of 'deep thinking' around the child's behaviour. While these mechanisms are clearly similar, clear differing outcomes for each were extracted from the data.

Furthermore, while this may be a limitation within the RE methodology, from the perspective of the researcher, it is hoped that by presenting the final program theory as whole to the consumers of the research (the LA), they will gain an overall picture/holistic view of what worked, for whom and in what situation in respect of a group consultation with staff supporting a LAC. The holistic and detailed view can therefore be used to inform application of the approach and this intermittent ambiguity will not result in having a detrimental effect on the final program theories for EP practitioners.

The context specific nature of the current research and the complexities that are inherent within a socially constructed intervention such as group consultation are barriers to the results of the current study being directly transferable to another setting. However, the aim of this research was to gain a deep understanding and insight of the current context, with a view to informing future research and practise into group consultation as an intervention to support school staff when working with LAC.

#### 5.11 Researcher Reflexivity

It is acknowledged that subjective judgements were used by the researcher when identifying contexts mechanisms and outcomes from

the literature and refining this using data from the RE. Pawson and Tilley (1997) recognise that the use of abstraction and formulation is inherently subjective. In an attempt to show an awareness of influence of personal subjectivity, the researcher engaged in personal reflexivity. Identifying the researcher's preconceptions and knowledge base related to the phenomenon under investigation is the first step in reflexivity (Malterud, 2001). While the researcher had some knowledge of the process of the group consultation within the current case study; they had no previous 'real world' experience of group consultation being conducted and therefore the researcher had an open perspective on 'how the group should be'. The researcher's engagement with the group consultation literature may however have heightened their selective attention to particular features of the intervention. In understanding this as a potential bias, this influenced the researcher's decision to using audio recording to create a narrative record of the group, which led to a transcript which was not pre-coded for any expected outcomes. The aim of this approach being to gather unanalysed and uninterpreted initial data within which CMOCs could be identified, supported and refined within the developing program theories.

Furthermore, the researcher attempted at all stages to attend systematically and consistently to the approach used in terms of data analysis, while remaining open to new knowledge emerging from the data set, despite its breadth and complexity.

Finally, a strength of the RE process used in this research was the iterative refinement process of theories using participant knowledge and feedback that helped to further reduce the potential for researcher subjectivity. As Pawson and Tilley (1997) describe, the 'teacher-learner function' invites participants to accept, reject and refine theories throughout the RE process, which in turn influences the construction of the final program theory. Bryman (2012) terms this 'respondent validation' (p391) and posits that use of participant feedback addresses potential threats to validity and increases the credibility of the data.

### 5.12 Case study design

The current study triangulated evidence in an attempt to reduce threats to internal validity, as recommended by Yin (2009). However, the sample of participants (N=6) in the study restricts any generalisability of theories developed in this case study to other settings. However, the purpose of the current RE is to generate theories about the group consultation as an intervention for LAC in a particular context, to support the application of the intervention within that LA setting. Furthermore, while the sample was small, the study drew on a variety of different perspectives in attempt to enhance of the potential validity of the findings to other similar groups and settings.

### 5.13 Data collection

Pawson and Tilley (1997) propose that any data gathering methods are acceptable when conducting a RE, provided they are able to provide data that supports the process of hypothesis refinement. While the data gathering tools were selected for purpose of the current study, they were not without limitations.

#### *Observation*

The observation was audio recorded and the data was transcribed for analysis. The researcher selected this method to reduce the impact of 'selective memory', a phenomenon posited by Robson (2002), who suggests that a researcher's memory of an account is reduced over time and threatens accuracy. It is recognised, however, that a different approach using a pre-coded format to deductively identify CMOCs may have produced different interpretations and outcomes.

#### *Interviews*

The current research utilised two types of interview, the individual RI with the EP facilitator and semi structured interviews with participants. A focus group was also conducted to present CMOCs to participants and category the CMOCs. Robson (2011) suggests that any interview

has the potential for misinterpretation because of the relationship and interpersonal dynamics between the researcher and participant. In attempts to avoid misinterpretations, the researcher audio recorded all interviews and participants were given the opportunity to discuss and refine theories. The Final Program Theory was presented electronically to participants two weeks before the focus group, to give them time for individual reflection on the theories. Furthermore, to avoid the potential power imbalance between researcher and participant, all participants were informed at the beginning of their interviews (including focus group) that the researcher was interested in how the group consultation works, rather than whether it was or was not effective and that the researcher's interest was in both the supporting features and limitations. Southwell (2014) suggests that in doing this, participants may feel able to answer more honestly and feel less defensive.

The focus group process asked participants to discuss each CMOC in terms of importance and relevance to their context and experience of group consultation and to collectively categorise each CMOC as to its perceived importance. This method was chosen in order to enable some rich discussion about the process and potentially draw out some commonality between participants in terms of their experience of the group consultation. There is, however, a risk within focus group research that some individuals are more dominant within the discussion (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011), however as this occurred at the end of the groups life cycle, the effect of this was minimal because the group were practiced in listening to each other and individual members were confident to voice opinions, because they had done so over the course of the intervention.

#### 5.14 Data analysis

The researcher used thematic analysis to inductively and deductively examine the data set. This process was specifically chosen for its flexibility in allowing both deductive and inductive analysis. The steps recorded in chapter 3 (section 3.29) were followed carefully and



recorded thoroughly, in order to support replicability of the analysis. It is acknowledged that this process would have been improved by inter-rater reliability checks, however, colleagues who are not familiar with the RE methodology and research context may have compromised the accuracy of this process (Fereday, 2006). Subjectivity involved in being a single researcher mapping data into context, mechanism and outcome codes and themes within the analysis is also a limitation, because of potential for interpretational error. In order to reduce the impact of this, the analytic process incorporated checking coding within transcripts (see appendix 3.7) and cross-referencing the data set within each outcome theme to highlight its relevance to individual contexts, mechanisms and outcomes (See appendix 3.7 for an example). As a result of this process, program theories were refined, combined and rejected. Furthermore, during the process the researcher referred back to Pawson and Tilley's (1997) advice about what constitutes a context, mechanism and outcome and therefore the researcher was able to cross reference the content of contexts, mechanisms and outcomes with the descriptions given in section 3.11-3.13.

#### 5.15 Implications of the research for EP practice

Hayes and Stringer (2016) report that there is a relatively long history of the use of consultation in schools by EPs. Moreover, group consultation has been described by Zins and Erchul (1995) as an efficient way of conducting school consultation. The current study provides a detailed examination of how, and why, group consultation may be an effective way of working as an EP with staff in schools who are supporting a LAC. In particular, this study highlights that EPs working with LAC may need to consider how they can support school staff in developing a collaborative and consistent approach to working with a LAC.

Furthermore, participants highlighted the EP's 'expert' skills in consultation as being critical to the process in terms of how questions were framed and how EPs supported participant's confidence in their

own expertise. When implementing consultation groups within school settings, EP facilitators may therefore need to give consideration to their style of facilitation, in terms of facilitating joint exploration, rather than being positioned in role of the expert who gives solutions.

Using group consultation to support understanding of the LAC's behaviours, in relation to psychological theories such as attachment theory may also be an effective way of EP's supporting schools.

Although in doing this, it is important for EPs to show a critical appreciation of the theory, and explain evidence-base and limitations. When EP's deliver training to schools on such issues, it is possible that the link between theory and practice is disjointed, whereas ongoing support with unpicking real and relevant examples of behaviours was highlighted in the current study as being particularly helpful.

The role of the EP facilitator in terms of ensuring the group met each week and strategies were being implemented was also highlighted in the current research as being most important. Previous authors (Bozic and Carter, 2002) have directly asked participants if they would feel confident in maintaining a consultation group without the EP facilitator. The current research suggests that the EP's attendance to the group and facilitation of the process was of high importance in terms of supporting the process, adding to knowledge and using consultation skills to highlight success. Therefore EP's considering group consultation as an approach to support a LAC will need to consider time commitments.

The program theories developed as a result of this study will be shared with the EP team that are currently conducting specialist work with LAC. It is intended, that the theories will also be used to inform the future use and development of group consultation in the LA as an intervention to support school staff who are working with a LAC.

### 5.16 Future research

This research has provided a set of program theories relevant to the research context. However the theories could provide a basis for further testing and development using Realistic Evaluations of group consultation as an intervention to support a LAC in other settings.

Additionally, this research did not explore the outcomes for the child. While the participants in the current study expressed perceptions of the outcomes of the LAC concerned and attributed this to the group consultation, further research is needed to examine whether the use of group consultation does have an impact on the LAC. For example, an examination of school connectedness of LAC and what strategies implemented by the school staff support this. Long-term outcomes for LAC who develop positive and successful relationships in school may also be an area of interest for policy makers.

Finally, the consultation group within the current case study did not include the LAC's Carer. Future evaluations of the impact of group consultation that includes school staff AND the LAC's carer would therefore be beneficial to see if it highlights differences in CMOCs and program theories as a result of the different composition and dynamic involved.

### 5.17 Final conclusions

The aim of the current study was to evaluate an EP led consultation group that utilised a problem solving approach with school staff who were supporting a LAC. The RE has contributed an increased understanding of how and why the intervention worked to support staff within the school context. The RE therefore supports the development of informed practice and hopes to provide significant insight that will inform future EP service delivery within the LA. As this is a new way of working within the current LA, the research has provided the beginnings of an evidence base in terms of how group consultation works as a method of service delivery specifically within the VS project.

This includes consideration of hindering factors, as highlighted within the Final Program Theory.

This research suggests that the critical elements of EP led group consultation with school staff supporting a LAC are;

1: The participants' perceptions of the success of their collaborative approach to working with the LAC in developing the child's school connectedness and belonging.

2: The expert consultation skills of the facilitator that support exploration of the child's needs in a supportive way that enables participants to gain confidence in their own expertise.

Although these findings are specific to the current context, it is hoped that its findings will be considered by researchers and practitioners when considering further research into, or use of, group consultation to support school staff working with a LAC.

## REFERENCES

Archer, M., Bhaskar, R., Collier, A., and Lawson, T. A. Norrie, A (eds)(1998), *Critical realism: essential readings*.

Astbury, B., and Leeuw, F. L. (2010). Unpacking black boxes: mechanisms and theory building in evaluation. *American journal of evaluation*, 31(3), 363-381.

Auerbach, C., and Silverstein, L. B. (2003). *Qualitative data: An introduction to coding and analysis*. NYU press.

Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. Macmillan.

Banyard, P., and Grayson, A. (2000). Revised and Expanded. *Introducing Psychological Research*, 2.

Bennett, S., and Monsen, J. J. (2011). A critical appraisal of four approaches which support teachers' problem-solving within educational settings. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 27(1), 19-35.

Berger, P. L., and Luckmann, T. (1966). *The social construction of reality*. New York.

Bhaskar, R. (1989). *Reclaiming Reality*. London: Verso.

Bhaskar, R. (2002). *Meta-Reality: The Philosophy of Meta-Reality Volume 1: Creativity, Love and Freedom* (Vol. 1). Sage.

Birch, S., Frederickson, N., and Miller, A. (2015). What do educational psychologists do?. *Educational Psychology*, 1.

Bombèr, L. M. (2007). *Inside I'm hurting: practical strategies for supporting children with attachment difficulties in schools*. Worth.

Boyle, C., Topping, K., Jindal-Snape, D., and Norwich, B. (2011). The importance of peer-support for teaching staff when including children with special educational needs. *School Psychology International*, 33(2), 167-184.

Bozic, N., and Carter, A. (2002). Consultation groups: Participants' views. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 18(3), 189-201.

Bozic, N., and Crossland, R. (2012). Using Realistic Evaluation to evaluate a local authority common induction programme.

Braun, V., and Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.

Brouwers, A., and Tomic, W. (1999). Teacher burnout, perceived self-efficacy in classroom management, and student disruptive behaviour in secondary education. *Curriculum and Teaching*, 14(2), 7-26.

Bushe, G.R. (2013) The appreciative inquiry model. In E.H. Kessler, (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Management Theory*, (Volume 1, pp. 41-44), Sage Publications, 2013.

Burnham, J. B. (1986). *Family therapy: First steps towards a systemic approach*. Routledge.

Brown, E., and Henderson, L. (2012). Promoting staff support in schools: Solution Circles. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 28(2), 177-186.

Bryman, A. (2012). Sampling in qualitative research. *Social research methods*, 4, 415-429.

Campbell, F. (1998). Progress or procrastination? The education of young people who are looked after. *Children and Society*, 12(1), 3-11.

Caplan, G. (1970). *The theory and practice of mental health consultation*. Basic Books.

Cherniss, C. (1997). Teacher empowerment, consultation, and the creation of new programs in schools. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 8(2), 135-152.

Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Morrison, K. (2003). *Research Methods in Education*. (5<sup>th</sup> Edition). London: Routledge Falmer.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., and Morrison, K. (2007). *Research methods in education*. (6<sup>th</sup> Edition). London: Routledge Falmer

Cohen, L., Manion, L., and Morrison, K. (2011). Surveys, longitudinal, cross-sectional and trend studies. *Research Methods in Education*, 7<sup>th</sup> edition. Abingdon: Routledge, 261-4.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., and Morrison, K. (2013). *Research methods in education*. Routledge.

Concato, J., Shah, N., and Horwitz, R. I. (2000). Randomized, controlled trials, observational studies, and the hierarchy of research designs. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 342(25), 1887-1892.

Conoley, JC, and Conoley, CW (1982). *School consultation: A guide to practice and training*. New York: Pergamon, 244 pp., \$12.95. *Psychology in the Schools*, 23(1), 116-118.

Creese, A., Norwich, B., and Daniels, H. (1998). The prevalence and usefulness of collaborative teacher groups for SEN: results of a national survey. *Support for Learning*, 13(3), 109-114.

Dann, R. (2011). Look out! “Looked after”! Look here! Supporting “looked after” and adopted children in the primary classroom. *Education 3-13*, 39(5), 455–465.

Davies, O. (2011) *Evidence Based Practice in Nurture Groups: Using a Realistic Evaluation framework to explore factors affecting practice and*

*suggest future training directions* [online] Available from [http://etheses.bham.ac.uk/3219/6/Davies\\_11\\_AppedChildPsyD.pdf](http://etheses.bham.ac.uk/3219/6/Davies_11_AppedChildPsyD.pdf)

Dent, R. J., and Cameron, R. S. (2003). Developing resilience in children who are in public care: The educational psychology perspective. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 19(1), 3-19.

Denzin, N. K., and Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). *Handbook of qualitative research*. Sage publications, inc.

Department for Education (DfE) (2015). Statistical first release: Outcomes for children looked after by local authorities in England, as at 31 March 2015. *London: DfE*

Diefenbach, T. (2009). Are case studies more than sophisticated storytelling?: Methodological problems of qualitative empirical research mainly based on semi-structured interviews. *Quality and Quantity*, 43(6), 875.

Dougherty Jr, E. M. (1990). Human reliability analysis—where shouldst thou turn?.

Dunsmuir, S., Brown, E., Iyadurai, S., and Monsen, J. (2009). Evidence-based practice and evaluation: from insight to impact. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 25(1), 53-70.

Edwards, L. N. (2016). Looking after the teachers: Exploring the emotional labour experienced by teachers of looked after children. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 32(1), 54–72.

Evans\*, S. (2005). The development of a group consultation approach to service delivery. *Educational psychology in practice*, 21(2), 131-146.

Farouk, S. (2004). Group work in schools: A process consultation approach. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 20(3), 207–220.

Farrell, P., Woods, K., Lewis, S., Rooney, S., Squires, G., and O'Connor, M. (2006). *A Review of the Functions and Contribution of Educational Psychologists in England and Wales in Light of" Every*



*Child Matters: Change for Children*". London: Department for Education and Skills.

Fereday, J., and Muir-Cochrane, E. (2006). Demonstrating rigor using thematic analysis: A hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding and theme development. *International journal of qualitative methods*, 5(1), 80-92.

Flick, U. (2006) *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*. London: Sage Publications.

Forrest, M., and Pearpoint, J. (1996). Solution circle: Getting unstuck a creative problem solving tool. *Retrieved November, 20, 2008*.

Frederickson, N., Dunsmuir, S., Lang, J., and Monsen, J. J. (2004). Mainstream-special school inclusion partnerships: pupil, parent and teacher perspectives. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 8(1), 37-57.

Gill, D., and Monsen, J. (1986). *The staff sharing scheme*. Auckland, NZ: Glen Eden Psychological Service, Department of Education.

Goddard (2000). The education of looked after children. *Child Family Social Work*, 5(1), 79–86.

Goodman, L. A., and Magidson, J. (1978). *Analyzing qualitative/categorical data*. Abt Books.

Gough, D. (2007). Weight of evidence: a framework for the appraisal of the quality and relevance of evidence. *Research papers in education*, 22(2), 213-228.

Guishard, J. (2000). Promoting inclusion in further education colleges: Staff consultation groups. *Educational psychology in Practice*, 16(2), 205-212.

Grahamslaw, L., and Henson, L. H. (2015). Solving problems through circles. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 31(2), 111-126.

Hanko, G. (1985). After Elton—How to ‘Manage’ Disruption?. *British Journal of Special Education*, 16(4), 140-143.

Hanko, G. (1990). *Special needs in ordinary classrooms: supporting teachers*. Simon and Schuster Education.

Hanko, G. (1995). *Special needs in ordinary classrooms: From staff support to staff development* (3rd ed.). London: David Fulton Publishers.

Hanko, G. (1999). *Increasing competence through collaborative problem-solving*. London: David Fulton Publishers.

Harker, R. M., Dobel-Ober, D., Berridge, D., and Sinclair, R. (2004). More than the sum of its parts? Inter-professional working in the education of looked after children. *Children and Society*, 18(3), 179–193.

Hargreaves, D. (1978). Deviance: the interactionist approach. *Reconstructing educational psychology*. London: Croom Helm.

Hayes, M., and Stringer, P. (2016). Introducing Farouk’s process consultation group approach in Irish primary schools. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 32(2), 145-162.

Hill, C., and Thompson, M. (2003). Mental and physical health Co-Morbidity in looked after children. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 8(3), 315–321.

Holland, S., Faulkner, A., Connell, D., Perez-del-Aguila, R. (2004). *Overview and survey of effectiveness of interventions to promote stability and continuity of care for looked after children*. School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University.

Howitt, D., and Cramer, D. (2008). *Introduction to research methods in psychology*. Pearson Education.

Hsu, S. (2005). Help-seeking behaviour of student teachers. *Educational Research*, 47(3), 307-318.

Jackson, E. (2008). The development of work discussion groups in educational settings. *Journal of Child Psychotherapy*, 34(1), 62-82.

Jackson, S., and Höjer, I. (2013). Prioritising education for children looked after away from home. *European Journal of Social Work*, 16(1), 1–5.

Jackson, S., and Martin, P. Y. (1998). Surviving the care system: Education and resilience. *Journal of Adolescence*, 21(5), 569–583.

Jackson, S., and Thomas, N. (1999). *On the Move Again?: What Works in Creating Stability for Looked After Children*. Barking: Barnardo's.

Jones, D., Monsen, J., and Franey, J. (2013). Using the Staff Sharing Scheme to support school staff in managing challenging behaviour more effectively. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 29(3), 258-277.

Kazvin, A.E. (2005). Creating a competitive index of the vulnerability to anxiety and depression in a community-based sample of siblings. *Twin Research* 3, 313-322.

Kelly, G. (1955). Personal construct psychology.

Kelly, B., Woolfson, L. and Boyle, J. (2008). *Frameworks for Practice in Educational Psychology: a Textbook for Trainees and Practitioners*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Kuhn, T. S. (1962). *The structure of scientific revolutions* Chicago University Press.

Larney, R. (2003). School-based consultation in the United Kingdom: Principles, practice and effectiveness. *School Psychology International*, 24(1), 5-19.

Liabo, K., Gray, K., and Mulcahy, D. (2013). A systematic review of interventions to support looked-after children in school. *Child and Family Social Work*, 18(3), 341–353.

Macready, T. (1997). Counselling and consultation from a social constructionist perspective. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 13(2), 130-134.

Malterud, K. (2001). Qualitative research: standards, challenges, and guidelines. *The lancet*, 358(9280), 483-488.

Martin, P. Y., and Jackson, S. (2002). Educational success for children in public care: advice from a group of high achievers. *Child and family social work*, 7(2), 121-130.

Martens, M. P. (2005). The use of structural equation modeling in counseling psychology research. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 33(3), 269-298.

McAlister, J. E. (2012). *A realistic evaluation of transition programmes in two secondary schools in a small multi-cultural city in the Midlands: how are the needs of vulnerable young people met during the transition from primary to secondary school?* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Birmingham).

McEvoy, P., and Richards, D. (2006). A critical realist rationale for using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. *Journal of research in nursing*, 11(1), 66-78.

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., Huberman, M. A., and Huberman, M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. sage.

Miller, A. (2003). *Teachers, parents and classroom behaviour: A psychosocial approach*. McGraw-Hill Education (UK).

Miller, A. (1996). Teachers' attributions of causality, control and responsibility in respect of difficult pupil behaviour and its successful management. *Educational Psychology*, 15(4), 457-471.

Mölder, B. (2010). *Mind Ascribed: An elaboration and defence of interpretivism* (Vol. 80). John Benjamins Publishing.

Morton, P. (2006). Using critical realism to explain strategic information systems planning. *JITTA: Journal of Information Technology Theory and Application*, 8(1), 1.

Mouly, G. J. (1978). *Educational Research; The Art and Science. QI Investigation*. Boston, Massachusetts.

Newton, C. (1995). Circles of Adults: Reflecting and problem solving around emotional needs and behaviour. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 11(2), 8-14.

Noor, K. B. M. (2008). Case study: A strategic research methodology. *American journal of applied sciences*, 5(11), 1602-1604.

Norwich, B., and Daniels, H. (1997). Teacher support teams for special educational needs in primary schools: evaluating a teacher-focused support scheme. *Educational Studies*, 23(1), 5-24.

Nugent, M., Jones, V., McElroy, D., Peelo, M., Thornton, T., and Tierney, T. (2014). Consulting with groups of teachers. Evaluation of a pilot project in Ireland. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 30(3), 255-271.

O'Donnell, C. L. (2008). Defining, conceptualizing, and measuring fidelity of implementation and its relationship to outcomes in K-12 curriculum intervention research. *Review of Educational Research*, 78(1), 33-84.

Parker, M. J., and Teasdale, K. (2016). The genetic assessment of looked after children: Common reasons for referral and recent advances. *Archives of Disease in Childhood*, 101(6), 581–584.

Pawson, R., and Tilley, N. (1997). Realist evaluation. *Changes*.

Pawson, R. (2006). *Evidence-based policy: a realist perspective*. Sage.

Pawson, R. (2013). *The science of evaluation: a realist manifesto*. Sage.

Perkins, D. D., and Zimmerman, M. A. (1995). Empowerment theory, research, and application. *American journal of community psychology*, 23(5), 569-579.

Reason, P., and Bradbury, H. (Eds.). (2001). *Handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice*. Sage.

Robson, C. (2002). *The analysis of qualitative data*. Blackwell.

Robson, C. (2011). *Real world research: A resource for users of social research methods in applied settings* 3rd edition.

Ryan, F., Smith, R, (2009). Interviewing in qualitative research: The one-to-one interview. *International Journal of Therapy and Rehabilitation*, 16(6), 309-314.

Sayer, A. (2000). *Realism and Social Science*. London: Sage.

Schein, E. H. (1988). *Process Consultation*. Vol. 1 (Rev. Ed.). Reading, Ma.

Schein, E. H. (1997). *Process consultation revisited: Building the helping relationship*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Educational Publishers.

Scott, D., and Usher, R. (Eds.). (1996). *Understanding educational research*. Psychology Press.

Sheridan, S. M., Welch, M., and Orme, S. F. (1996). Is consultation effective? A review of outcome research. *Remedial and Special Education*, 17(6), 341-354.

Stringer, P., Stow, L., Hibbert, K., Powell, J., and Louw, E. (1992). Establishing staff consultation groups in schools. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 8(2), 87-97.

Soni, A. (2010). *Educational psychology work in children's centres: a realistic evaluation of group supervision with family support workers* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Birmingham).

Southwell, L. (2014). *Using Realistic Evaluation to evaluate forest schools with young people aged 14-16 with SEN* (Doctoral thesis, University of Nottingham)

Taylor, P. C., and Medina, M. N. D. (2013). Educational research paradigms: From positivism to multiparadigmatic. *The Journal of Meaning-Centered Education*, 1(2), 1-13.

Thornbery, E. (2012) Using Realistic Evaluation principles to evaluate an intervention in Children's Centres. *Division of Educational and Child Psychology: Debate*. (142) p. 31 – 33.

Timmins, P., and Miller, C. (2007). Making evaluations realistic: the challenge of complexity. *Support for Learning*, 22(1), 9-16.

Turner, J. (2014). Evaluating the outcomes of the "Circles of Adults" intervention on adults supporting Looked After Children at risk of exclusion. (*Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Nottingham*).

Turner, S., Robbins, H., and Doran, C. (1996). Developing a model of consultancy practice. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 12(2), 86-93.

Turner, S., Norman, E., and Stillson, K. (1996). Promoting resilience strategies: A modified consultation model. *Children and Schools*, 18(3), 158-168.

Wagner, P. (2000). Consultation: Developing a comprehensive approach to service delivery. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 16(1), 9-18.

Wagner, P. (2008). Consultation as a framework for practice. *Frameworks for practice in educational psychology: A textbook for trainees and practitioners*.

Watkins, C. (2000). Introduction to the articles on consultation. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 16(1), 5-8.

Wilson, D., and Newton, C. (2006). Circles of Adults.

Yin, R. K. (2009). Case Study Research: Design and Methods. Essential guide to qualitative methods in organizational research (Vol. 5). In *The Information Systems Research Challenge (Harvard Business School Research Colloquium)*. London: Sage.

Yin, R. K. (2013). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Sage publications.

Zins, J. E. and Erchul, W.P. (1995). Has consultation achieved its primary prevention potential?. *Journal of Primary Prevention*, 15(3), 285-301.

Zins, J. E., and Erchul, W. P. (2002). Best practices in school consultation.



## Appendix 2.1: List of removed studies

Study	Reason for exclusion
Griffin et al (2006) <b>A Qualitative Study of Student Teachers' Experiences with Collaborative Problem Solving</b>	Not group problem solving-based on 1:1 relationships with student teachers
Golding (2004) <b>Providing specialist support to foster carers (a consultation model)</b>	1:1 consultation with clinical psych and foster carers
Farouk (2004) <b>Group work in schools: a process consultation approach</b>	No evaluation within study-descriptive only and repeated in Evans study
Dawson (2013) (doctoral thesis) <b>An interpretative analysis of key adults' and children's experiences of school and their relationship before and after a Circle of Adults intervention</b>	Focus on exploration of relationships between adult and child rather than reflection on intervention
Newton et al (2012) <b>A randomized wait-list controlled analysis of the implementation integrity of team-initiated problem solving processes</b>	Evaluation of training in team problem solving rather than the process itself
Leadbetter (2006) <b>Investigating and Conceptualising the Notion of Consultation to Facilitate Multi-agency Work</b>	No evaluation and non relevant subject matter
Bennet and Monsen (2011) <b>A critical appraisal of four approaches which support teachers' problem-solving within educational settings</b>	Critical appraisal of various approaches (not evaluation or research study)
Algozzine et al (2016) <b>Measuring the Process and Outcomes of Team Problem Solving</b>	Outcome focus only regarding decision making and implementation of strategies on child
Snell and Janney (2000) <b>Teachers' Problem-Solving About Children with Moderate and Severe Disabilities in Elementary Classrooms</b>	Not evaluating group consultation just ad hoc problem solving in classrooms and through conversations
Bahr (2006) <b>Creative Problem Solving for General Education Intervention Teams</b>	Evaluation of a training program not the consultation process
Norwich and Daniels (1997) <b>Teacher Support Teams for Special Educational Needs in Primary Schools: evaluating a teacher-focused support scheme</b>	Evaluation of implementation process but not outcomes of group consultation as an intervention
Roger Christie , Clare Hetherington and Jenny Parkes (2000) <b>Consultation: A team approach to keeping it alive</b>	1:1 consultation approaches reviewed rather than group consultation

<p>Jeff W. Matthews and RajVinder Singh 2015</p> <p><b>Positioning in groups: a new development in</b></p>	<p>Description of an approach rather than evaluation study</p>

<b>systemic consultation</b>	
Katrina M. Burns and Halit M. Hulusi <b>Bridging the gap between a learning support centre and school: A solution-focused group approach</b>	Description of an approach rather than evaluation study

## Appendix 2.2: A table to compare evaluation studies of problem solving approaches to group consultation

Title & Author/date	Focus of Research	Participant s/sample	Methodology/d esign	Measures	Main Outcomes
Introducing Farouk's process consultation approach in Irish Primary Schools- Hayes & Stringer 2016	Farouk's (2004) process consultation approach:	Teaching and support staff from 3 Irish primary schools  26 participants in total across 3 schools	Mixed methods	Thematic analysis of semi structured interviews with participants  Pre/post questionnaires (developed by the researcher)  Session reflections with numerical ratings (1-10) at the end of each session	Outcomes for participants: Time for discussion, information sharing and learning, enhancement of behaviour management skills through sharing strategies  Low return rate on questionnaires resulted in no reporting of quant data  Average ratings by school: School 1: 8.89 School 2: 8.96 School 3: 7.38
Consultation Groups: Participants Views Bozic & Carter 2002	Hanko's (1999) approach to group consultation	4 consultation groups from 4 different schools including teachers, SENCo's, TA's and specialist teachers (31 participants overall- 25 respondents to questionnaires)	Mixed methods Questionnaire design (6 closed and 1 open question)	6 closed questions were analysed using descriptive statistics to present main effects across 4 schools  Open question was analysed qualitatively for recurring themes	84% Agreed or strongly agreed the consultation was a good use of time  92% Agreed or strongly agreed it made them think more deeply about individual children  80% agreed or strongly agreed it gave support with new strategies  64% agreed or strongly agreed it led to trying new strategies 56% agreed or strongly agreed it increased confidence in working with SEN  52% Reported a reduction in stress  Qualitative analysis of open question highlighted 2 main themes:  Reduced feelings of isolation and reassurance that other staff faced similar problems
The	Problem	SENCo's	Mixed	Session evaluation questionnaires at the	3 questions (scale 1-10)

development of a group consultation approach to service delivery Evans (2005)	solving consultation influenced by the work of Hanko (1999)	and teachers/TA's from 16 schools. 7 groups received 3 sessions of consultation over 1 academic year	methods case study	end of each session-descriptive statistics presented (Mean scores across 7 groups)  Commentary of qualitative examples of outcome evidence extracted from participant observation (the EP leading the group)	Q1 (To what extent were you able to draw up a plan of action) Mean: 9.2  Q2 (to what extent do you feel you benefitted from the skills and experience of colleagues) Mean: 9.2  Q3 (to what extent do you feel you were able to contribute your own skills and experience) Mean: 7.9
Consulting with groups of teachers: Evaluation of a pilot project in Ireland Nugent et al (2014)  )	Problem solving consultation	12 groups in year 1, 10 in year 2, 205 total participants (teachers/SENCo's/TA's)	Mixed Methods	Session evaluation questionnaires at the end of each session-descriptive statistics presented (Mean scores for each question across participants)  Content analysis evaluation of 2 open ended questions on session evaluation questionnaires to look for useful aspects of consultation and aspects that could be improved	3 questions (scale 1-10)  Q1 (To what extent were you able to draw up a plan of action) Mean: 8.4  Q2 (to what extent do you feel you benefitted from the skills and experience of colleagues) Mean: 9.2  Q3 (to what extent do you feel you were able to contribute your own skills and experience) Mean: 8.6  Positive comments were placed under the following headings: Those relating to the value of the process (which included comments on brainstorming, listening, sharing ideas and group discussion)  Those relating to the value of others input  A positive environment  Sharing similar experiences  Value of psychologists input  Liking the structure of the process Comments referring to possibilities for improvement are listed below:  Increased attendance

					<p>More sharing of resources</p> <p>More time</p> <p>Sticking to time</p> <p>More in depth work on some cases needed</p> <p>Follow up to discuss how strategies have worked</p> <p>Psychologists following up through class observations</p>
Promoting inclusion in further education colleges: Staff consultation groups Guishard (2000)	Problem solving consultation groups underpinned by theory from Schein (1969) and Hanks (1999)	College staff at 2 different sites were offered 3 x 1.5 hour sessions. 16 total participants	Pre and post measure quantitative case study design	2 question pre and post scale 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree)	75 % of respondents felt they gained understanding of needs and 63% felt more confident about setting goals and targets for students.
Solving Problems through Circles Grahamslaw and Henson (2015)	Circle of Adults and Solution circle interventions	62 participants took part in the circle of adults intervention and 31 in the Solution Circle	Thematic analysis of questionnaire data	The authors created a semi-structured questionnaire consisting of five open questions to elicit participants' views, in the form of qualitative data, on the intervention process that they had taken part in	Participants who had taken part in a Solution Circle described the applicability of solutions to other aspects of their work and a greater amount of strategies and solutions generated as a result of the group process. Participants who had been involved in a Circle of Adults session described having a greater understanding of a problem situation and empathy towards the focus pupil and the role of the educational psychologists in facilitating the process.

Promoting staff support in schools: Solution Circles Brown and Henderson (2012)	Solution circles intervention	NQT teachers in 1 primary and 1 secondary school setting, number of participants not specified	Mixed methods case study design	SWOT analysis, questionnaire, 'round of words', structured discussion with the head teacher	<p>'round of words' comments:</p> <p>"better than expected"</p> <p>"good having one shared focus and being positive"</p> <p>"good way of formalising dialogue and really considering solutions".</p> <p>Discussion with the head teacher: staff enthusiasm, variety of strategies discussed, time for reflection</p> <p>Teachers were asked to rate how useful they found the sessions on a scale (1 = not useful at all, 5 = very useful). The sessions were rated positively (mean = 3.9). Teachers were asked how much the SC approach had impacted on their practice (scale from 1 = not at all to 5 = very much so). Again ratings were positive (mean = 3.9). Teachers were also asked whether they would find it useful to continue with the sessions and 100% agreed they would find this useful.</p> <p>SWOT analysis:</p> <p>Strengths and opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• opportunities for people to talk and listen;</li> <li>• staff became more aware of the difficulties colleagues were experiencing;</li> <li>• a platform for sharing and encouraging an atmosphere of team work;</li> <li>• ideas, advice and practical solutions to the issue(s) raised;</li> <li>• the opportunity to identify recurring issues/patterns and the ability to address these at a more systemic level;</li> <li>• the consideration, exploration, and trialling of different solutions and strategies.</li> </ul> <p>Weaknesses/threats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• time pressures to conduct sessions;</li> <li>• the small number of teachers within the school;</li> <li>• the possibility of differing advice and related conflict/disagreement; • keeping to the agreed structure and time limitations;</li> <li>• fear of exposure and possible ridicule.</li> </ul>
Evaluating the outcomes of the 'Circles of Adults'	Circle of Adults intervention	15 participants all of whom were staff in a	Mixed methods design with quasi experimental component	<p>Attribution Inventory (adapted from Poulou &amp; Norwich, 2000)</p> <p>Teacher Efficacy in Classroom Management and Discipline scale (adapted from Emmer &amp; Hickman, 1991)</p>	<p>Quantitative: The findings indicate that participation in the CoA</p> <p>intervention has no statistically significant effect upon school staffs' causal attributions or perceived self-efficacy. However, there is some evidence to suggest that participation in the CoA leads to statistically significant increases in the perceived success of actions.</p>

intervention on adults supporting Looked After Children at risk of exclusion. Turner 2014		secondary school (teachers and support staff)	and thematic analysis to gain participants views on outcomes	Target Monitoring and Evaluation (Dunsmuir et al., 2009)  Thematic analysis of a focus group	Qualitative: participants reported that they valued the structure and visual representation of the CoA. However, school staff also highlighted functional difficulties in arranging support processes for LAC young people: in ensuring that relevant staff were present at the meetings and challenges associated with supporting LAC who often experience rapidly changing circumstances.
Circles of Adults: Reflecting and Problem Solving Around Emotional Needs and Behaviour Newton (1995)	Circle of adults intervention	1 group of teachers in a secondary school	Post Hoc qualitative evaluation	Qualitative analysis of interviews	Increased levels of tolerance and greater levels of self reflection in participant's comments related to relationships with the child  Participants were positive about the process, the COA was perceived as supportive to individuals and reports of increased and deeper understanding were given
The development of work discussion groups in educational settings Jackson (2008)	Problem solving work discussion groups	Sample of 95 participants (teachers)- number of schools not specified	Post Hoc evaluation via questionnaires	Qualitative and quantitative (descriptive) analysis of questionnaires relating to participant experiences	93% of staff found the work discussion groups supportive. 88% of staff reported that they found it helpful to share their work with an outside professional 97% of staff reported that they had developed a deeper understanding about the meaning of behaviour. 91% of staff reported that they had been helped to develop new ways of engaging with challenging or disruptive pupils. 88% of staff reported that they had been helped to persevere with challenging pupils when they had previously felt like giving up. 85% of staff reported that they felt less stressed after talking about pupils/clients with whom they had been struggling.



## Appendix 2.3: CMOCs extracted from individual paper reviews

Context	Mechanism	Outcome
The groups allows space for shared reflection	Collaborative problem solving occurs	Better understanding of pupil behaviour is developed
The EP is viewed as an 'expert' assessor	Participants begin to develop skills using their own collective experience	Reliance on the EP as an expert is reduced
Change within organisations can be slow and difficult to maintain	Staff gain experience in supporting each other	Positive changes in the school culture occur
The EP has skills in consultation and facilitation	The EP models and asks questions which support the group in defining problems	Staff develop enhanced problem solving skills
The EP and teachers work together as professionals with equal but differing expertise	The EP asks answerable questions in a non challenging and supportive way	Insights and understanding of problems increases
Sufficient time is given to run the group	Consistency and structure support group cohesion and process	The sessions are valued
Support is given towards running the group	Attendance is good	Participants feel valued
Group members are encouraged to share and contribute	Strategies and problems are shared between group members	Learning from the groups spreads to the wider staff body
Within child attributions dominate	Staff acknowledge each others success and efforts	Holistic insight into behaviour is gained
The group is facilitated by an EP	Everyone gets a chance to be the problem holder	A supportive and equal atmosphere is created
	Expert advice is shared	Useful strategies are generated
		The group feels reliant on the EP

Hayes and Stringer 2016

Newton (1995)

Context	Mechanism	Outcome
<p>The facilitator asks questions that encourage exploration</p> <p>Participants are able to talk through a major problem in a safe environment</p>	<p>Deeper exploration of individual stories occurs</p> <p>Consultation skills are modeled by the facilitator</p> <p>Participants realize their problem is not unique</p> <p>Participants recognize success</p>	<p>Understanding and tolerance increases</p> <p>Participants develop skills in consultation</p> <p>Participants feel encouraged</p>

Jackson (2008)

Context	Mechanism	Outcome
<p>Time of the group</p> <p>Location of the group</p> <p>Membership</p> <p>Size of the group</p> <p>Staff feel fear and exposure to criticism</p>	<p>The group is frequent/not frequent</p> <p>The group is held in a particular location in school (SEN department)</p> <p>Membership is voluntary/compulsory</p> <p>Managers support the group</p> <p>The group is large</p> <p>The group is small</p> <p>The facilitator creates a forum in which participants feel able to share issues</p> <p>Group members act as consultants to each other Participants share experiences and info r.e the child</p> <p>Experiences are shared and compared</p>	<p>Frequency impacts on group cohesion</p> <p>Attributions about attendance to the group are made</p> <p>Fear of problem sharing impacts on perceptions of confidence</p> <p>Not everyone has a voice</p> <p>Participants feel pressured to attend</p> <p>Participants feel validated and accepted</p> <p>Tolerance of others increases</p> <p>A culture of peer consultation develops</p> <p>Understanding of the child increases</p> <p>Participants feel less isolated with the problem</p> <p>Differences in experiences result in useful suggestions of how to work with the child</p>

Boznic and Carter (2002)

Context	Mechanism	Outcome
The group has a clear process to follow	The problem holder explores a personal issue in depth	Planning different strategies occurs through sharing ideas
Membership is voluntary	Expertise are shared	Deeper thinking of the problem occurs
The process allows time for discussion around a particular child	Participants want to take part and have a positive attitude	Participants feel less isolated with the problem and therefore stress is reduced
Staff in schools are often isolated and unable to talk to others about problems	Reflection of self and others is supported	Confidence in managing the child increases due to a shift in self blame
An external consultant is present	The group discuss and share similar issues with the child	
The group allows time for staff to talk together	Staff feel emotionally supported	
Teachers feel a sense of failure due to self attributions for finding solutions	Teachers realize the problem is and can be shared	

Guishard (2000)

Context	Mechanism	Outcome
A space is created for discussion of difficulties related to children with SEN	Specific SEN are discussed Various approaches and strategies are discussed	Professionals gain knowledge and understanding of SEN, which leads to confidence in managing difficulties  Specific strategies are generated

Evans (2005)

Context	Mechanism	Outcome
Ground rules are set	An equal working partnership is created	Strategies are contextually relevant and appropriate
Professional support and guidance is offered by the facilitator	All contributions are valued	Participants learn new strategies
The process is structured	Regular opportunities for the facilitator and group to problem solve together	Shared responsibility for outcomes
An appropriate time and venue is provided	The problem is discussed in detail	Participants feel empowered
The group members have a range of expertise and knowledge	Practical next steps are discussed	Participants are able to draw up an action plan  Participants formulate new

	Discussions are relevant to a range of children	ideas based on learning from expertise of others
	The discussion is focused and uninterrupted	Participants feel more supported
	Expertise across schools is shared	
	The nature of the SEN or behavioural difficulty is varied	

Nugent et al (2014)

Context	Mechanism	Outcome
The process is structured	The participants share experiences of/with the child	Participants learn from each other
A new case is discussed every session	Time is dedicated to exploration of the problem	Participants value the input of the psychologist facilitator
The group are finding an issue difficult to understand	ideas and strategies are discussed that can be applied to other children	The group remains focused
Regular time is given for the group to meet	The facilitator gives expert advice	The rigid structure hinders the natural flow of discussion
School staff do not have time for discussion and feedback because they are too busy	The facilitator sticks to timings within the process	Participants are able to create and action plan
The group is closed and inflexible about new members	Strategies discussed are relevant to the school context	New and different ideas/hypothesis are formed
The room allocated is not private	Expertise are shared	Participants feel enabled and more confident in their ideas
	Problem solving process allows time for deeper reflection	Division occurs across the wider organisation
	The wider staff body become suspicious about the group and what is being discusses	Confidentiality is threatened and participants feel less able to be open and honest
	Other staff members walk in and out of the room	

Brown and Henderson 2012

Context	Mechanism	Outcome
---------	-----------	---------

Time is dedicated for reflection on relationships and interactions with the child	Participants are encouraged to scrutinize their current strategies	Strategies become less reactionary
Everybody has opportunity to share a problem and discuss in detail	Group problem solving occurs, the problem is transferred from the individual to the group	Participants experience reduced feelings of isolation
The school is small with few staff	Participants focus on positives and success	Participants see less value in having structured time to discuss issues
The process is structured and times	Participants regularly discuss issues on an 'ad hoc' basis	Strategies are implemented
The group creates a platform for encouraging teamwork	Suggestions and ideas are provided by group members	Participants feel more confident due to recognition of success
Ground rules are not explored	Participants share experiences	Participants develop fear of exposure and conflict
	Participants conflict	Participants feel reassured and supported

Turner 2014

Context	Mechanism	Outcome
The problem solving process encourages deep discussion around 1 child	Expertise are shared	Perceptions of the child's behaviour change
The circumstances of the child change quickly	Participants are focused	Within child attributions change
A range of professionals are involved	Organisational factors are discussed	Systemic change occurs
	Pupils discussed present similar needs to others	Strategies are tried and applied to a range of children
		Strategies need constantly adjusting and this is frustrating for participants

Grahamslaw and Henson 2015

Context	Mechanism	Outcome
A problem solving process is used	The views and opinions of everyone are listened to and treated equally	Deeper understanding of the behaviour leads to increased confidence
Problems are shared	A detailed analysis and brainstorming of the problem occurs	A sense of shared responsibility for the child
The process enables all voices to be heard		Participants feel less isolated

<p>The group are working together</p> <p>The process has a clear structure</p> <p>Everyone has the opportunity to contribute</p> <p>The group represents a collective idea that the child is cared for</p> <p>The expert facilitator asks questions to support understanding of behaviour</p>	<p>The complexity of supporting the child is acknowledged</p> <p>Participants reassure each other through sharing own experiences</p> <p>Everyone listens to each other</p> <p>A times and structured process allows clarification of key issues</p> <p>Ideas are shared</p> <p>Participants empathise with each other</p> <p>The antecedents, functions and consequences of the behaviour are discussed</p>	<p>with the problem</p> <p>Attributions related to within child behaviour begin to shift</p> <p>participants feel valued</p> <p>Confidence in managing the child increases</p> <p>Relationships within the organization improve</p>
---	--	---

Appendix 2.4: CMO outcome themes/evidence (overlaps highlighted in red-relation to theme highlighted in pink)

### **Confidence?**

Understanding of the child increases/ Professionals gain knowledge and understanding of SEN, which leads to confidence in managing difficulties//Better understanding of pupil behaviour is developed

Participants feel enabled and more confident in their ideas/Participants feel empowered

Participants feel more confident due to recognition of success

Deeper understanding of the behaviour leads to increased confidence in behaviour management

Confidence in managing the child increases/Confidence in managing the child increases due to a shift in self blame

Reliance on the EP as an expert is reduced

### **Generation of strategies?**

Planning different strategies occurs through sharing ideas/Participants are able to draw up an action plan/Participants are able to create and action plan

Strategies are contextually relevant and appropriate/Specific strategies are generated/Useful strategies are generated

Participants learn new strategies

Participants formulate new ideas based on learning from expertise of others/Differences in experiences result in useful suggestions of how to work with the child

New and different ideas/hypothesis are formed

Strategies become less reactionary

Strategies are implemented

Systemic change occurs

Strategies are tried and applied to a range of children

### **Reduced isolation and stress?**

Participants feel validated and accepted

Participants feel more supported/Participants feel reassured and supported

Participants experience reduced feelings of isolation/Participants feel less isolated with the problem/Participants feel less isolated with the problem and therefore stress is reduced/Participants feel less isolated with the problem

A sense of shared responsibility for the child

Participants feel encouraged

### **Collaboration and sharing?**

Tolerance of others increases

A culture of peer consultation develops/Relationships within the organization improve /Learning from the groups spreads to the wider staff body/Positive changes in the school culture occur/

Shared responsibility for outcomes

Participants learn from each other

Participants value the input of the psychologist facilitator

Participants develop skills in consultation

Participants feel valued/Participants feel valued

The sessions are valued

A supportive and equal atmosphere is created

### **Reflection and self awareness?**

Understanding and tolerance increases (of the child and behaviours)/Perceptions of the child's behaviour change/Within child attributions change /Attributions related to within child behaviour begin to shift

Deeper thinking of the problem occurs

Insights and understanding of problems increases



Holistic insight into behaviour is gained

**Hindering aspects/difficulties**

Frequency impacts on group cohesion

Attributions about attendance to the group (being just for SEN staff) are made

Fear of problem sharing impacts on perceptions of confidence

Not everyone has a voice

Participants feel pressured to attend

The rigid structure hinders the natural flow of discussion

Division occurs across the wider organization

The group feels reliant on the EP

Participants see less value in having structured time to discuss issues

Participants develop fear of exposure and conflict

Confidentiality is threatened and participants feel less able to be open and honest

## Appendix 2.5: Initial Program Theory

### Initial Program Theory

#### Outcomes theme: Confidence

Context	Mechanism	Outcome	Source
The group allows time for in depth discussions about behaviour	Antecedents and consequences of behaviour are considered in greater detail	Learning about behaviour increases confidence in behaviour management	Hayes and Stringer 2016 Grahamslaw and Henson 2015
The problem solving process allows professionals to consider behaviour from various perspectives	Participants become more aware of their ability to influence behaviour	Self efficacy and confidence is increased due to understanding of own influence in changing behaviour	Nugent et al 2014 Boznic and Carter 2002
Ep's and other professionals work together with equal but differing expertise	The EP facilitator promotes joint exploration through asking answerable questions in a non challenging and supportive way	Participants feel valued and gain confidence in their own expertise	Boznic and Carter 2002
An external consultant facilitates the group	?	Participants feel contained and confident with the process	Boznic and Carter 2002 Hayes and Stringer 2016
The EP facilitator is viewed as the 'expert' and the 'assessor of children'	Participants are encouraged to develop skills in problem solving using their collective knowledge and experience	Reliance of the EP as the 'expert' is reduced	Boznic and Carter 2002

#### Outcomes theme: Generation Of strategies

The problem is explored in detail through a structured step by step process	The exact problem is explored and identified	The group is able to focus on specific and relevant targets and strategies	Turner 2014 Nugent et al 2014 Evans 2005 Boznic and
---	--	--	--

			Carter 2002 Grahamslaw and Henson 2015
Time is dedicated for reflection on relationships and interactions with the child	Participants are encouraged to scrutinize their current strategies	Strategies become less reactionary	Turner 2014, Brown and Henderson 2012
Child/ren discussed present similar needs	Participants are able to identify similar traits in other children in their organisation	Strategies are applied to a wide range of children	Turner 2014, Nugent et al, 2014 Evans 2005
A range of professionals attend the group consultation	Skills and experience are shared, existing and new strategies are discussed	Learning about new interventions and strategies occurs, strategies are explored and trialed	Turner 2014, Brown and Henderson 2012 Nugent et al 2014 Evans 2005 Hayes and Stringer 2016
The members of the group are ware of organizational structures	Strategies discussed are relevant and relatively simple to implement within the structure of the organisation	Participants feel enabled and empowered to implement strategies	Nugent et al 2014 Evans 2005

#### Outcome Theme: Reducing isolation and Stress

Everybody has opportunity to share a problem	Group problem solving occurs, the problem is transferred from the individual to the group	Participants experience reduced feelings of isolation	Brown and Henderson 2012 Nugent et al 2014
Participants share similar problems and experiences	Participants realize that their issues are not unique, others are experiencing similar difficulties with the child	Feelings of isolation are reduced, participants feel reassured	Newton 1995, Brown and Henderson 2012 Nugent et al 2014 Boznic and Carter 2002
Schools are busy	Structured time is	Participants feel	Boznic and

environments and departments can be fragmented	given to staff to discuss issues	reduced isolation and emotionally supported	Carter 2002 Grahamslaw and Henson 2015
The group represents a collective representation that the child is cared for	Participants share experiences and empathise with each other, the complexity of supporting the child is acknowledged	Participants feel reassured and a reduction in isolation	Grahamslaw and Henson 2015

#### Outcome Theme: Collaboration and Sharing

The group encourages specific time for collaboration and discussion between staff members in a safe and supportive context	Participants are treated as equals and able to discuss difficulties with behaviour without judgment	Participants feel supported and are more likely to seek support, this may reduce stress and burnout and increase enthusiasm	Brown and Henderson 2012 Grahamslaw and Henson 2015 Evans 2005
Membership is voluntary	Participants choose to attend and therefore are more likely to be motivated to engage	The group faces less resistance and functions with support and positivity	Jackson 2008 Turner 2014 Boznic and carter 2002
The facilitator uses consultation skills to support and encourage exploration	In depth exploration of individual stories occurs	Understanding and tolerance between participants increases	Newton 1995 Hayes and Stringer 2016
	Effective consultation skills are being modeled to participants	Participants develop skills in consultation	
The facilitator supports the group through the problem solving process	Participants learn how to be consultants to each other	A culture of peer support and shared responsibility within the organization is created	Jackson 2008, Evans 2005 Hayes and Stringer 2016 Grahamslaw and Henson 2015
The group is supported by the	Regular times, an appropriate space	Participants feel valued and see	Hayes and Stringer

senior management team	and cover for teaching staff is allocated to support the running of the group	the value in the sessions	2016
The group allows time and space for difficulties related to students with SEN	Specific SEN are discussed and professionals share knowledge	Participants gain knowledge and understanding of students with SEN	Guishard 2000
The group is the optimal size (not too large or small)	All members get a chance to contribute and share problems/roles	Participants feel their contributions are valued and the group is cohesive	Boznic and Carter 2002 Grahamslaw and Henson 2015

#### Outcome Theme: Reflection and self awareness

The problem solving process is reflective in terms of individual participant and organizational factors relating to behaviour	Participants discuss the nature and meaning of behaviour, including the child's background and the systems around the child	Causal attributions for the behaviour begin to change and this influences individual and organizational strategies	Turner 2014 Nugent et al 2014
School staff feel a sense of failure due to self attributions for finding solutions	The participant is reassured by group members that the difficulty is not a result of individual shortcomings or failure	Participants self esteem increases due to a reduction in self blame	Boznic and Carter 2002 Hayes and Stringer 2016
The group are finding an issue or behaviour difficult to understand	The EP facilitator offers expert advice	Participants value the input of the psychologist and the application of psychology to the problem situation occurs	Nugent et al 2014 Evans 2005

#### Outcome Theme: Hindering aspects/difficulties encountered

The frequency of the group is not consistent, a lack	Group members do not develop a	The group does not function because group	Jackson 2008, Turner
--	--------------------------------	---	-------------------------

of time is dedicated to regular group sessions	sense of cohesion	members do not feel comfortable in being open and honest	2014,
The group location is problematic	The group is held in a room within the SEN department on every occasion	Attributions are made by the wider staff body about the nature of the group being solely for SEN staff and this may affect attendance	Jackson 2008
Managers attend the group	Participants feel less confident about sharing difficulties regarding behaviour	Participants devalue the group because they don't feel they can be open and honest	Jackson 2008
The size of the group is large	Participants feel they don't have a voice	The positive outcomes are reduced because participants are less engaged	Jackson 2008
The circumstances of the child change rapidly due to home circumstances	The child's behaviour changes from week to week and strategies need adjusting	Participants feel frustrated that no change is occurring	Turner 2014
Ground rules are not set and explored	Participants conflict and disagree, do not listen to each other and are judgmental in their responses	The group does not function in a supportive manner and participants stop attending	Brown and Henderson 2012
The school is small with few staff	Participants regularly discuss issues on an 'ad hoc' basis	Participants see less value in having structured time to discuss issues	Jackson 2008
The group is closed and inflexible about new members	The wider staff body become suspicious about the group and what is being discussed	Division occurs across the wider organisation	Jackson 2008

The room allocated is not private	Other staff members walk in and out of the room	Confidentiality is threatened and participants feel less able to be open and honest	Jackson 2008
The process has a clear structure	The facilitator follows the structure and times allocated for each part of the process	The structure is too rigid and this hinders the natural flow of ideas and conversation	Nugent et al 2014 Grahmslaw and Henson 2015
The group focuses on a new case each week	Feedback on previous cases is not part of the process	The efficacy of strategies and interventions is unknown	Nugent et al 2014

### Appendix 3.1: Timeline of research activities

Phase of data collection	Procedural event	Purpose	Time of occurrence
Preliminary Phase	Discussion with EPS	To define intended and expected outcomes of the systemic work as part of the virtual school project	October 2016
	Proposal submitted and ethical consent obtained	To enable continuation with research	Jan-Feb 2017
	Ggroup members selected by facilitating EP following referral of a LAC via the virtual school project panel	To determine participants for GC and research project	April 2017
	Participating school and group members approached for ethical consent	To gain participation and consent	April 2017
Cycle one	Formulation of initial CMO's elicited from core texts and research literature through a realist synthesis	To determine core assumptions of GC 'why should it work'	May 2017
	Observations of group process	To observe CMO's in operation	May 2017
	RI (Realist interview) with facilitating EP	To discuss and refine CMO's that will lead to initial program theories	June-July 2017
	Initial program theories developed	To elicit hypothesis about why and how the GC intervention may work	July 2017
Cycle two	Semi structured interviews with group members	To gather data from participants that provides evidence of program theories in operation	September 2017
	Thematic analysis of data conducted	To elicit themes from participant interviews relating to program theories and outcomes	September-October 2017
	CMO's refined based on thematic analysis	To add, delete and refine CMO's that will be integrated into program theories	October 2017



	Second program theories developed	To refine program theories based on thematic analysis of interviews	November 2017
Concluding Phase	Focus group with group members	To refine and categorise program theories	November 2017
	Concluding program specification developed	To determine a set of program theories that elicit the most important mechanisms and contextual influences of the GC intervention for adults when supporting a LAC	December 2017
	Program specification feedback to EPS	To inform future systemic work and provide some evidence of the efficacy of EP led GC in schools.	June/July 2018

## Appendix 3.2: Participant Information and consent



### School of Psychology

#### *Participant Information*

*Researchers:* [REDACTED]

*Supervisors:* [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

This is an invitation to take part in a research study related to the consultation group that you have agreed to take part in throughout the summer term.

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

My name is Maddi Austin and I am a Doctoral research student from the University Of Nottingham under the supervision of [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

As you may be aware, educational psychologists in Derby are involved in on-going work with looked after children across the city, as part of a project with the virtual school. A significant part of the role entails the psychologist facilitating 'consultation groups' with the team of adults supporting Looked After children.

The primary aim of the 'consultation group' is to support the adults in their day-to-day practice and care of the child, with the aim of building the adults' confidence and knowledge and hence improved outcomes for the children and young people they are working with.

I would greatly appreciate your participation in a research project centred on these groups. The study seeks to explore and understand what influences a group consultation and it's outcomes, when this is focused on the needs of a Looked after Child.

This study will be written up as a research thesis and submitted as a requirement for the award of Doctorate in Applied educational psychology (the postgraduate professional qualification in educational psychologist toward which I am currently studying), and has received ethical approval from The University of Nottingham.

As part of the research process, I will be completing an observation of the consultation group, which will, subject to the agreement of all participants, be tape recorded. In addition, participants will be asked to complete a semi-structured interview of approximately 1 hour's duration about their experiences of the consultation process. This will also be tape recorded. A second 'focus group' interview will also be conducted with all participants after the consultation group has finished. The purpose of the focus group interview will be to seek participants' views on the research findings.

The information gathered will be transcribed by the researcher and analysed, fed back and used to inform local authority virtual school and educational psychology service developments and the future use of group consultation and/or other staff training and support for looked after children.

**All data collected during the research project will be confidential. Pseudonyms will be used to ensure that individual participants cannot be identified from their responses, and all data will be managed in line with both University and Local Authority data protection procedures. It will not be possible to identify the Local Authority, the school or any of the interview participants within any written account of this study.**

Retained data will be coded to ensure that confidentiality and anonymity is assured. Data will be stored securely. Only my University supervisor, Nick Durbin and I, will have access to the data, for the purposes of analysis. In addition, the academics who examine my thesis will also have the right to scrutinise my raw data; however, prospects of this occurring are remote.

Participation in this research is **completely voluntary**; you are free to decline to participate or withdraw at any point until the end of the focus group following the last observation, without risk of incurring any adverse consequence.

If you experience any emotional distress as a result of taking part in the research, or feel you need additional support, advice or guidance, a list of relevant support agencies within the local area has been provided at the end of this information sheet, a debrief letter will be provided at the end of the research process.

If you would like further information regarding the research, please don't hesitate to contact me [REDACTED]

[Nick.durbin@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:Nick.durbin@nottingham.ac.uk)

[Judith.McAlister@derby.gov.uk](mailto:Judith.McAlister@derby.gov.uk)

Thank you for considering this request. Your contribution to this research would be greatly appreciated.

If you agree to be included in this research project, please could you indicate your consent using the brief consent form

Many thanks.

,  
[REDACTED]

**Trainee Educational Psychologist**

**Adult Support services in Derby City**

RELATE: [http://www.relatederby.org.uk/counselling\\_services.html](http://www.relatederby.org.uk/counselling_services.html)

**Phone:** 01332 349177 **Address:** 3 Wentworth House, Vernon Gate, Derby DE1 1UR **email:** [info@relatederby.org.uk](mailto:info@relatederby.org.uk)

Derbyshire Carers Association • o Derby Carers Centre 17 Babington Lane, Derby DE1 1TA Tel: 01332 200002

Psychology Services 01332 292740 Oaklands, 103 Duffield Road, Derby, DE22 1AE

Psychotherapy Services 01332 717507 63 Duffield Road, Derby, DE22 1AA



Researcher(s): ...Maddi Austin [REDACTED]

You should answer these questions independently:

- Have you read and understood the Information Sheet?  
YES/NO
- Have you had the opportunity to ask questions about the study?  
YES/NO
- Have all your questions been answered satisfactorily?  
YES/NO
- Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the study?  
YES/NO  
(at any time and without giving a reason)
- I give permission for my data from this study to be shared with other  
researchers provided that my anonymity is completely protected.  
YES/NO
- I understand that the interviews and observations of the group process  
will be 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:

### Appendix 3.3: RI questions

Could you explain your reasons for using Group Consultation as an intervention to support a LAC?

What are your intended outcomes for participants in the GC?

Which elements of the GC process do you feel will enhance these outcomes?

Did/Do you foresee any difficulties in setting up the intervention within the context ?

How do you think your experience and knowledge support the process?

What do you think are the most essential psychological mechanisms/interactions that lead to outcomes?

Are there any external contextual factors that impact or hinder the running of the group?

How do you think the intervention has affected the way the group work as a team?

How do you think the GC supports staff in changing they work with the child?

In your opinion, how effective is GC as a method of service delivery in terms of impact on participants well being?

### Appendix 3.4: EP consent

**School of Psychology**



**The University of  
Nottingham**

UNITED KINGDOM • CHINA • MALAYSIA

*Ethics Approval Number or Taught Project Archive Number:*

*Researcher(s): ...*

You should answer these questions independently:

- Have you read and understood the Information Sheet provided for all participants YES/NO
- Have you had the opportunity to ask questions about the study? YES/NO
- Have all your questions been answered satisfactorily? YES/NO
- Do you understand the safeguarding and confidentiality procedures outlined in all participant information sheets and your role within these domains? YES/NO
- I give permission for my data from this study to be shared with other researchers provided that my anonymity is completely protected. YES/NO
- I understand that the group consultations and interviews will be audio recorded. YES/NO

“This study has been explained to me to my satisfaction, and I agree to take part.”

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:





### Appendix 3.5: RI and Observation analysis table

Context	Mechanism	Outcome	Evidence in Observation Transcript RI with EP New CMO'S are highlighted in Orange	Theme	Reference number in transcript
The group allows time for in depth discussions about behaviour	Antecedents and consequences of behaviour are considered in greater detail	Learning about behaviour increases confidence in behaviour management	<p>P2 L56-P3 L24 Discussion related to a biting incident with child results in participant reflecting on better way to manage behaviour in future</p> <p>P4 L59-P5 L38 Reflecting on behaviour in different environments evolves into understanding of the impact of consistency on the child's behaviour in general and this leads to comments related to providing a consistent environment</p> <p>P6 L39- L61 Discussion related to rewards and motivation leads to dialogue about the best way to use rewards to motivate the child</p> <p>P7 L48-P8 L36 A discussion related to control and why the child feels the need to control her environment leads to adult understanding of ways to manage the child's environment so that the child experiences minimal stress</p>	Confidence	1
The problem solving process allows professionals to consider	Participants become more aware of their ability to influence behaviour	Self efficacy and confidence is increased due to understanding of own influence in	<p>P1 L15 –L69 participants spend time discussing and reflecting on the child's behaviour over the past week at the beginning of the session, which allows time for participants to gain each others perspectives</p>	Confidence	2

behaviour from various perspectives		changing behaviour	<p>P2 L56 –P2 L61 The problem holder talks about the child's behaviour in different settings, allowing others to develop understanding of behaviour in the school environment</p> <p>P2 L62 The facilitator focuses the group on a specific behaviour (control), which is then explored by all participants according to their own experience of this with child</p> <p>P4 L31-69 In depth discussion about the child's needs and behaviour start leading to hypothesis being generated</p> <p>P6 L39 C discusses how difficult it is to get the child to do anything, other participants give their perspective that child is becoming more complinat than she was and had changed in some ways</p> <p>P8 L6-28 The home perspective is considered, which leads to hypothesis related to control</p> <p>P9 L5-P9 35 Some in depth discussion about how to manage controlling behaviours leads to specific strategies for how each adult will interact with the child and what the expectations of the child will be</p> <p>P2 L 83-86: 'EP: Yeh definatley, right at the beginning of the</p>		
-------------------------------------	--	--------------------	--	--	--

			<p>process they felt like everything was really child centred and everything was coming from her and there was nothing they could do about it that she was just a wild child but by gradually acknowledging their role in being able to support her and their confidence in that and their self efficacy in supporting a child with those kind of needs'</p> <p>P3 L175-183: The EP discusses the importance of C having time to reflect on her emotions around the child's behaviour and the meaning of the behaviour</p> <p>P4 L260-271: 'TEP: Do you think that kind of, people understanding that a bit more kind of supported people in not taking things so personally maybe  EP: Yeh definatley related to C having feelings of rejection and getting them to think about her behaviour in terms of whats happened to her and why she might be doing that was alot more helpful than 'she hates me', which is what she was coming in with  TEP: Yeh and mayeb C was internalising some of that  EP: Yeh and i think that was sort of in terms of the containment and projection she was experincing  TEP: So there is also an element then of not just changing attributions but especially for the TA of kind of containing her emotions though her developing an understanding of what was going on her child  EP: Definatley and her being able to understand why that was happening and then not take it so personally and being able to respond more appropriatley to child, not in a confrontational way but in a supportive and containing way'</p>		
3Ep's and other professionals	The EP facilitator promotes joint	Participants feel valued and gain	P 4L61 , 'So if we could talk a bit more about your experiences of her needing to be in control'	Confidence	3

<p>work together with equal but differing expertise- change this? Is this the right context or should it be more related to the EP's consultation skills? Exceptions questions</p>	<p>exploration through asking answerable questions in a non challenging and supportive way Identifying success?</p>	<p>confidence in their own expertise</p>	<p>P4 L65, 'Are there any times when she has accepted an instruction from some one else' P5 L 8, 'So how have you got to that point with her' P5 L22, 'Do you think that's because you have been giving her a consistant message' P6 L50, 'So she's getting something out of it, that could be something to work on, thinking about what motivates her' P7 L25, 'Are there other times when you've felt like you've gained some control back?' P8 L1, 'so in terms of her control, what do you think she is doing when she is trying to gain control, why do you think she feels she needs to be in control?' P8 L33, 'Do you think we need to let her have some control' P 2 L80-81 'In terms of the adults role in that for them to acknowledge what they have done in the process' P2 L137-P3 L142, 'so the exceptions questions were really powerful in getting people to think about when they had managed to get her...and it was quite hard to draw out at times but I think once you got there it felt like people were then able to start generating strategies for themselves and think about the way they are interacting with her. I guess without having somebody asking those questions in that forum would you ever get to that point in thinking where you think 'oh that worked let me try that again', without someone directing that question at you'.  P5 L297: The EP talks about the use of exceptions questions as a way of identifying success and hence generating strategies</p>		
--	---	--	--	--	--

An external consultant facilitates the group	?A process is followed that is coherent but not rigid-evidenced through observation checklist	Participants feel contained and confident with the process		Confidence	4
The EP facilitator is viewed as the 'expert' and the 'assessor of children'	Participants are encouraged to develop skills in problem solving using their collective knowledge and experience	Reliance of the EP as the 'expert' is reduced	<p>P8 L52-P9 L59: The group engage in some group problem solving, coming up with strategies based on their conversations and thoughts related to the child's psychological issues</p> <p>This continues on P10 L10, to the end of the session, the group continue to develop strategies based on their current knowledge of the child</p> <p>P1 L49-51 'from my experience I've found GC a really productive way of school staff coming up with their own solutions, rather than there being an expert telling them what they should do, they have the opportunity to come up with their own solutions, reject suggestions'</p> <p>P6 L398: EP: erm, I think before I started the consultation work I thought id have a much bigger expert role and they would expect me to come up with solutaions and tell them about psychological theory around attachment and so on but I dotn</p>	Confidence	5

			<p>think that happened that often. But there were times when I tried to reframe things in terms of her background by asking things like 'what do you think might have caused or led to that'</p> <p>TEP: Yeh its almost like the hypothesis generation or theory generation, because I felt they were very good at, when you asked the right questions people were easily able to make those connections themselves</p> <p>EP: and I think alot of teachers no know about attachment difficulties and although this school was very small and leafy and perhaps dont get much experience of these issues although they have had children with similar difficulties so they do have expertise themselves and I think acknowledging that is quite useful</p> <p>P7 L482-485: EP: Yeh and its been a big part of me doing this I think probably also that we are reflecting on it and ive probably been more reflective in what im doing so its been useful in seeing that change and acknowledging the really useful parts of the consultation and not neccasarily being so strategy driven or directive and being that expert and tring to direct what there doing</p>		
The problem is explored in detail through a structured step by step process	The exact problem/s is explored and identified	The group is able to focus on specific and relevant targets and strategies	<p>P1 L1-7: The EP explains that C will be the problem holder and have 10 mins to explore a current issue with child</p> <p>P2 L62-P3 L24: The EP encourages C to discuss the issue of biting in depth</p> <p>P3 L25 The EP encourages the group to explore the difficulties in trying to get the child to do any work</p> <p>P8L1-P9 L16: The issue of control is explored in depth, which leads to generating strategies for supporting the child to remain in one of 2 or 3 locations in school</p> <p>P2 L69-71:EP: Yeh so we'd have a 'by this time next week' and at the end of my sessions we had a bit of a target, so our aim for next week is...say to try and get her to be in class 3 (she</p>	Generation-and implementation? of strategies	6

			<p>was meant to be in class 3) until after registration and then she can go to class 1 if she wanted to so we had that aim for the next one</p> <p>TEP: So quite specific strategies that you generated through the process?</p>		
Time is dedicated for reflection on relationships and interactions with the child	Participants are encouraged to scrutinize their current strategies	Strategies become less reactionary	<p>P2 L69-P3 L2: C reflects on her own actions and strategies related to a specific incident and considers how her behaviour influenced the child's behaviour</p> <p>P6 L10-26 D reflects on his relationship with child, expressing that he has never put any demands on her or never told her she has to do anything, D follows this up by commenting that in using this strategy, the child is becoming less aggressive and less explosive in her behaviour</p> <p>P7 L9-19 D reflects to the group how he feels about his interactions with the child and his own personal relationship with her, this leads to him displaying empathy for C, who was recently bitten by the child and also expressing disappointment that this had happened</p> <p>P3 L175-183: The EP discusses the importance of C having time to reflect on her emotions around the child's behaviour and the meaning of the behaviour</p> <p>P4 L260-271:TEP: Do you think that kind of, people understanding that a bit more kind of supported people in not taking things so personally maybe</p>	Generation of strategies	7



			<p>EP: Yeh definatley related to C having feelings of rejection and getting them to think about her behaviour in terms of whats happened to her and why she might be doing that was alot more helpful than 'she hates me', which is what she was coming in with</p> <p>TEP: Yeh and mayeb C was internalising some of that</p> <p>EP: Yeh and i think that was sort of in terms of the containment and projection she was experincing</p> <p>TEP: So there is also an element then of not just changing attributions but especially for the TA of kind of containing her emotions though her developing an understanding of what was going on her child</p> <p>EP: Definatley and her being able to understand why that was happening and then not take it so personally and being able to respond more appropriatley to child, not in a confrontational way but in a supportive and containing way.</p> <p>P7 L479-481: TEP: So also there is a level isnt there in terms of just reflecting on your interpersonal relationship with a child and how you are interacting with them and that in itself is a strategy isnt it just thinking about the way your speaking to somebody or what you are saying</p>		
Child/ren discussed present similar needs	Participants are able to identify similar traits in other children in their organisation	Strategies are applied to a wide range of children	NOT APPLICABLE TO THIS CONTEXT (REJECT?)	Generation of strategies	8
A range of professionals attend the group consultation	Skills and experience are shared, existing and new strategies are discussed	Learning about new interventions and strategies occurs, strategies are explored and	<p>Mostly teachers made up the group, apart from C, who was the child's TA and the Head Teacher, who left on this occasion after 10 minutes.</p> <p>Skills and experience being shared: P2 L56-66: C</p>	Generation of strategies	9

		trialed	<p>shares her experience of the child in after school club, and is guided by the EP to think about what is supporting the child within this context. This leads to a discussion around routine, boundaries and consistency</p> <p>P2 L36-L50: The Head Teacher shares some expertise with the group related to managing the child</p> <p>P8 L39-48: Z Shares an example of an interaction with the child, which indicates that she was starting to feel more secure in the school, Z follows this with a comment about how to ensure this continues to develop in relation to using small and safe steps with the child that don't make her feel insecure because she is not pushed too far</p>		
The members of the group are aware of organizational structures	Strategies discussed are relevant and relatively simple to implement within the structure of the organisation	Participants feel enabled and empowered to implement strategies	<p>P6 L52: C reflects on a strategy that hasn't worked well in the context because the child was able to work around the rewards due to contextual factors</p> <p>P8 L57: Some discussion related to how a particular strategy might work within the context of the school in terms of the building, class rooms and teaching staff</p> <p>P10 L15: The EP suggests giving the child additional structure through a timetable, the group agree this would be difficult within this context because the school will be too chaotic up until the end of term</p> <p>P1 L 64-65, 'Hopefully there will be more of a chance of those strategies being implemented because they</p>	Generation of strategies	10

			are more personal to the people that have come up with them'		
The problem solving process encourages participants to discuss their own strategies	Strategies are generated by all participants whom will be involved in the implementation, everyone is clear on their role	Participants feel enabled and empowered to implement strategies, they have ownership over the strategy	<p>P8L59-P9 L58: The group engage in a lengthy discussion related to supporting the child remain in one of 3 locations in the school, the class 1 teacher discusses her response if the child attempts to go into her class and other staff contribute ideas. A consensus for all is arrived at</p> <p>P1 L49-51: 'I've found GC a really productive way of school staff coming up with their own solutions, rather than there being an expert telling them what they should do, they have the opportunity to come up with their own solutions, reject suggestions'</p> <p>P2 L72-74 'TEP: So quite specific strategies that you generated through the process</p> <p>EP: Yeh and that they came up with most of the time, I may have suggested some smart targets or something or made them smarter but usually it was them</p> <p>P6 L360-362: TEP: Also what is quite powerful in that is that he, D had come up with that himself</p> <p>EP: Yeh in front of C</p> <p>TEP: Yeh so its not been directed to him hes come up with it himself</p>	Generation of strategies	11
The sessions are regular and supported by an outside professional	The outside professional checks in each week how strategies have been implemented and if they have	Participants are more likely to implement strategies if they know they will be asked to discuss within the group	<p>All of page 1: The group discuss how well strategies generated from the previous week have been going</p> <p>P1 L66-67 'Also I think because they know that 'next week the EP is going to come in and talk to me about how it went'</p>	Generation and implementation of strategies	12

	worked				
Everybody has opportunity to share a problem-change to contribute to discussion?	Group problem solving occurs, the problem is transferred from the individual to the group	Participants experience reduced feelings of isolation	<p>P8 L31-P9L58: Lengthy example of the group engaging in group problem solving, all participants are contributing ideas and potential strategies that are specific to one problem with the child</p> <p>P10L54P11L45: More problem solving around a specific issue and contributions being made by all group members</p>	Reducing isolation and stress	13
Participants share similar problems and experiences	Participants realize that their issues are not unique, others are experiencing similar difficulties with the child	Feelings of isolation are reduced, participants feel reassured	<p>P1 L13-P2L34: The group share their experiences of the child over the past week, interactions with her are discussed as well as managing her behaviour</p> <p>P5L54-P6L5: The group reflect on a reduction in some behaviours, this leads to group reflection on progress</p>	Reducing isolation and stress	14
<p>Lots of people interact with the child but?</p> <p>Schools are busy environments and departments can be fragmented</p>	Structured time is given to staff to discuss issues	Participants feel reduced isolation and emotionally supported	<p>Evident in commitment to group</p> <p>P1 L47: 'I thought they would be able to support each other, a chance to all sit down and discuss it'</p> <p>P6 L362-363: so do you think that having time within the GC process supported D is developing that perspective on what C was having to manage?</p> <p>EP: Yeh definatley</p>	Reduced isolation and stress	15
The group represents a collective representation	Participants share experiences and empathise with each other, the	Participants feel reassured and a reduction in isolation	<p>P7 L9-19 D expresses empathy for C related to C being bitten by the child</p> <p>P6L39: Acknowledgement of C's time with the child being very 'concentrated'</p>	Reduced isolation and stress	16

that the child is cared for	complexity of supporting the child is acknowledged		<p>P8L1-36: The group discuss the child's experiences outside of school and the complexities of the child as a result of this</p> <p>P8 L66-P9L4: D discusses the child's difficult behaviour at her previous school and this leads to the group feeling more positive about their approach because they have not experienced such extreme behaviours</p> <p>P5 L321 – 333: 'EP: Definately they got on well with each other, the teaching stff did, not too sure about C, she was quite new and she only cam in I think 4 weeks after child started she went from working in after school club to supporting child in the afternoons, so i think from that point of view it was probably useful for her to be part of that group so they could acknowledge and actively acknowledge C role and that was probably quite useful for her to hear from the teachers and support her own confidence in what she was doing. But to have, yeh I think that was useful in terms of her self efficacy but also for them to acknowledge how difficult it was for her I think was useful</p> <p>TEP: So you think she needed a level of understanding from others</p> <p>EP: Yeh erm and so the day or the week that child had hit C I dont think they'd talk about it themsleves or outside of my group but D said how upset he had been when hed heard that child had hit C and I think that was supportive for C but then also part of that what he was doing there was he was upset for C but also for child and I though that was, in terms of how empathetic he was towards her it was useful that he acknowledged and that he had thought about that</p> <p>P6 L363-L370: so do you think that having time within the GC process supported D is developing that perspective on what C was having to manage?</p> <p>EP: Yeh definately because C had talked about how difficult it</p>		
--------------------------------	---	--	--	--	--

			<p>was and we talked about how we would like child to be in class 3 a bit more and at that point she was mostly in the library and she had stopped going into year 1 so she was mostly in the library with C or dragging C around the school and I think i might have, we were talking about how difficult it was and I said I was just wondering if there is anything we could do about it or are there any other adults that child will accept working with or could help out and D said 'oh well I could come and talk to her for 10 minutes'....it was like a realisation that he could help, so that was nice for him to acknowledge.</p> <p>P6 L374: TEP: Do you think having the group with the purpose of discussing child there was something just in the physical body of people giving everybody a sense of shared responsibility for the child? EP: Definatley</p>		
The group encourages specific time for collaboration and discussion between staff members in a safe and supportive context with an outside professional to facilitate	Participants are treated as equals and able to discuss difficulties with behaviour without judgment	Participants feel supported and are more likely to seek support, this may reduce stress and burnout and increase enthusiasm	<p>All participants are open about their relationship with the child and are willing to discuss difficult interactions, E.G</p> <p>C: P3 L1 Talks about the biting incident and is open about her role and difficulty in managing the situation</p> <p>C: P3 L49 Discusses how difficult it is to keep the child in one place</p> <p>D: P7 L10 Discusses his difficulty in managing his relationship with the child</p> <p>P3 L143-146; EP: Yeh I think we probably have the time to step back and think about it and that's part of our job but as teachers I don't think they do and I think from a supervision point of view I think teacher to have time to be able to talk about issues it would be really useful if they could do that around all children presenting difficulties</p> <p>P3 L187-189: TEP: No theres just not time in the day is there</p>	Collaboration and sharing	17

			EP: Yeh even if you...and I think even if you planned it in the school it probably wouldnt happen but I think having that time to sit down with a professional made a big difference		
Membership is voluntary	Participants choose to attend and therefore are more likely to be motivated to engage	The group faces less resistance and functions with support and positivity	<p>The group members attend through choice</p> <p>P4 L239-TEP: Was membership voluntary?</p> <p>EP: Yeh, erm I mean I think all of them, the positive thing was that they all seemed committed to coming, they all wanted to be there but yeh it was quite a push for them to do it every week at that time so yeh but that's the only way i think you could do it..... It was difficult but despite those difficulties i still think it was a really productive use of time. I think it was helpful for them to get together and talk about it and work through their issues and come up with solutions</p>	Collaboration and sharing	18
The facilitator uses consultation skills to support and encourage exploration	In depth exploration of individual stories occurs	Understanding and tolerance between participants increases	<p>P2 L65: The EP encourages C to discuss and explore an incident where the child bit her</p> <p>P2 L22: The EP asks C to share other concerns related to the child and this leads to a long discussion related to encouraging the child to engage in school work, all members give their perspective</p> <p>P5 L340-P6 L355:</p> <p>EP: That was definitely the case for C as the only non teacher in the group, she said privately outside the group that she felt like she had everything dumped on her so for her to then be able to discuss that, not quite so openly and not in those words but for the others to acknowledge how difficult it was for her I think was really useful for her</p> <p>TEP: So is support the right words? like emotional support?</p> <p>EP: Hmm yeh from other members of staff for each other but yeh</p>	Collaboration and sharing	19

			<p>TEP: and then maybe recognition as well</p> <p>EP: Yeh acknowledging what theyve done and how difficult it is for them, I mean its not great to labour about how terrible something is but i think if your in that situation day in day out, for someone to say, I understand im sorry your having to go through that and for one of the solutions, well strategies that came out of that was giving C a bit of a break and thats something that the clas teacher came up with that, so C was with child all the time in the afternoon and erm, to the point where she wouldnt let c go anywhere she would follow her and stand outside the toilet if she went to the loo. So D suggested that for 2 blocks of 15 minutes he could go to child, he or another staff member could go to child and say 'id just like to see some of the great work your doing' or say C would you mind doing x while I look at all the great work Child is doing', and that was something that came from him acknowledging the pressure on C</p>		
	Effective consultation skills are being modeled to participants	Participants develop skills in consultation	The EP models consultation skills, especially the use of exceptions questions on several occasions, but no evidence of participants using these skills with each other-Reject this?-		20



			<p>Evidence against: P5 L297-315:</p> <p>EP: Ok, erm yeh I think the exceptions and solution focused stuff was really useful for that, erm</p> <p>TEP: Is that in terms of them generating strategies</p> <p>EP: Yeh aknowledging what theyve done, which they may not see as a strategy</p> <p>TEP Yeh so acknowledging that it is a strategy</p> <p>EP: Yeh and I think it terms of self efficacy thats also useful because its an acknowledgement of 'yeh we already do that or weve already done that or yeh that worked that was great', so i think that was really useful and in terms of thinking about the progress that she had made and how much easier things are now than they used to be</p> <p>TEP: Do you feel like the group was able to do that for each other or was it your acknowledgement do you think was the key things, so was it like them saying to each other 'oh ye you did that, that was great' or was it more your expert role is saying...</p> <p>EP: erm,</p> <p>TEP: Do you think they needed that from you or do you think they could get that from each other I think is the question I am asking</p> <p>EP: Hm yeh thats a good point I dont know erm I dont know if they erm did it, hmm possibly did it for each other but i think</p>		
--	--	--	---	--	--

			more for themselves for each other so having that forum to think about it meant that they were able to acknowledge it in themselves but I cant think of an example of when somebody used consultation skills like exceptions.		
The facilitator supports the group through the problem solving process	Participants learn how to be consultants to each other-	A culture of peer support and shared responsibility within the organization is created	Keep this as an outcome but change the CM? this is also very similar to CMO 20-are both relevant or can they be fused in some way?	Collaboration and sharing	21
The group is supported by the senior management team	Regular times, an appropriate space and cover for teaching staff is allocated to support the running of the group	Participants feel valued and see the value in the sessions	The group has a regular time and the Head Teacher attended	Collaboration and Sharing	22
The group allows time and space for difficulties related to students who are LAC? with SEN	Specific SEN (add-related to LAC) are discussed and professionals share knowledge	Participants gain knowledge and understanding of SEN students – LAC?	P4 L45: Some discussion around the child's need to be 'babied' at times P5 L10: Discussion around the need for structure and consistency P7 L67: Opening up of discussion around the child's need for control in relation to her experiences	Collaboration and Sharing	23
The group is the	All members get a	Participants feel	The group consists of 5 people and all get a chance to	Collaboration and	24

optimal size (not too large or small)	chance to contribute and share problems/roles	their contributions are valued and the group is cohesive	contribute throughout the process	sharing	
The problem solving process is reflective in terms of individual participant and organizational factors relating to behaviour	Participants discuss the nature and meaning of behaviour, including the child's background and the systems around the child	Causal attributions for the behaviour begin to change and this influences individual and organizational strategies	<p>P1 (ALL) the group reflect on the past week and discuss the organizational factors that have impacted on the child working towards a target. Participants communicate information and discuss the differences they see in the child in various class rooms or during different activities</p> <p>P4 L1-15: The group discuss the potential difficulty with the forthcoming new school year in terms of the structure and focus of the organization being different</p> <p>P5 L1-25 The EP guides C into thinking about the differences between after school club and the school environment, which leads to a discussion around structure and consistency in approach</p> <p>P2 L95-106: EP: 'Yeh and I felt like the head teacher and class teacher who had read up alot about attachment difficulties had a bit of an idea about where the control was coming from but the TA who spent most of the time with her had this sort of need to, she wanted to control child ..... They had all experienced child when she first came in and anytime they tried to push her at all she would be at the top of the field and just completely disengage'</p> <p>P5 L380-388: so the question 'how come child feels comfortable in your class'</p> <p>TEP: hmm so that got them to understand her level of development ?</p> <p>EP: Yeh and it also helped, because everybody was saying she was doing it because of control and because she doesnt have to</p>	Reflection and self awareness	25

			do any work there but then L said well she does do work in the classroom she does some year 1 age appropriate things and we were able to think about what is she she likes there so we talked about you know maybe its the less structured element of it the fact she has some free flow she can take short breaks and the way all the adults respond to her is more like the way they would respond to a 4-5 year old		
School staff feel a sense of failure due to self attributions for finding solutions	The participant is reassured by group members that the difficulty is not a result of individual shortcomings or failure-maybe reflection time and use of EP skills to point out success?	Participants self esteem increases due to recognition of success? a reduction in self blame	<p>P1-2 The group engage in reflection about the previous week and child's behaviour, the EP makes several comments that highlight the progress, 'Oh she's been able to sit and wait for the other kids' 'so that's brilliant she was actually doing some work'</p> <p>P5 L1-6: C discusses the progress the child has made in the after school club and other join in with the positivity</p> <p>P5 L54-P6 L26: D starts to comment on how much the child's behaviour has changed and how much progress she has made as compared with when she first started at the school</p> <p>P6 L70: D: ' If you think about when she first started the change is amazing , you don't see it until we do this' ('this' meaning the group consultation)</p> <p>P3 L148-151; 'EP: Yeh and I mean even when I started working with them 2 weeks in there was a difference in what she had been like when she first arrived but being able to reflect on a weekly basis, because I did speak to child's teacher on a weekly basis even though it wasn't always in GC, being able to reflect every week about how far we'd come by comparing to the beginning and even the previous week. I think that's was really helpful to them'</p>	Reflection and self awareness	26

The group are finding an issue or behaviour difficult to understand	The EP facilitator offers expert advice	Participants value the input of the psychologist and the application of psychology to the problem situation occurs	<p>P11 L7: The EP offers specific knowledge related to child trauma and the impact of this on development</p> <p>P6 L 388: me bringing my expert hat on a little bit which is not something you always have in consultation but was quite useful I think in talking about attachment difficulties and trauma</p> <p>P6 L398: EP: erm, I think before I started the consultation work I thought id have a much bigger expert role and they would expect me to come up with solutaions and tell them about psychological theory around attachment and so on but I dotn think that happened that often. But there were times when I tried to reframe things in terms of her background by asking things like 'what do you think might have caused or led to that'</p> <p>P8L 491: EP: Yeh I think it is important to have someone who is an outsider, so I had thought at the beginning about them carrying on and I think a group could continue with me being there and in terms of developing the relationships for them being able to do it on their own is useful but I think having an outsider, so a professional thats coming in, theres more of a formality.</p>	Reflection and self awareness	27
The child's voice is contributed by the EP as part of the process	The EP frames questions that encourage the group to think about behaviour from the child's perspective and	Participants develop empathy, which shifts attributions for behaviour	<p>P2 L107-132 TEP: So it was almost like just one question the way that you can frame a question to get somebody to think about something from a different perspective</p> <p>EP: Yeh so having the child's voice or getting somebody to think about the child's voice and then put that into words .....</p> <p>But I felt like in this group situation it was a more suttle way of developing that empathy and maybe some pity in there as well but not laboring it too much and thinking about it in a more proactive way in terms of what we can do about it because</p>	Reflection and self awareness	28

	experiences		<p>when he had been thorough all the paperwork he was saying 'I don't know what I'm gonna do' this child is broken and in terms of thinking about it specifically in terms of control and how we are going to deal with it"</p> <p>P4 L252-259: EP: I think the change in attributions was one of the most important ones TEP: So we think what did that was the voice of the child.. EP: Yeh definatley, as well as being able to, I mean I don't think we ever really touched on or went into details of her background very much or all the terrible things that happened to her I think they probably had that in the back of their mind so it was just the being able to reflect on what is going on for child using the voice of the child question and trying to reframe their view of her behaviour and her motives for behaviour and why she was seeking control and why she had such difficulty developing social relationships because that was also a big issue</p> <p>P5 P278-281: The voice of the child develops understanding of how the child interacts with others, 'EP; Yeh so like what's the point in getting to know these people, anyway we discussed that and through the voice of the child stuff, when I asked why do you think child doesn't know any of the teachers names they were sort of like 'well, she's just come from a new school, she possibly thinks what's the point in developing relationships ill move on anyway or what's the point in getting to know these adults I can't trust them'</p>		
The frequency of the group is not consistent, a lack of time is dedicated to regular group	Group members do not develop a sense of cohesion	The group does not function because group members do not feel comfortable in being open and	<p>P4 L230-237: TEP: So in terms of practicalities that also quite important I guess thinking about how it would work in any context, so is it realistic to say to a school you want 6 members of staff for an hour every week, is that a commitment that people can realistically do...particularly if its long term EP: Yeh so thinking about it as over a 6 week period I don't know, we also had to do it after school every time obviously because they can't all be released from lessons and then twice</p>	Hindering aspects/difficulties encountered	29

sessions		honest	they had school trips so 2 of the teachers on seperate times came late or couldn't come and then the teachers have other commitments at times or they had arranged meetings with parents. C was also one of the people who ran after school club so she could always come or she had to get cover for after school club		
The group location is problematic	The group is held in a room within the SEN department on every occasion	Attributions are made by the wider staff body about the nature of the group being solely for SEN staff and this may affect attendance	N/A PREVIOUS RESEARCH HAS INDICATED THIS BUT NOT RELEVANT IN THIS CASE	Hindering aspects/difficulties encountered	30
Managers attend the group	Participants feel less confident about sharing difficulties regarding behaviour	Participants devalue the group because they don't feel they can be open and honest	The head teacher attended	Hindering aspects/difficulties encountered	31
The size of the group is large	Participants feel they don't have a voice	The positive outcomes are reduced because participants are less engaged	N/A	Hindering aspects/difficulties encountered	32
The circumstances of the child change	The child's behaviour changes from week to	Participants feel frustrated that no change is		Hindering aspects/difficulties encountered	33

rapidly due to home circumstances	week and strategies need adjusting	occurring			
Ground rules are not set and explored	Participants conflict and disagree, do not listen to each other and are judgmental in their responses	The group does not function in a supportive manner and participants stop attending		Hindering aspects/difficulties encountered	34
The school is small with few staff	Participants regularly discuss issues on an 'ad hoc' basis	Participants see less value in having structured time to discuss issues		Hindering aspects/difficulties encountered	35
The group is closed and inflexible about new members	The wider staff body become suspicious about the group and what is being discusses	Division occurs across the wider organisation		Hindering aspects/difficulties encountered	36
The room allocated is not private	Other staff members walk in and out of the room	Confidentiality is threatened and participants feel less able to be open and honest- Do I need to change this as	EVIDENCE OF C, M: P 4 L213: EP: Yeh that was difficult, the only space we had available for anything beynd teaching was the staff room. P4 L220-224: TEP: What impact, if any do you think it had, a few times as the session went on a few people came in and out do you think it had any impact on the group? EP: Yeh i think it probably in terms of a negative impact it probably meant that it wasnt as formal maybe as it could have been because its their social area	Hindering aspects/difficulties encountered	37



		lack of evidence for this? Maybe to the group is less productive, informal?			
The process has a clear structure				Hindering aspects/difficulties encountered	38

	The facilitator follows the structure and times allocated for each part of the process	The structure is too rigid and this hinders the natural flow of ideas and conversation			
The group focuses on a new case each week	Feedback on previous cases is not part of the process	The efficacy of strategies and interventions is unknown	N/A	Hindering aspects/difficulties encountered	39
The child is LAC and has difficulties in his/her care placement	Foster carers or social workers do not attend the group	A joined up approach and strategies being used at school are not being transferred to the home environment	P3 L195-206: The EP discusses the potential advantages and disadvantages of having carers involved in the GC: 'EP: Erm well one of the things I wished we'd been able to do and when we do this in the furture I would like to get the foster carer or parent involved TEP: Why do you think that would be valuable		40

			EP: In terms of sharing concerns, all being on the same page, and having a forum, if there had been some more joined up thinking between home and school and that support I think that may have made things easier. I dont know if it would		
--	--	--	---	--	--

Possible new outcome theme: Outcomes for the LAC

Context	Mechanism	Outcome	Evidence	Theme	
The group are in sync and collaborative with their approach to managing a LAC	The group develop an approach to focus on the child feeling safe and secure in school, with specific targets to work on developing relationships	The child develops school connectedness, begins to trust adults and becomes a part of the school	<p>P1 L35-49: H: I think how we react to her is almost more important than how we set the stage, as long as we react to her so that she feels safe  EP: Yeh  H: Things are beginning to happen arent they  EP: Yep  D: To be honest not as, i dunno not as rude as she was, before it was like IM GOING, BYE and then slam the door</p> <p>P5 L281-294: So it went from that to, in the last week of term, because D has left and gone to a new school, child got everyone in the class to make a card and sign it, she took part in (the school assembly, which she got really involved in and got really emotional in, then C made her a goodbye card which</p>	Outcomes for the LAC	41

			<p>wasn't really an official goodbye card but a card with pictures in that she could have over the summer holidays because I think towards the end of term she had a realistaion that the 6 weeks she wouldnt be in school and i think for child it became really, well she realised how important school was and how safe she was starting to feel</p> <p>TEP: Yeh and how secure she felt at school</p> <p>EP: Yeh it was a secure base for her, she was like 'im not going to be in school for 6 weeks' and got really upset at that erm and so C made her this book so she had something to hold onto, so yeh</p> <p>TEP: So she literally came leaps and bounds then I guess in terms of her attachments to the adults</p> <p>EP: Yeh and her erm, like her school connectedness because the change in that was huge and I think that has a massive impact on children</p> <p>EP: Yeh I think it was quite a clear thing with child because she started school and I started working with her at the beginning and she had no connection with the school and was actively not learning anybodies names, so 4 weeks in she knew the receptionists names and others were just 'miss' and aksed her what the class 1 teachers name was and she was just 'i dunno'</p> <p>TEP: Yeh she making a choice whether that concious or uncouncious, yeh and you talked about a journey where shes making other children in her class make a card for the teacher who is leaving</p> <p>EP: Yeh and we did pick out particular strategies, so the good thing about this school is that they were really good at putting aside the academic tragets and saying her targets are to feel safe in school and to develop friendships</p> <p>EP: Yeh really important, when we acknowledged that her being safe in school and developing social relationships were her 2 main targets the class teacher then said well may an aim for her this week is to learn the names of 2 class teachers and then we kept up with that target and it was one of her activities that she was doing with C to find out 3 bits of info</p>		
--	--	--	---	--	--

			about 5 other children in her class so they were actively putting strategies in place to develop relationships		
--	--	--	--	--	--

## Appendix 3.6: Semi structured interview schedule

### Preamble to the interview:

Once again thank you for agreeing to take part in this research. I am going to ask you a series of questions about your experience of the group consultation process. Just to remind you, your answers will be treated confidentially and your responses anonymized, so that you cannot be identified. With your agreement (and consent?) the interview will be tape recorded and transcribed. You therefore encourage you to speak as openly and as honestly as you can. If, however, you feel uncomfortable and want to stop the interview at anytime, please let me know and we will stop without question or negative consequence.

### Semi structured interview questions

1. **What is your understanding of the aims of the group consultation?**
2. **Could you tell me a bit about how the consultation group has worked in your school? (logistics, time commitments etc)**
3. **I'm interested in what positives you can see in the process. What do you find valuable or useful?** (Prompts: What benefits (if any) did you get, personally, from the process? Did it help your practice? What value does the process bring to your working life? Have you noticed any changes in your own working life since the process has begun / you were involved in the process?) Was there anything that you did not find valuable?
4. **How useful or otherwise were any strategies suggested within the group consultation process, for your 'day-to-day' practice with the child or other children with similar presenting difficulties– are strategies realistic; were there difficulties with implementation?** (Prompts: What kinds of strategies have emerged from the consultation groups? Did they work? How useful/efficacious were they? Were any challenges / difficulties present with taking the group ideas back to the 'real world'? What challenges have emerged from the consultation process?)
5. **What benefits, if any, do you see the consultation group process bringing for the school?** (Prompts: What changes has the consultation procedure brought for the school? Any examples? Long term / short term?)
6. **What benefits, if any, do you see the consultation process bringing for the group members?** (Prompts: What affect has the consultation procedure had on staff? Has it been beneficial? What kind of impact does the process have? How do you feel when working with the child now?)
7. **What helped or hindered the GC from your perspective?, in terms of your specific context and group experience?**
8. **What did you observe about how the psychologist facilitated the group? What would you say is the role of the psychologist who facilitated the session?** Prompts: what processes are in place for feeding back the outcomes of the consultation groups? Is this an efficient and beneficial process?)

9. **Anything else that you might like to comment on with regard to the consultation group process and how it is used within the school context?**  
(Prompts: Anything else that might be worth noting?)

**Thank the participants and offer a reminder about how the data will be used / recheck consent.**

Appendix 3.7: Example participant C transcript (example extract) and corresponding analysis table (see data files 8-11 for other participants)

Transcript Extract:



82 3 C: Yeh and thats what I spoke to the EP about, so most of my concerns or problems i discussed with her  
83 and she would then support me in bringing it up within the group and it really helped because I could  
84 finnaly say what I wanted to say through answering a question rather than just blurting it out and in a way I  
85 felt comfortable and she wouldnt, well she always made me feel conformatble about being able to say it  
86 TEP: So do you think the GC had any affect on you personally?  
87 1 C: Definately I learned so much, hearing different points of veiws and all the dfferent strategies and the  
88 EP really helped her coming from a different background it helped because it brought a different  
89 perspective that I wouldnt have looked at  
90 TEP: So was that to do with her expert knowledge do you think or was it the way she asked questions that  
91 made you see things differently?  
92 C: Yeh I would say a mixture of both obviously having her background really helps and from a professional  
93 point of view but also from a real life being in the situation it really helped  
94 TEP: What about in terms of your...I mean did you ever feel stressed about working with child  
95 15 C: Yeh i did, especially at first, I felt I couldnt really communicate with other members of staff at the  
96 beginning and it was difficult because I was only in in the afternoon and she did what she liked in the  
97 morning and then in the afternoon I would come in and be more strict  
98 TEP: So you were coming from a different angle?  
99 C: Yeh if id have been there all day it would have been better obviously but coming in half way through  
100 the day when I didnt really know what she did in the morning  
101 TEP: Did the group help with that at all do you think?  
102 17 C: Yeh it did, just being able to communicate those stressors and how i was feeling, it made me feel like  
103 part of the team and you know whenever you go to a new place you feel like a bit of an outsider and that  
104 really made me feel like erm, well it just grew relationships, it was nice I could talk to them more and it  
105 was positive  
106 TEP: So do you think being part of the group and developing those relationships within the group supported  
107 your interactions with staff outside of the group  
108 C: Oh yeh definately, a couple of them had never said 2 words to me so obviously now I talk to them all the  
109 time whenever i see when so yeh definately  
110 TEP: So having a set up situation has kind of supported youd eveloping relationships?  
111 C: Yeh definately and also seeing other peoples point of views as well, you get to know them as a person a  
112 bit more so it does help  
113 TEP: Hmm its interesting hearing your perspevtive you were an outsider really for want of a better word,  
114 you were the one who was coming in from a different perspective in the way you wanted to manage child  
115 but also not being a 'core' staff member, so yeh its interesting to hear how meeting once a week with an  
116 outside professional supported you in feeling less like an outsider. Is there anything you observed about the  
117 way the EP facilitated the group, so like from your perspective could you see the things that she did as a  
118 facilitator, so do you feel like she kept the group on track? What was her role do you think?  
119 3 C: Definately instigating conversations and asking questions and the questions were also very....hmmm I  
120 cant think of the word, like around the right...  
121 TEP: Do you mean they were open question  
122 4 C: Erm yes and no, I feel like they kept us all on track so we didnt go off on tangents, we kept on topic  
123 and some of them I do have a tendency to go off on tangents but she always brought me back to the

### Participants C data analysis table:

Context	Mechanism	Outcome	Theme	Evidence-Participant C	Reference number in transcript
The group allows time for in depth discussions about behaviour	Professionals bring different perspectives and ...Antecedents and consequences of behaviours are considered in greater detail	Learning about behaviour increases confidence in behaviour management	Confidence	P1 L67: But while we were in the group someone said 'well actually she cant go completely cold turkey because its just going to go the other way, so thats something we discussed and we said that we would say to her 'oh its nice to see you child but you shouldnt be here' and thats something we really used and by the end of the summer holidays she wasnt going into class one anymore so that really worked	1
The problem solving process allows professionals to consider behaviour from various perspectives	Participants become more aware of their ability to influence behaviour	Self efficacy and confidence is increased due to understanding of own influence in changing behaviour	Confidence	P2 L 87 Definately I learned so much, hearing different points of veiws and all the dfferent strategies and the EP really helped her coming from a different background it helped because it brought a different perspective that I wouldnt have looked at	2
The EP has expert skills in consultation	The EP facilitator promotes joint exploration through asking answerable 'exceptions' questions in a non	Participants identify success with the child and hence feel valued and gain confidence in their own	Confidence	P2 L82: C: Yeh and thats what I spoke to the EP about, so most of my concerns or problems i discussed with her and she would then support me in bringing it up within the group and it really helped because I could finnaly say what I wanted to say through answering a question rather than just blurting it out and in a way I felt comfortable and she wouldnt, well she always made me feel conformatble about being able to say it  P2 L119 C: Definately instigating conversations and asking questions and the questions were also very....hmmm I cant think	3

	challenging and supportive way	expertise		of the word, like around the right...	
An external consultant facilitates the group	A process is followed that is coherent but not rigid-evidenced through observation checklist	Participants feel contained and confident with the process	Confidence	P2 L122: I feel like they kept us all on track so we didnt go off on tangents, we kept on topic and saw it through, I do have a tendency to go off on tangents but she always brought me back to the original question. I think everything I was trying to say she brought together to make sense TEP: Ok, so almost like she collected all your thoughts C: Yeh and that what I need most the time	4
The EP facilitator is viewed as the 'expert' and the 'assessor of children'	Participants are encouraged to develop skills in problem solving using their collective knowledge and experience	Reliance of the EP as the 'expert' is reduced	Confidence		5
The problem is explored in detail through a structured step by step process	The exact problem/s is explored and identified	The group is able to focus on specific and relevant targets and strategies	Generation-and implementation ? of strategies (more evidence needed before changing this outcome theme)		6
Time is dedicated for	Participants are encouraged to	Strategies become less	Generation of strategies		7

reflection on relationships and interactions with the child	scrutinize their current strategies	reactionary			
Child/ren discussed present similar needs	Participants are able to identify similar traits in other children in their organisation	Strategies are applied to a wide range of children	Generation of strategies		8
A range of professionals attend the group consultation	Skills and experience are shared, existing and new strategies are discussed	Learning about new interventions and strategies occurs, strategies are explored and trialed	Generation of strategies	<p>P1 L2:C: Basically so weve got, well 1: so we are all on the same page and 2: that we were sharing ideas and opinions on her behaviour</p> <p>TEP: So sharing good ideas?</p> <p>C: Yeh and getting you know different perspectives from different teachers or members of staff</p> <p>P1 L12: Yeh I worked with child 1:1 all afternoon everyday so yeh it was even more beneficial to come to the group and see other peoples opinions but also put my opinion across more because obviously i spent the most time with her during the last couple of months</p>	9
The members of the group are aware of organizational structures	Strategies discussed are relevant and relatively simple to implement within the structure of the organisation	Participants feel enabled and empowered to implement strategies	Generation of strategies		10

The problem solving process encourages participants to discuss their own strategies	Strategies are generated by all participants whom will be involved in the implementation, everyone is clear on their role	Participants feel enabled and empowered to implement strategies, they have ownership over the strategy	Generation of strategies	11
The sessions are regular and supported by an outside professional	The outside professional checks in each week how strategies have been implemented and if they have worked	Participants are more likely to implement strategies if they know they will be asked to discuss within the group	Generation and implementation of strategies	12
Everybody has opportunity to contribute to discussion	Group problem solving occurs, the problem is transferred from the individual to the group	Participants experience reduced feelings of isolation	Reducing isolation and stress	13
Participants share similar problems and experiences	Participants realize that their issues are not unique, others are experiencing	Feelings of isolation are reduced, participants feel reassured	Reducing isolation and stress	14

Lots of people interact with the child but Schools are busy environments and staff can be fragmented	similar difficulties with the child Structured time is given to staff to discuss issues	Participants feel reduced isolation and emotionally supported	Reduced isolation and stress	P2 L95: C: Yeh i did, especially at first, I felt I couldnt really communicate with other members of staff at the beginning and it was difficult because I was only in in the afternoon and she did what she liked in the morning and then in the afternoon I would come in and be more strict TEP: So you were coming from a different angle? C: Yeh if id have been there all day it would have been better obviously but coming in half way throught the day when I didnt really know what she did in the morning TEP: Did the group help with that at all do you think? C: Yeh it did,	15
The group represents a collective representation that the child is cared for	Participants share experiences and empathise with each other, the complexity of supporting the child is acknowledged	Participants feel reassured and a reduction in isolation	Reduced isolation and stress	P2 L 77: C: Yeh and I could also put across how difficult it was making things for me, you know working with her 1:1 and asking her not to do something or not go in there when shes been in there all morning I have no leg to stand on really have I because if she is allowed when I am not there	16
The group encourages specific time for collaboration and discussion between staff members in a safe and supportive context with an	Participants are treated as equals and able to discuss difficulties with behaviour without judgment	Participants feel supported and are more likely to seek support, this may reduce stress and burnout and increase enthusiasm	Collaboration and sharing	P 1 L19: C: I think it was helpful that as members of staff we had the support of someone we could talk to who wasnt here all the time and had a totally different angle on it than we do, erm so obviously all getting together and discussing it really helped because theres some things that one of us didnt know TEP: So being able to communicate and share information. but also having someone else there that wasn't part of the school you feel like that was important? C: Yeh definatley because she wasnt part of the school and also she, you felt like you could talk maybe about issues, well obviously because ive only worked here when I started with child I wasnt here before so I only witnessed what I witnessed with her so it was nice to be able to talk to her an air my concerns does	17

outside  
professional to  
facilitate

that make sense?  
TEP: Yeh it does, so I guess what your saying is having an  
outsider there helped you to feel like you could be more honest  
and open in that forum?  
C: Yes completely yes  
TEP: Is that because you felt supported  
C: Yeh completely

P2 L102: just being able to communicate those stressors and how  
i was feeling, it made me feel like part of the team and you  
know whenever you go to a new place you feel like a bit of an  
outsider and that really made me feel like erm, well it just grew  
relationships, it was nice I could talk to them more and it was  
positive  
TEP: So do you think being part of the group and developing  
those relationships within the group supported your interactions  
with staff outside of the group  
C: Oh yeh definatley, a couple of them had never said 2 words to  
me so obviously now I talk to them all the time whenever i see  
when so yeh definatley  
TEP: So having a set up situation has kind of supported youd  
eveloping relationships?

P2 L130: when we got talking it was just like a room full of  
friends or colleagues but it was quite relaxed it wasnt too tense  
so you didnt have to, well if you said something, I mean I say  
things sometimes and they may not come across how i mean  
them it was relaxed enough for that not to be a problem and  
still talk  
TEP: So you dont feel like it was rigid or you were moved on too  
quickly  
C: No definatley not it would always over run so we had time to  
say everything that we needed to say

Membership is  
voluntary

Participants  
choose to attend

The group faces  
less resistance

Collaboration  
and sharing

18

	and therefore are more likely to be motivated to engage	and functions with support and positivity		
The facilitator uses consultation skills to support and encourage exploration	In depth exploration of individual stories occurs	Understanding and tolerance between participants increases	Collaboration and sharing	19
	Effective consultation skills are being modeled to participants	Participants develop skills in consultation		20
The facilitator supports the group through the problem solving process	Participants learn how to be consultants to each other-	A culture of peer support and shared responsibility within the organization is created	Collaboration and sharing	21
The group is supported by the senior management team	Regular times, an appropriate space and cover for teaching staff is allocated to support the running of the group	Participants feel valued and see the value in the sessions	Collaboration and Sharing	22



The group allows time and space for difficulties related to students who are LAC with SEN	Specific SEN related to LAC are discussed and professionals share knowledge	Participants gain knowledge and understanding of LAC students	Collaboration and Sharing	<p>P3 L147: so obviously the attachment and things but actually child was a new one to me I havent really worked with children with attachment difficulties before whereas someone else had so they gave their point of view and I gave mine from a different angle</p> <p>P3 L156: TEP: Yeh ok and also I guess in your interactions with child you had an undertsanding of some things  C: Yeh I really belive that aswell so little things like if someone is in your face and your trying to say leave me alone and they wont go thats when it will all beuild up and I remeber that from being a child. So I know when child said that she really meant it she wasnt trying to be a pain  TEP: Do you think bringing your experience to the group helped other people develop empathy  C: I hope so because ive never hid the fact ive got ADHD and I feel it helps me with my job and we spoke about it in the group discussions so I hope that it would because some things that werent mentioned by others I mentioned and we persued a few things  TEP: Ok so some kind of 'lines of inquiry' were followed because of the perspective you brought  C: Yeh, yeh  P3 L 145: C: I mean from my own personal experiences ive worked with excluded children for a few years so ive worked with quite difficult children and I brought my own experiences into it and how I would have dealt with children from different backgrounds 23 so obviously the attachment and things but actually child was a new one to me I havent really worked with children with attachment difficulties before whereas someone else had so they gave their point of view and I gave mine from a different angle.</p>	23
The group is the optimal size (not too large or	All members get a chance to contribute and	Participants feel their contributions are	Collaboration and sharing		24

small)	share	valued and the			
	problems/roles	group is cohesive			
The problem solving process is reflective in terms of individual participant and organizational factors relating to behaviour	Participants discuss the nature and meaning of behaviour, including the child's background and the systems around the child	Causal attributions for the behaviour begin to change and this influences individual and organizational strategies	Reflection and self awareness	P1 L60 C: Yeh I think obviously, I mean ive worked in alot of different schools and different strategies work for different schools but no I think some of the strategies werent in my opinion what I would have done but the majority worked	25
School staff feel a sense of failure due to self attributions for finding solutions	The participant is reassured by group members that the difficulty is not a result of individual shortcomings or failure-maybe reflection time and use of EP skills to point out success?	Participants self esteem increases due to recognition of success? a reduction in self blame	Reflection and self awareness		26
The group are finding an issue or behaviour difficult to understand	The EP facilitator offers expert advice	Participants value the input of the psychologist and the application of psychology to the	Reflection and self awareness	P1 L19: 17 C: I think it was helpful that as members of staff we had the support of someone we could talk to who wasnt here all the time and had a totally different angle on it than we do  P3 L175: TEP: So it feels like for you from what youve said is that the most important thing was having the EP as a support and someone to offload onto	27

		problem situation occurs		<p>C: Yeh definatley someone to help me know if im doing it right and also being new at the school I didnt feel like I could talk to certain people</p> <p>TEP: So it helped you have a voice?</p> <p>C: Yeh completely</p>	
The child's voice is contributed by the EP as part of the process	The EP frames questions that encourage the group to think about behaviour from the child's perspective and experiences	Participants develop empathy, which shifts attributions for behaviour	Reflection and self awareness		28
The frequency of the group is not consistent, a lack of time is dedicated to regular group sessions	Group members do not develop a sense of cohesion	The group does not function because group members do not feel comfortable in being open and honest	Hindering aspects/difficulties encountered		29
The group location is problematic	The group is held in a room within the SEN department on every occasion	Attributions are made by the wider staff body about the nature of the group being solely for SEN staff and this may affect attendance	Hindering aspects/difficulties encountered		30
Managers	Participants feel	Participants	Hindering		31

attend the group	less confident about sharing difficulties regarding behaviour	devalue the group because they don't feel they can be open and honest	aspects/difficulties encountered	
The size of the group is large	Participants feel they don't have a voice	The positive outcomes are reduced because participants are less engaged	Hindering aspects/difficulties encountered	32
The circumstances of the child change rapidly due to home circumstances	The child's behaviour changes from week to week and strategies need adjusting	Participants feel frustrated that no change is occurring	Hindering aspects/difficulties encountered	33
Ground rules are not set and explored	Participants conflict and disagree, do not listen to each other and are judgmental in their responses	The group does not function in a supportive manner and participants stop attending	Hindering aspects/difficulties encountered	34
The school is small with few staff	Participants regularly discuss issues on an 'ad hoc' basis	Participants see less value in having structured time to discuss issues	Hindering aspects/difficulties encountered	35

The group is closed and inflexible about new members	The wider staff body become suspicious about the group and what is being discusses	Division occurs across the wider organisation	Hindering aspects/difficulties encountered	36-CE not marked in transcript
The room allocated is not private	Other staff members walk in and out of the room	Confidentiality is threatened and participants feel less able to be open and honest- Do I need to change this as lack of evidence for this? Maybe to the group is less productive, informal?	Hindering aspects/difficulties encountered	37
The process has a clear structure	The facilitator follows the structure and times allocated for each part of the process	The structure is too rigid and this hinders the natural flow of ideas and conversation	Hindering aspects/difficulties encountered	38
The group focuses on a new case each week	Feedback on previous cases is not part of the process	The efficacy of strategies and interventions is unknown	Hindering aspects/difficulties encountered	39

The child is LAC and has difficulties in his/her care placement	Foster carers or social workers do not attend the group	A joined up approach and strategies being used at school are not being transferred to the home environment	Hindering aspects/difficulties encountered	P1 L34: C: I suppose just because I feel like its not gone anywhere because of how its ended but thats not the fault of the group. So there thats all really	40
The sessions take up substantial periods of time each week	Participants have to give up planning time	? –Participants feel pressured and frustrated with the process being too lengthy? <b>NEW OUTCOME</b> (FROM A)	Hindering aspects/difficulties encountered		41-

#### Possible new outcome theme: Outcomes for the LAC

Context	Mechanism	Outcome	Theme	Evidence	
The group encourages participants to be collaborative in their approach to managing a LAC	The group develop an approach that focuses on the child developing feelings of safety and security in	The child develops school connectedness, begins to trust adults and the school environment	Outcomes for the LAC	P1 L44: C: I think it made her feel more secure definatley, she had quite a few members of staff that were always interested in what she had to say and listened to her and cared and showed they cared and having someone from outside of school who came in just for her was really positive for her you know she loved that attention.	42

	the school environment, with specific targets that aim to build relationships				
Meeting regularly as a group ensures a consistent approach is developed	Discussions related to the child's behaviour in various contexts around school lead to adult understanding of the child's needs	The child feels supported, understood and accepted	Outcomes for the LAC	<p>P1 L53 C: Ok so we would all walk in the room on totally seperate pages but we would always leave the room on the same page and then be able to put a plan in place so for rewards or anything we would always have that when we left the room</p> <p>TEP: So when you left the room you all felt like you had a plan?</p> <p>C: Yep</p> <p>P 1 L60 C: Yeh so her always going into class 1 that had a massive affect because she was in year 4 and we all discussed here but we all had different opinions on that so whether she should be able to go in and my strong opinion was that she shouldnt be able to. But while we were in the group someone said 'well actually she cant go completely cold turkey because its just going to go the other way, so thats something we discussed and we said that we would say to her 'oh its nice to see you child but you shouldnt be here' and thats something we really used and by the end of the summer holidays she wasnt going into class one anymore so that really worked</p> <p>TEP: So if it hadnt been for sitting down as a group and thinking about how it was going to work ?</p> <p>C: It wouldnt have worked, because before it wasnt working, id come in in the afternoon and she will have been in class one all morning so it didnt, there was no communication in the right places so</p>	43

yeh definatley helped in that case

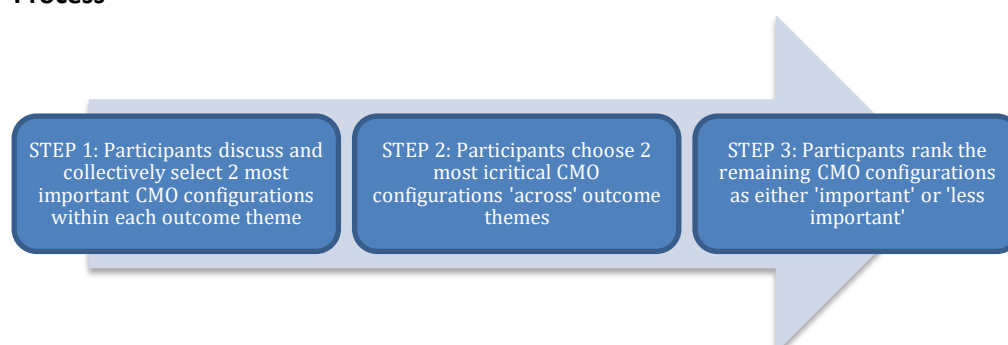


## Appendix 3.8 Focus Group:

### Preamble to the focus group:

Once again thank you for agreeing to take part in this research. I am going to present you with a series of program theories, that have been derived from data collected throughout the research process. I will then ask you to discuss as a group and category the theories in terms of which ones you feel were most pertinent and important to your context and to yourselves as participants in the group consultation intervention. Just to remind you, your answers will be treated confidentially and your responses anonymised, so that you cannot be identified. You therefore encourage you to speak as openly and as honestly as you can, as well as listen to each other's viewpoints. If, however, you feel uncomfortable and want to stop the interview at anytime, please let me know and we will stop without question or negative consequence. Is everybody happy to go ahead?

### Process



MOST CRITICAL
MOST IMPORTANT
IMPORTANT
LESS IMPORTANT

I will check consent to use participants input into a final set of program theories

## Appendix 3.9: Ethics approval



School of Psychology

The University of Nottingham  
University Park  
Nottingham  
NG7 2RD

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

SJ  
Ref: S947

Thursday, 16 March 2017

Dear Nick Durbin and Maddi Austin,

### **Ethics Committee Review**

Thank you for submitting an account of your proposed research 'A Realistic Evaluation Of An EP Led Process Consultation Group With A Team Of Adults Supporting A Looked After Child'.

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

### Appendix 3.10: Social worker information and consent



**School of Psychology**

#### *Participant Information (Social Worker)*

*Researchers: Maddi Austin.*

*Supervisors:*

As you are aware, a child who is placed in the care of Derby City local authority for whom you have care responsibilities has been referred to the Derby City educational Psychology Service for additional support. The child's school have agreed to host a consultation group involving the team of adults around the child, you may also have agreed to be part of the team.

As part of this project, I would like to conduct some research, which is explained in more detail below:

My name is Maddi Austin and I am a Doctoral research student from the University Of Nottingham under the supervision of

[REDACTED]

As you may be aware, Educational Psychologists in Derby are involved in on-going work with looked after children across the city, as part of a project with the virtual school. A significant part of the role entails the psychologist

facilitating 'consultation groups' with the team of adults supporting Looked After children.

The primary aim of the 'consultation group' is to support the adults in their day-to-day practice and care of the child, with the aim of building the adults' confidence and knowledge and hence improved outcomes for the children and young people they are working with.

The study seeks to explore and understand what influences a group consultation and its outcomes, when this is focused on the needs of a Looked after Child.

This study will be written up as a research thesis and submitted as a requirement for the award of Doctorate in Applied educational psychology (the postgraduate professional qualification in educational psychologist toward which I am currently studying), and has received ethical approval from The University of Nottingham.

As part of the research process, I will be completing two observations of the consultation group, which will, subject to the agreement of all participants be tape recorded. In addition, participants will be asked to complete a semi-structured interview of approximately 1 hour's duration about their experiences of the consultation process. This will also be tape recorded. A second 'focus group' interview will also be conducted with all participants after the consultation group has finished. The purpose of the focus group interview will be to seek participants' views on the research findings.

The information gathered will be analysed, fed back and used to inform local authority virtual school and educational psychology service developments and the future use of group consultation and/or other staff training and support for looked after children.

**As the child's legal guardian, it is essential that you are aware some of the child's background and present issues will be discussed within the group and possibly with the researcher during interviews and focus groups, should any issues arise that relate to the safety of the child, or raise safeguarding concerns, you will be informed immediately by the EP facilitating the group or the researcher. Participants will also be briefed on safeguarding and confidentiality procedures as part of the initial setting up of ground rules within the group.**

**All data collected during the research project will be confidential. Pseudonyms will be used to ensure that individual participants, the child and the school cannot be identified from their responses or involvement, and all data will be managed in line with both University and Local Authority data protection procedures. It will not be possible to identify the Local Authority, the school or any of the interview participants within any written account of this study.**

Retained data will be coded to ensure that confidentiality and anonymity is assured. Data will be stored securely. Only my University supervisor, Nick Durbin and I, will have access to the data, for the purposes of analysis. In addition, the academics who examine my thesis will also have the right to scrutinise my raw data; however, prospects of this occurring are remote.

Your consent is required for me to gather any data regarding the child, If you would like further information regarding the research, please don't hesitate to contact me [REDACTED]

[Nick.durbin@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:Nick.durbin@nottingham.ac.uk)

[Judith.McAlister@derby.gov.uk](mailto:Judith.McAlister@derby.gov.uk)

Thank you for considering this request. Your involvement in this research would be greatly appreciated.

If you agree to be included in this research project, please could you indicate your consent using the brief consent form.

Many thanks.

,  
Maddi Austin  
**Trainee Educational Psychologist**

**School of Psychology**



**The University of  
Nottingham**

UNITED KINGDOM • CHINA • MALAYSIA

Researcher(s): ... [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

You should answer these questions independently:

- Have you read and understood the Information Sheet?  
YES/NO
- Have you had the opportunity to ask the researcher questions about the study? YES/NO
- Have all your questions been answered satisfactorily?  
YES/NO
- I give permission for data regarding the child for whom I have legal responsibility from this study to be used for the purposes of the research and shared with other researchers provided that anonymity is completely protected. YES/NO

- I agree that the researcher has made clear that any issues regarding the safety of the child that may arise as part of the research will be reported to me immediately and the researcher is aware that in the case of concerns or disclosures that appropriate procedures will be adhered to.  
YES/NO

“This study has been explained to me to my satisfaction, and I agree for data about the child to be used for research purposes”.

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:

### Appendix 3.11–Initial email to Head Teacher

Dear Head Teacher

My name is Maddi Austin and I am a trainee Educational Psychologist. I am currently studying for the doctoral training program with the University of Nottingham and conjointly working as a trainee for Derby City Council. I am aware that you have already discussed my potential research project with XXXXXX as part of the Consultation group that will be ongoing over the next 6 weeks with some selected members of staff at your school. The aim of the research is to investigate how, why and in what ways the Consultation group may be effective in supporting your staff in their work with a specific child.

My research will involve me observing the group process on 1 occasions, I will audio record the sessions and then transcribe the data, all names of participants and the child will be anonymised and your school will be given a pseudonym, so that it cannot be identified in the write up of the research. I will also be asking the group members to participate in individual interviews, that will last for around 45 minutes and focus on their experiences within the group. With your permission, these interviews may be conducted in school, however I will be asking participants to give their free time to take part in the interviews and therefore they are likely to be during lunchtime or after school, at a convenient time for each individual.

The final part of my research will require participants to take part in a focus group, which aims to ask participants their thoughts on my findings from the research and take part in a process of 'categorising' various elements of the group consultation process according to their views on the mechanisms and outcomes of the process. This focus group may also take place in school, however participants will be asked to give their free time to take part.

I would like the opportunity to meet with you to answer any questions you may have, and for you to sign a consent form should you agree for the research to go ahead in your school.

You can contact me using the details below

Kind regards

Appendix 3.12: Example of data sources for CMOC's in outcome theme 'Increased Confidence'. N.B: All other outcome themes can be found in data files 12-16

No	Context	Mechanism	Outcome	Data sources
1	The consultation group allows time for participants to have in depth discussion about the child's behaviour	The child's behaviours are considered in detail, deeper levels of thinking and learning about behaviour occur	Learning about behaviour increases confidence in behaviour management	(D) P1 L35, P 7 L281)  (C) P1 L67)  (H) P1 L46, P2 L77)  ((L) P4 L173)  ((Z) P1 L 37, P1 L68, P3 L205)  (RI and Obs analysis)
2	The problem solving process allows professionals to consider behaviour from various perspectives	Participants develop awareness of their ability to influence behaviour	Self efficacy is increased due to understanding of own influence in managing challenging behaviour	(D) P5 L197: P5 L203:  (L) P 5 L209:  (Z) P1 L33:  (H) P 2 L72 P2 L82:  (C) P2 L 87  (RI and Obs analysis)
3	An external facilitator supports the group using expert skills in consultation	The facilitator promotes joint exploration using a coherent process and asks 'exceptions' questions in a non challenging and supportive way	Participants identify success with the child and hence feel valued and gain confidence in their expertise	(D) P3 L104, P3 L131: P6 L 235  (C) P2 L122, P2 L82:  (L) P6 L240, P5 L200  (Z) P4 L211



CMO 1:

(D)

P1 L35: for me personally its that knowing your doing the right thing, or at least knowing your not doing the wrong thing, because the last thing you want to do is the wrong thing and sometimes with a case like that its hard to know if your doing the right thing

P 7 L281: 'There was no umbrella solution to all the places she went, they were bespoke and we all reported back different things. Even when she was dealing with the Head, the relationship she had with the Head was very different to the one she had with me and was also very different to the one she had with L and she had with T

(C)

P1 L67: But while we were in the group someone said 'well actually she cant go completely cold turkey because its just going to go the other way, so that's something we discussed and we said that we would say to her 'oh its nice to see you child but you shouldn't be here'

(H)

P1 L46 we looked at what worked and what didn't work and that's how we formulated the approach we had with her because it was clear she wasn't going to respond to what other children would respond to

P2 L77: And actually the more we let her be the more we got to know her because we understood about her controlling behaviour, which meant that you could adapt your strategies, but it wasn't out of a text book

(L)

P4 L173: At first we weren't sure how to approach it so sort of make sure we were firm so she knew where she stood or to be a little bit for lenient and I think in the end we met a balance that was ok for us all.

(Z)

P1 L 37: consistency of approach, which is definitely what she needed because that's what she hadn't had, barely had any consistency which is why she had regressed, she was an 8 year old but acting like a 4 year old. That's kind of where her maturity level stopped really with all the awful things that happened to her really

TEP: Is that something that you think you learned from the process of GC or is that something that you were already aware of because of child's circumstances anyway, so is that something you discussed in the group in terms of her level of need

Z: yeh it was definitely and it was the bit of research that I know D had done swell had done quite a lot of reading around it and effectively her development had stopped when the abuse starts and it was like watching a reception child come in and develop, I mean we see the 4 year old coming in now and she was exactly like that but with all the extra baggage that she had

P1 L68: you cant have normal school discipline because it just doesn't work, if you try to have normal societal rules, because she hasn't had that. Yeh she cant cope with that and I would say it definitely did help in terms of its all about listening isn't it in the end and listening to others and listening to her as well in terms of what she's saying.

P3 L205: Z: Yeh the issues I suppose its defiantly that, I mean if your average child in the class room was behaving like that you'd treat them differently whereas with child you didn't because you had the understanding

CMO 2:

(D)

P5 L197: 'but because we had those meetings I knew that wasn't the goal, I wasn't meant to be the pastoral person to her and I wasn't that person, like I say everything was a transaction'

P5 L203: 'when you went to consultation you saw how the whole system worked, so my role was different but I knew my role, I knew my aims but I also knew that when she went to T's, she got that kind of care and when she went into class 1 she got that kind of care...so you got to see the bigger picture and then it made more sense of what you were doing'

(L)

L: Hmm well I think definitely using the groups and also everyday that you spend trying you own little ways and seeing what works and I did feel more confident as time went on

(Z)

P1 L33: Again, finding out about how child reacted in different circumstances and environments

TEP: So something about sharing of information?

Z: Yes, yep definitely sharing information, that's always the key to anything and ensuring that everybody was doing the same thing and again, well she was trying to play one off against the other but knowing that that's what she was doing

(H)

P 2 L72: it was more about having the confidence to let her be and do her own thing.

P2 L82: I think the intervention gave us the confidence to do it

(C)

P2 L 87 Definitely I learned so much, hearing different points of views and all the different strategies and the EP really helped her coming from a different background it helped because it brought a different perspective that I wouldn't have looked at

CMO 3

(D)

P3 L104: 'do you know the biggest impact for me, so the number 1 impact was that it highlighted to me how far we had come. Because we had weeks between and then we'd sit down and we'd go through something and there wasn't a lot but you'd sit there and think, 'yeh but 4 weeks ago, look at how she was then'. When you sit down and somebody highlights the progress by highlighting what was happening the week before or a few weeks before. It really highlighted how much the situation had improved each time'

P3 L131: 'but then when we went to the group and it highlighted how much difference we had made.

P4 L153: 'so yeh I needed those meetings to recognize we were getting somewhere, you know

P6 L 235: 'I mean I don't know I suppose for her its really really good management of people because what she did, she came to the school at the same time every week so it was consistent, but she didn't know what was happening on the other days so she came in and asked the right questions so we explored the options. She kind of gave us a nudge and then we came up with it and I think we learned quite early on to make the goals small'

(C)

P2 L122: I feel like she kept us all on track so we didn't go off on tangents, we kept on topic and saw it through, I do have a tendency to go off on tangents but she always brought me back to the original question. I think everything I was trying to say she brought together to make sense

P2 L82: C: Yeh and that's what I spoke to the EP about, so most of my concerns or problems I discussed with her and she would then support me in bringing it up within the group and it really helped because I could finally say what I wanted to say through answering a question rather than just blurting it out and in a way I felt comfortable and she wouldn't, well she always made me feel comfortable about being able to say it

(L)

P6 L240: I think the EP balanced it really well because she had specific questions to lead us on the right path and making sure we actually got something out of the meeting so we came up with targets and we went through how we were going to solve and what we were going to improve for child. She used a strategy where she let one person almost lead it so I think that was C, so she was asking questions to C and C was the main speaker but then that kind of helped us in that it wasn't just everybody throwing in ideas

P 5 L200: you could have still used your experience but the consultation gave us the professional in the room and it felt like the strategies were working and the professional is saying its a good idea so that was reassuring and built confidence in what we were doing.

(Z)

P4 L211: We worked through the process and she didn't straight jacket us, sometimes it did kind of wander off a little but she did bring it back. I suppose its a judgment call of how long you let it go off for and when you bring it back, whether its right or wrong its just a judgment call and it was obviously structured and she knew the key points in moving through it. She would let it go off for a little bit but she would bring it back and like I say its when you've got different individuals and they all need different times to get things across and different ways of expressing thing

## Appendix 4.1: Program Theory 2

Context	Mechanism	Outcome	Theme
The group allows time for in depth discussions about behaviour	Antecedents and consequences of behaviour are considered in greater detail	Learning about behaviour increases confidence in behaviour management	Confidence
The problem solving process allows professionals to consider behaviour from various perspectives	Participants become more aware of their ability to influence behaviour	Self efficacy and confidence is increased due to understanding of own influence in changing behaviour	Confidence
The EP has expert skills in consultation	The EP facilitator promotes joint exploration through asking answerable 'exceptions' questions in a non challenging and supportive way	Participants identify success with the child and hence feel valued and gain confidence in their own expertise	Confidence
An external consultant facilitates the group	?	Participants feel contained and confident with the process	Confidence
The EP facilitator is viewed as the 'expert' and the 'assessor of	Participants are encouraged to develop skills in problem solving using their	Reliance of the EP as the 'expert' is reduced	Confidence

children'	collective knowledge and experience		
The problem is explored in detail through a structured step by step process	The exact problem/s is explored and identified	The group is able to focus on specific and relevant targets and strategies	Generation-and implementation? of strategies (more evidence needed before changing this outcome theme)
Time is dedicated for reflection on relationships and interactions with the child	Participants are encouraged to scrutinize their current strategies	Strategies become less reactionary	Generation of strategies
?	Participants are able to identify similar traits in other children in their organisation	Strategies are applied to a wide range of children	Generation of strategies
A range of professionals attend the group consultation	Skills and experience are shared, existing and new strategies are discussed	Learning about new interventions and strategies occurs, strategies are explored and trialed	Generation of strategies
The members of the group are	Strategies discussed are relevant and relatively simple to implement within	Participants feel enabled and	Generation of strategies

aware of organizational structures	the structure of the organisation	empowered to implement strategies	
The problem solving process encourages participants to discuss their own strategies	Strategies are generated by all participants whom will be involved in the implementation, everyone is clear on their role	Participants feel enabled and empowered to implement strategies, they have ownership over the strategy	Generation of strategies
The sessions are regular and supported by an outside professional	The outside professional checks in each week how strategies have been implemented and if they have worked	Participants are more likely to implement strategies if they know they will be asked to discuss within the group	Generation and implementation of strategies
Everybody has opportunity to contribute to discussion	Group problem solving occurs, the problem is transferred from the individual to the group	Participants experience reduced feelings of isolation	Reducing isolation and stress
Participants share similar problems and experiences	Participants realize that their issues are not unique, others are experiencing similar difficulties with the child	Feelings of isolation are reduced, participants feel reassured	Reducing isolation and stress
Lots of people interact with the child but Schools are busy environments and staff can be fragmented	Structured time is given to staff to discuss issues	Participants feel reduced isolation and emotionally supported	Reduced isolation and stress

The group represents a collective representation that the child is cared for	Participants share experiences and empathise with each other, the complexity of supporting the child is acknowledged	Participants feel reassured and a reduction in isolation	Reduced isolation and stress
The group encourages specific time for collaboration and discussion between staff members in a safe and supportive context with an outside professional to facilitate	Participants are treated as equals and able to discuss difficulties with behaviour without judgment	Participants feel supported and are more likely to seek support, this may reduce stress and burnout and increase enthusiasm	Collaboration and sharing
Membership is voluntary	Participants choose to attend and therefore are more likely to be motivated to engage	The group faces less resistance and functions with support and positivity	Collaboration and sharing
The facilitator uses consultation skills to support and encourage exploration	In depth exploration of individual stories occurs	Understanding and tolerance between participants increases	Collaboration and sharing
	Effective consultation skills are being modeled to participants	Participants develop skills in consultation	
The facilitator supports the group through the problem solving process	Participants learn how to be consultants to each other-	A culture of peer support and shared responsibility within the organization	Collaboration and sharing

is created

The group is supported by the senior management team	Regular times, an appropriate space and cover for teaching staff is allocated to support the running of the group	Participants feel valued and see the value in the sessions	Collaboration and Sharing
The group allows time and space for difficulties related to students who are LAC	Specific SEN related to LAC are discussed and professionals share knowledge	Participants gain knowledge and understanding of LAC students	Collaboration and Sharing
The group is the optimal size (not too large or small)	All members get a chance to contribute and share problems/roles	Participants feel their contributions are valued and the group is cohesive	Collaboration and sharing
The problem solving process is reflective in terms of individual participant and organizational factors relating to behaviour	Participants discuss the nature and meaning of behaviour, including the child's background and the systems around the child	Causal attributions for the behaviour begin to change and this influences individual and organizational strategies	Reflection and self awareness
School staff feel a sense of failure due to self attributions for finding solutions	The participant is reassured by group members that the difficulty is not a result of individual shortcomings or failure- reflection time and use of EP	Participants self esteem increases due to recognition of success?	Reflection and self awareness



skills to point out success?

The group are finding an issue or behaviour difficult to understand	The EP facilitator offers expert advice	Participants value the input of the psychologist and the application of psychology to the problem situation occurs	Reflection and self awareness
The child's voice is contributed by the EP as part of the process	The EP frames questions that encourage the group to think about behaviour from the child's perspective and experiences	Participants develop empathy, which shifts attributions for behaviour	Reflection and self awareness
The frequency of the group is not consistent, a lack of time is dedicated to regular group sessions	Group members do not develop a sense of cohesion	The group does not function because group members do not feel comfortable in being open and honest	Hindering aspects/difficulties encountered
The group location is problematic	The group is held in a room within the SEN department on every occasion	Attributions are made by the wider staff body about the nature of the group being solely for SEN staff and this may affect attendance	Hindering aspects/difficulties encountered
Managers attend the group	Participants feel less confident about	Participants devalue the group because they don't feel they can be	Hindering aspects/difficulties

	sharing difficulties regarding behaviour	open and honest	encountered
The size of the group is large	Participants feel they don't have a voice	The positive outcomes are reduced because participants are less engaged	Hindering aspects/difficulties encountered
The circumstances of the child change rapidly due to home circumstances	The child's behaviour changes from week to week and strategies need adjusting	Participants feel frustrated that no change is occurring	Hindering aspects/difficulties encountered
Ground rules are not set and explored	Participants conflict and disagree, do not listen to each other and are judgmental in their responses	The group does not function in a supportive manner and participants stop attending	Hindering aspects/difficulties encountered
The school is small with few staff	Participants regularly discuss issues on an 'ad hoc' basis	Participants see less value in having structured time to discuss issues	Hindering aspects/difficulties encountered
The group is closed and inflexible about new members	The wider staff body become suspicious about the group and what is being	Division occurs across the wider organisation	Hindering aspects/difficulties

	discusses		encountered
The room allocated is not private	Other staff members walk in and out of the room	Confidentiality is threatened and participants feel less able to be open and honest-Do I need to change this as lack of evidence for this? Maybe to the group is less productive, informal?	Hindering aspects/difficulties encountered
The process has a clear structure	The facilitator follows the structure and times allocated for each part of the process	The structure is too rigid and this hinders the natural flow of ideas and conversation	Hindering aspects/difficulties encountered
The group focuses on a new case each week	Feedback on previous cases is not part of the process	The efficacy of strategies and interventions is unknown	Hindering aspects/difficulties encountered
The child is LAC and has difficulties in his/her care placement	Foster carers or social workers do not attend the group	A joined up approach and strategies being used at school are not being transferred to the home environment	Hindering aspects/difficulties encountered

Possible new outcome theme: Outcomes for the LAC

Context	Mechanism	Outcome	Theme
The group are in sync and collaborative with their approach to managing a LAC	The group develop an approach to focus on the child feeling safe and secure in school, with specific targets to work on developing relationships	The child develops school connectedness, begins to trust adults and becomes a part of the school	Outcomes for the LAC



## Appendix 4.2: Evaluation cycle one refinements

### Refinements to Outcome Theme ‘Confidence’

The Outcome theme ‘Confidence’ contained five CMOCs. One of the CMO configurations was highlighted as needing refinement as a result of observation and interview data and is presented in table 4.2.

Table 4.2: CMO identified for refinement from Initial Program Theory

Context	Mechanism	Outcome	Source
Ep’s and other professionals work together with equal but differing expertise	The EP facilitator promotes joint exploration through asking questions in a non challenging and supportive way	Participants feel valued and gain confidence in their own expertise	Boznic and Carter 2002

The refinements made to this CMO can be found in program theory 2 (appendix 4.1) and are presented in table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Refinements made to outcome theme ‘confidence’ in evaluation cycle one (taken from program theory 2)

Context	Mechanism	Outcome	Data sources
The EP has expert skills in consultation	The EP facilitator promotes joint exploration through asking answerable ‘exceptions’ questions in a non challenging and supportive way	Participants identify success with the child and hence feel valued and gain confidence in their own expertise	Appendix 3.6 (observation transcript P4 L59)

### Interpretation of evidence to support refinements

Evidence within the data from the observation exemplars how the EP uses facilitation skills in the way she questions and leads the conversation in a way that is explorative but not challenging to the problem holder within the group:

*P 4 L59 ,EP: 'So if we could talk a bit more about your experiences of her needing to be in control'*

The extract below further highlights the use of EP skills in questioning, through the use of an 'exceptions' question, which enables the participant to identify success with the child and thereby leading to the child's need for a consistent approach in managing her:

*P4 L63, EP: 'Are there any times when she has accepted an instruction from some one else....C: A lot more she seems to at after school club, listen to direction and Listens to J and me, so if I say something she knows that J is there as well and if J says something she knows that I'm with J on it*

*P5 L21, EP: 'Do you think that's because you have been giving her a consistent message.....C: Yeh that's the word I was looking for*

The EP's use of consultation skills in terms of questioning therefore leads to the identification of success with the child and through this, the participant is able to 'label' what had led to that success 'C: Yeh, that's the word I was looking for'.

This therefore led to a potential refinement of this CMOC, because although the group does consist of professionals that having a range of expertise (see table 4.2), the evidence from the data suggests that the context and mechanism for 'ignighting' the potential outcome in this case was more subject to the skills of the EP in terms of questioning being the context, which leads to the participant identifying successes with the child (Mechanism), which then leads to the participant being able to label the approach which has been successful with the child (Outcome). The extract below is from the RI transcript, and further supports the notion that the use of exceptions questions in particular were the contextual factor in terms of being an element of the process, that leads to participants recognising success in terms of 'what works well' with the child.

*P2 L137-P3 L142, 'so the exceptions questions were really powerful in getting people to think about when they had managed to get her.... I guess without having somebody asking those questions in that forum would you ever get to that point in thinking where you think 'oh that worked let me try that again', without someone directing that question at you'.*

All other CMO configurations within this outcome theme remained unchanged. There were no new CMO configurations within this outcome theme.

**Refinements to Outcome Theme 'Generation of Strategies' in evaluation cycle one**

The Outcome theme 'Generation of Strategies' contained 5 CMOCs in the Initial Program Theory (appendix 2.5). As a result of the analysis of the observation and RI transcripts, 1 CMO configuration was refined. The CMOC is included in the initial program theory as presented in table 4.4:

Table 4.4:

Context	Mechanism	Outcome	Source
Child/ren discussed present similar needs	Participants are able to identify similar traits in other children in their organisation	Strategies are applied to a wide range of children	Turner 2014, Nugent et al, 2014 Evans 2005

The context of this CMO configuration was elicited from the RS. Most of the current body of research examines consultation groups in which participants bring a different child each week to be discussed and therefore participants can gain knowledge and develop strategies based on the similarities of the child's presenting behaviours to other children within the organisation. As this group is specific to one child and the same child is discussed each week, the context of this CMO configuration is not relevant to the current study and was therefore removed at this stage. However, the mechanism and outcome were included as they may still be pertinent to participants in relation to their potentially gaining understanding of issues faced by LAC.

Within the 'Generation of Strategies' outcome theme, two new CMO configurations were elicited in evaluation cycle one and are presented in table 4.2 below. The extracted evidence is presented in appendix 3.7.

**Table 4.5:** Additional CMOCs elicited from inductive analysis of data and included in program theory 2:

Context	Mechanism	Outcome
The problem solving process encourages	Strategies are generated by all participants whom will be involved in the	Participants feel enabled and empowered to implement strategies, they have ownership



participants to discuss their own strategies	implementation, everyone is clear on their role	over the strategy
The sessions are regular and supported by an outside professional	The outside professional checks in each week how strategies have been implemented and if they have worked	Participants are more likely to implement strategies if they know they will be asked to discuss within the group

Evidence that the process enabled the group to discuss and generate strategies collectively, rather than being 'given' or 'directed' ideas from the EP facilitator was elicited from the observation data:

P8 L59-P9 L58: The group engage in a lengthy discussion related to supporting the child remain in one of 3 locations in the school, the class 1 teacher discusses her response if the child attempts to go into her class and other staff contribute ideas. A consensus for all is arrived at

During the RI, the EP facilitator suggested that this part of the process was 'productive' because participants had arrived at strategies themselves:

P1 L49-51: 'I've found GC a really productive way of school staff coming up with their own solutions, rather than there being an expert telling them what they should do, they have the opportunity to come up with their own solutions, reject suggestions'

P2 L72-74 'TEP: So quite specific strategies that you generated through the process?  
EP: Yeh and that they came up with most of the time, I may have suggested some smart targets or something or made them smarter but usually it was them

Evidence in the observation transcript also highlighted the role of the EP facilitator in 'checking in' with participants to see how strategies had been working;

P1 L1-50: Participants engage in discussion led by the EP about how strategies from the previous week have been implemented and if they have worked.

The EP facilitator also indicated during the RI that her weekly presence at the meetings meant that participants were more likely to implement the strategies discussed because they knew there would be a discussion related to how they had worked within the consultation process:

P1 L66-67 'Also I think because they know that 'next week the EP is going to come in and talk to me about how it went'

All other CMO configurations within this outcome theme remained the same, Giving a total 7 CMOCs within this outcome theme in program theory 2 (see appendix 4.1).

The overarching theme 'Generation of Strategies' was adapted to include 'Generation **and Implementation** of Strategies', because evidence within the observation gave substance to participants suggesting the consultation group supported both the generation of strategies for working with the child, but also the finer details of implementation within the particular school context. For example:

P6 L52: Participant C reflects on a strategy that hasn't worked well in the context because the child was able to work around the rewards due to contextual factors

P8 L57: Some discussion related to how a particular strategy might work within the context of the school in terms of the building, classrooms and teaching staff

P10 L15: The EP suggests giving the child additional structure through a timetable, the group agree this would be difficult within this context because the school will be too chaotic up until the end of term

### **Refinements to Outcome Theme 'Reducing Isolation and Stress'**

Outcome theme 'Reducing Isolation and Stress' contained 4 CMO configurations in the Initial Program Theory (appendix 2.4). Following analysis of the observation and RI data, two CMO configurations were refined. Table 4.6 displays one of the CMOCs identified for refinement as presented in the Initial program theory:

Table 4.6: CMOC identified for refinement in Evaluation cycle one:

Context	Mechanism	Outcome	Source
---------	-----------	---------	--------

Everybody has opportunity to share a problem	Group problem solving occurs, the problem is transferred from the individual to the group	Participants experience reduced feelings of isolation	Brown and Henderson 2012 Nugent et al 2014
--	---	---	---

The refinements made to this CMOC can be found in program theory 2 (appendix 4.1) and are presented in table 4.7.

Table 4.7: Refinements made to outcome theme 'confidence' in evaluation cycle one (taken from program theory 2)

Everybody has opportunity to contribute to discussion	Group problem solving occurs, the problem is transferred from the individual to the group	Participants experience reduced feelings of isolation
---	---	---

The structure of the problem solving process used within the research context did not allow capacity for 'everyone to share a problem' as elicited as being relevant within the literature examined in the RS. The 'problem holder' within the current context was the participant who worked most closely and often with the child. This is likely to be a unique difference in the current context in that the consultation group focused on the same child each week. However, the evidence did highlight the many opportunities for group members to contribute to the discussion and problem solving process, for example, from the observation transcript:

*P8 L31-P9L58: Lengthy example of the group engaging in group problem solving, all participants are contributing ideas and potential strategies that are specific to one problem with the child*

*P10 L54-P11L45: More problem-solving around a specific issue and contributions being made by all group members*

Table 4.8 presents the second CMOC within this outcome theme identified for refinement, as presented in the initial program theory:

Context	Mechanism	Outcome	Source
Lots of people interact with the child but schools are busy environments and departments can be fragmented	Structured time is given to staff to discuss issues	Participants feel reduced isolation and emotionally supported	Boznic and Carter 2002 Grahamslaw and Henson 2015

The initial CMO was not totally relevant to the setting of the group which was the focus of this research . The school setting was a small primary school and therefore the use of the word 'departments' did not reflect this context. A minor change was therefore made to the context statement from the use of 'departments' to the word 'staff' (See appendix 4.1, program theory 2)

n.b: Both of these mechanisms are similar to mechanisms within collaboration and sharing...possibly remove?

### **Refinements to Outcome Theme 'Collaboration and Sharing'**

Outcome theme 'collaboration and sharing' contained 8 CMOCs in the Initial Program Theory (appendix 2.5). Following analysis of the observation and RI transcript, 3 CMOCs were refined as a result of evidence found within the transcripts. Table 4.8 displays the CMOCs identified for refinements, as presented in the initial program theory:

Table 4.8: CMOCs identified for refinement in evaluation cycle one:

Context	Mechanism	Outcome
The facilitator uses consultation skills to support and encourage exploration	Effective consultation skills are being modeled to participants	Participants develop skills in consultation
The facilitator supports the group through the problem solving process	Participants learn how to be consultants to each other	A culture of peer support and shared responsibility within the organization is created
The group allows time and space for difficulties related to	Specific SEN are discussed and	Participants gain knowledge and

students with SEN	professionals share knowledge	understanding of students with SEN
-------------------	-------------------------------	------------------------------------

Table 4.9 displays refinements made to CMOCs and included in program theory 2:

Context	Mechanism	Outcome
The facilitator uses consultation skills to support and encourage exploration	Effective consultation skills are being modeled to participants	
The facilitator supports the group through the problem solving process		A culture of peer support and shared responsibility within the organization is created
The group allows time and space for difficulties related to students who are LAC	Specific issues for LAC are discussed and professionals share knowledge	Participants gain knowledge and understanding of LAC

Within the observation transcript the EP uses consultation skills, in particular the use of ‘exceptions questions’ to support the problem solving process:

P7 L25, ‘Are there other times when you’ve felt like you’ve gained some control back?’

However, throughout the observation none of the participants mirrored the consultation skills and therefore no evidence exists at this stage for this outcome. Furthermore, the RI revealed some counter evidence that the modelling of consultation skills did not (in this case) evidently transfer those skills onto participants:

*EP: ...but I cant think of an example of when somebody used consultation skills like exceptions.*

The CMOC presented above that refers to students with SEN also required refinement to make it relevant to the current context.

All other CMO configurations within this outcome theme remained unchanged

### Refinements to Outcome Theme ‘Reflection and Self Awareness’

Outcome theme ‘Reflection and Self Awareness contained 3 CMO configurations in the Initial Program Theory (appendix 2.4). Following evaluation cycle , 1 CMO configuration was refined. Table 4.10 displays the CMOC identified for refinements, as presented in the initial program theory:

Table 4.10: CMOC identified for refinement in evaluation cycle one:

Context	Mechanism	Outcome
School staff feel a sense of failure due to self attributions for finding solutions	The participant is reassured by group members that the difficulty is not a result of individual shortcomings or failure	Participants self esteem increases due to a reduction in self blame

Table 4.11 displays refinements made to CMOCs and included in program theory 2:

Context	Mechanism	Outcome
School staff feel a sense of failure due to self attributions for finding solutions	Time is given for reflection in which the EP points out success	Participants self esteem increases due to recognition of success

All other CMO configurations within this outcome theme remained unchanged. The evidence for this CMOC ‘in action’ considers how the consultation process may result in participant’s experiencing increased self-esteem in their perceptions of success with the child. In examining the transcripts, it was evident that a substantial amount of time was spent

reflecting on success, which is further highlighted by the EP facilitator through the use of praise and pointing out positive changes in behaviour:

*P1-2 The group engage in reflection about the previous week and child's behaviour, the EP makes several comments that highlight the progress, 'Oh she's been able to sit and wait for the other kids' 'so that's brilliant she was actually doing some work'*

One participant directly attributes the recognition of success to participation in the group:

*P6 L70: D: ' If you think about when she first started the change is amazing , you don't see it until we do this' ('this' meaning the group consultation)*

*P3 L148-151; 'EP: Yeh and I mean even when I started working with them 2 weeks in there was a difference in what she had been like when she first arrived but being able to reflect on a weekly basis, because I did speak to child's teacher on a weekly basis even though it wasn't always in GC, being able to reflect every week about how far we'd come by comparing to the beginning and even the previous week. I think that's was really helpful to them'*

The current study suggests that reassurance is found through the use of time to reflect on 'what's worked well' highlighting positive changes in relation to the child's behaviour. The refinements displayed in table 4.11 were therefore made.

Within the outcome theme 'Reflection and Self Awareness', 1 new CMOC was elicited and is presented in table 4.12 below.

Table 4.12 :Additional CMOC elicited from inductive analysis of data and included in program theory 2:

Context	Mechanism	Outcome
The child's voice is contributed by the EP as part of the process	The EP frames questions that encourage the group to think about behaviour from the child's perspective and experiences	Participants develop empathy, which shifts attributions for behaviour

This CMO considers the contribution of a specific part of the process that is unique to this intervention; that is having the 'child's voice' contributed by the EP within the process. The mechanism elicited related to this part of the process giving a different perspective and hence

shifting the attributions related to the behaviour as a result of the participants developing empathy and understanding of the child's situation. For example:

EP: Yeh so having the child's voice or getting somebody to think about the child's voice and then put that into words .....But I felt like in this group situation it was a more subtle way of developing that empathy and maybe some pity in there as well but not laboring it too much and thinking about it in a more proactive way in terms of what we can do about it

P4 L252-259: EP: I think the change in attributions was one of the most important ones

A specific example of participants attributions changing and how using the voice of the child develops understanding of how the child interacts with others, was also given by the EP in the RI:

P5 P278-281: 'EP; Yeh so like whats the point in getting to know these people, anyway we discussed that and through the voice of the child stuff, when I asked why do you think child doesn't know any of the teachers names they were sort of like 'well, shes just come from a new school, she possibly thinks whats the point in developing realtionships ill move on anyway or whats the point in getting to know these adults I cant trust them'

### **Refinements to outcome theme 'Hindering Aspects/Difficulties Encountered'**

Outcome theme 'Hindering Aspects/Difficulties Encountered' contained 12 CMOCs elicited in the Initial Program Theory (appendix 2.4). Following evaluation cycle one, one CMOC was refined. Table 4.13 displays the CMOC identified for refinements, as presented in the initial program theory:

Table 4.13: CMOC identified for refinement in evaluation cycle one:

Context	Mechanism	Outcome
The room allocated is not private	Other staff members walk in and out of the room	Confidentiality is threatened and participants feel less able to be open and honest



Table 4.14 displays refinements made to CMOCs and included in program theory 2:

Context	Mechanism	Outcome
The room allocated is not private	Other staff members walk in and out of the room	The consultation group is considered less formal and therefore less productive

The context of this configuration is relevant to the current research, because the group took place in the school staff room.

*P 4 L213: EP: Yeh that was difficult, the only space we had available for anything beyond teaching was the staff room.*

This was unavoidable due to space within the school, however it did result in other staff members occasionally needing to enter the room. However; a refinement to this CMO was considered because there was no evidence of the outcome and an alternative outcome was suggested by the facilitating EP during the RI:

*P4 L220-224: TEP: What impact, if any do you think it had, a few times as the session went on a few people came in and out do you think it had any impact on the group?*

*EP: Yeh I think it probably in terms of a negative impact it probably meant that it wasn't as formal maybe as it could have been because its their social area*

Three CMOCs were also highlighted as potentially needing to be rejected, because the context and mechanisms were not relevant to the current context. Table 4.15 displays three CMOCs highlighted for rejection, with reasons in relation to the current context:

Context	Mechanism	Outcome	Reason for rejection
The group location is problematic	The group is held in a room within the SEN department on every occasion	Attributions are made by the wider staff body about the nature of the group being solely for	The group was not held within a specific department in the school within the

		SEN staff and this may affect attendance	current context and attendance to the group was consistent
The size of the group is large	Participants feel they don't have a voice	The positive outcomes are reduced because participants are less engaged	The current group had 5 members and all members made a contribution within the session observed by the researcher.
The group focuses on a new case each week	Feedback on previous cases is not part of the process	The efficacy of strategies and interventions is unknown	Within the current context, the same child is discussed each week and time for reflection on strategies is part of the process.

Within the outcome theme, 'Hindering Aspects/Difficulties Encountered', 1 new CMOC was elicited and is presented in table 4.16 . .

Table 4.16: Additional CMOC elicited from inductive analysis from data

Context	Mechanism	Outcome
The child is LAC and has difficulties in his/her care placement	Foster carer or social workers do not attend the group	A joined up approach and strategies being used at school are not being transferred to the home environment

This CMO is potentially unique to the current research in that it considers the impact of the child's care placement outside of the school setting and the potentially hindering mechanism that the child's social worker or carer do not attend the group. The EP within the RI reflects on

the potential impact this may have had in terms of a 'joined up' approach to supporting the LAC:

P3 L195-206: EP: Erm well one of the things I wished we'd been able to do and when we do this in the future I would like to get the foster carer or parent involved

TEP: Why do you think that would be valuable

EP: In terms of sharing concerns, all being on the same page, and having a forum, if there had been some more joined up thinking between home and school and that support I think that may have made things easier.

**New outcome theme: 'Outcomes for the LAC'**

As a result of inductive analysis, a new CMOC was elicited. This is presented below in table 4.17

Table 4.17: Additional CMO (41) elicited from inductive analysis within NEW outcome theme 'Outcomes for the LAC'

Context	Mechanism	Outcome
The group encourages participants to be collaborative in their approach to managing a LAC	The group develop an approach that focuses on the child developing feelings of safety and security in the school environment, with specific targets that aim to build relationships	The child develops school connectedness, begins to trust adults and the school environment

The outcome for this configuration was directly related to potential outcomes for the LAC, therefore not appropriately placed within any of the current outcome themes. A new outcome theme was therefore included. The CMO was elicited from evidence that the group make acknowledgement to 'what's important is that she feels safe':

(Observation transcript)/P1/L35

H: I think how we react to her is almost more important than how we set the stage, as long as we react to her so that she feels safe

, further discussion around 'school connectedness' and 'belonging' within the RI also suggests that the group developed specific targets to support the child in building relationships and feeling connected to other students and staff:

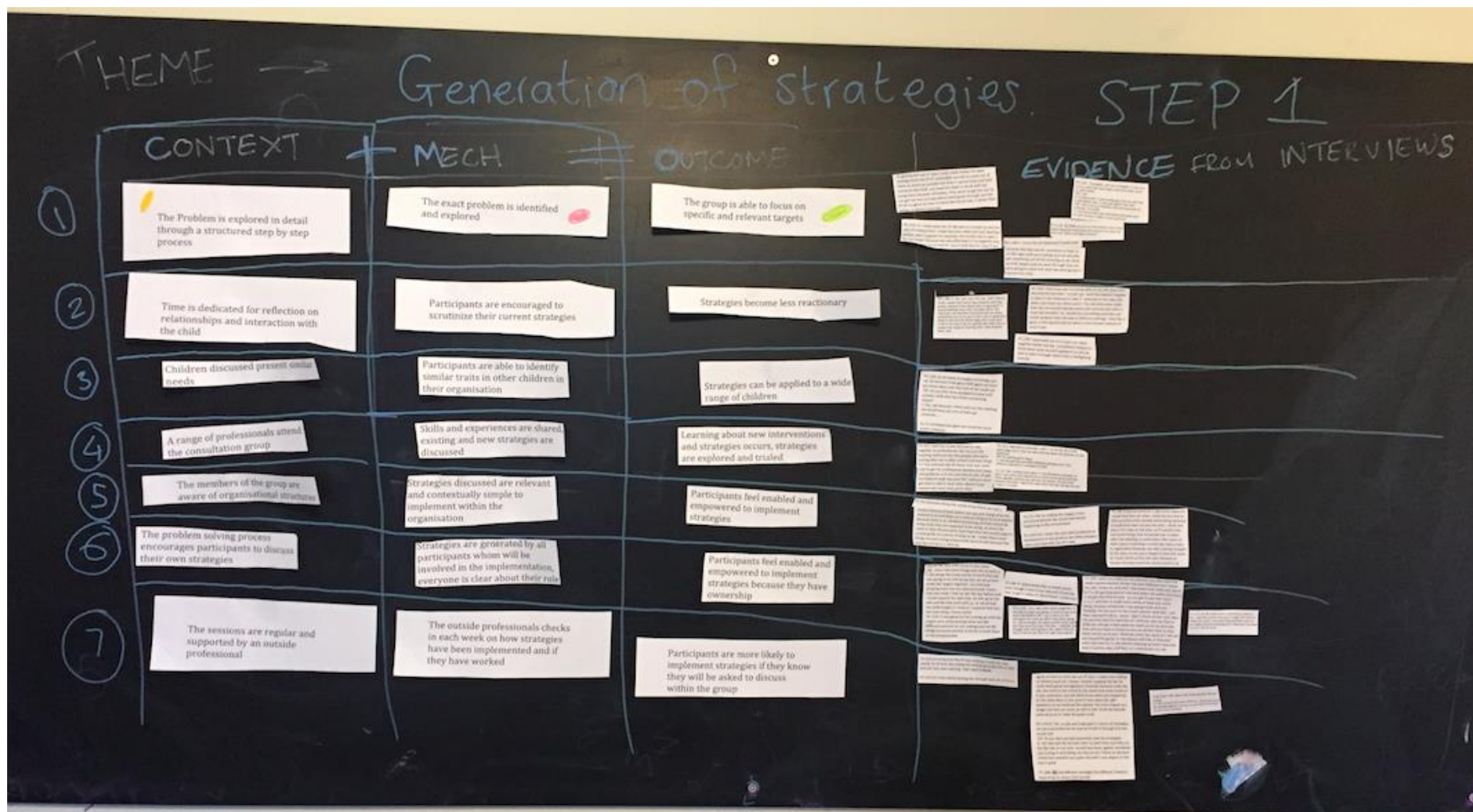
EP: Yeh and we did pick out particular strategies, so the good thing about this school is that they were really good at putting aside the academic targets and saying her targets are to feel safe in school and to develop friendships

This reportedly resulted in the child displaying pro-social behaviours and connectedness to the environment:

EP: So it went from that to, in the last week of term, because D has left and gone to a new school, child got everyone in the class to make a card and sign it, she took part in the school assembly, which she got really involved in and got really emotional in....and I think for child it became really, well she realised how important school was and how safe she was starting to feel

Appendix 4.3: Example of thematic analysis and refinements made in evaluation cycle 2 for outcome theme 'Generation and implementation of strategies:

Program Theory Development: Outcome Theme 2: Generation and Implementation of strategies-phase 3: collation of evidence



The above picture displays the collation of evidence from each interview next to the CMO configuration for which each extract of data supports. Step 2 (pictured below) displays a process of analysis of each data extract, throughout which I examined the statements and made changes according to the best fit of evidence in relation to each CMO. Several changes were made as a result, these changes are outlined in the CMO configuration tables below, with examples of data to support my decisions.

Phases 4 and 5-colour coding and examination of evidence:

## Generation of strategies STEP 2

## STEP 2

296



## Program theory: Generation of Strategies (with changes made)

### Context

The problem is explored in detail through a structured step by step process

### Mechanism

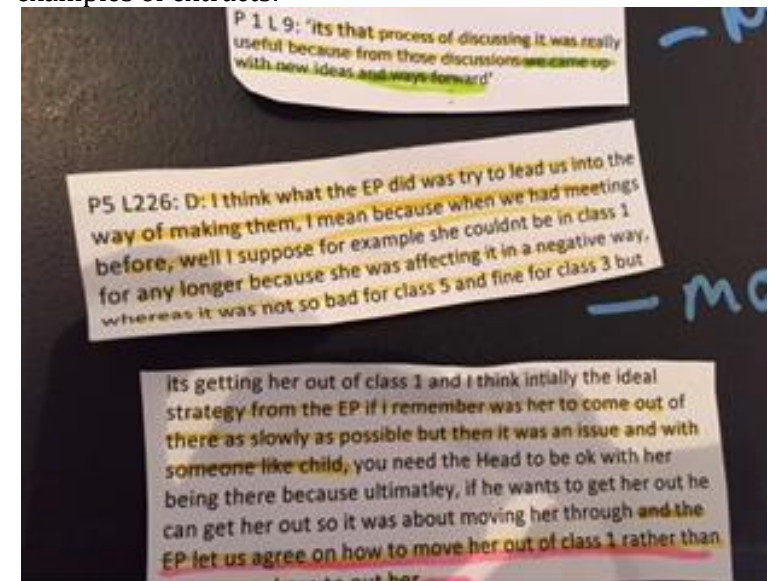
The exact problem/s is explored and identified

### Outcome

The group is able to focus on specific and relevant targets and strategies

### Changes made

This CMO will be removed because the evidence was more relevant/pertinent and representative of CMO 6, some examples of extracts:



So for example one participant here is discussing how the group come up with their own strategies and were able to agree these between themselves, which is relevant to the outcome in CMO 6 and the idea of ownership over strategies.

CMO 2 was also removed because much of the evidence

Time is dedicated for reflection on

Participants are

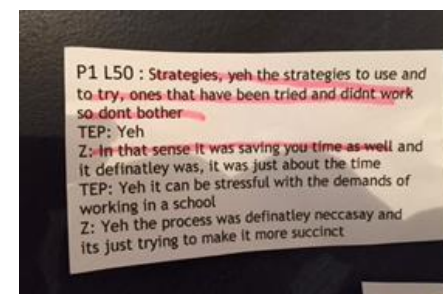
Strategies become less

relationships and interactions with the child

encouraged to scrutinize their current strategies

reactionary

was more pertinent to either CMO 6 or CMO 7, examples below:



This participant is discussing the ‘trial and testing’ of strategies, which is related to the mechanism in CMO 7. The ‘strutiny’ of strategies also felt important here in terms of the mechanism, however this was easily added to CMO 6. No evidence exists within the interview data for the context or mechanism for CMO 3 and were therefore removed, this is because the group did not discuss a range of children. However, one participant talked about ‘if they were to get another child like ‘child’, they would be better prepared. I therefore looked at how/where this outcome could be incorporated and decided to join CMO 3 and CMO4, slightly adjusting the outcome to incorporate the idea of potentially using newly learned strategies in the future with other children.

Child/ren discussed present similar needs

Participants are able to identify similar traits in other children in their organisation

Strategies are applied to a wide range of children

A range of professionals attend the group consultation

Skills and experience are shared, existing and new strategies are discussed

Learning about new interventions and strategies occurs, strategies are explored and trialed with the child and potentially with others in the future

The members of the group are aware of organizational structures

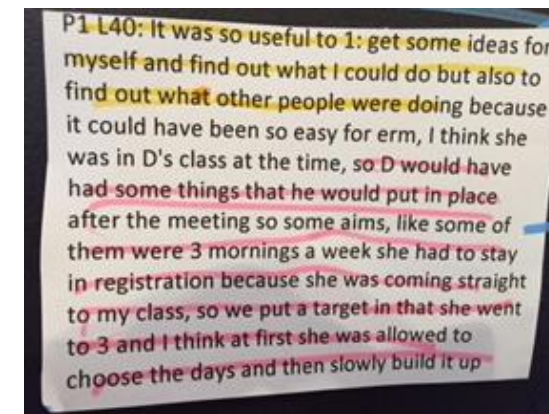
Strategies discussed are relevant and relatively simple to

Participants feel enabled and empowered to implement strategies

Some evidence exists that is unique to the mechanism of this CMO, however no evidence exists that participants directly attribute the relevance of strategies to

implement within the structure of the organisation

organizational structures. Much of the evidence in terms of context highlights the 'process' and 'time' to discuss strategies as a catalyst for the group planning together and being clear about individual roles in the implementing of strategies. CMO 10 and 11 have therefore been combined to create a configuration that includes the mechanism from CMO 10. Evidence of the above (taken from CMO 10) is pictured below:



The problem solving process encourages participants to discuss and scrutinize their own strategies

Strategies are generated by all participants whom are part of the organization and will be involved in the implementation, everyone is clear on their role

Participants feel enabled and empowered to implement strategies, they have ownership over the strategy

Multiple pieces of evidence in the data exist for this CMO, the word 'scrutinize' has been added to the context (see program theory 3) as some of the evidence pointed towards this as a part of the process.

The sessions are regular and

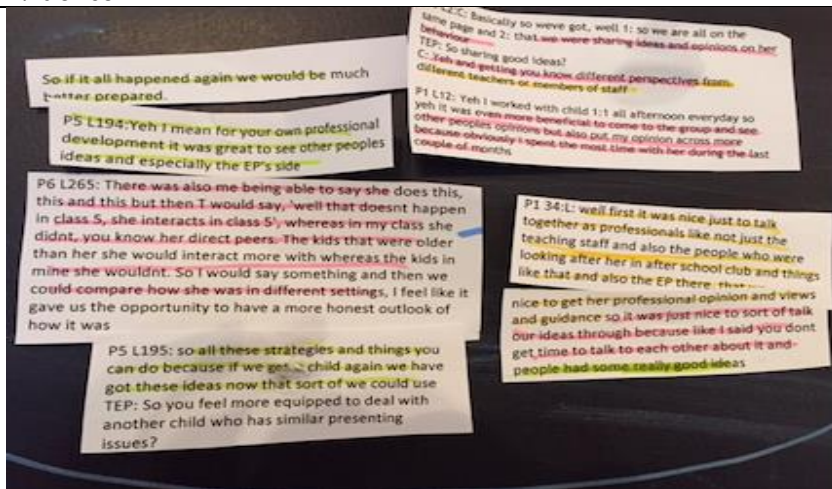
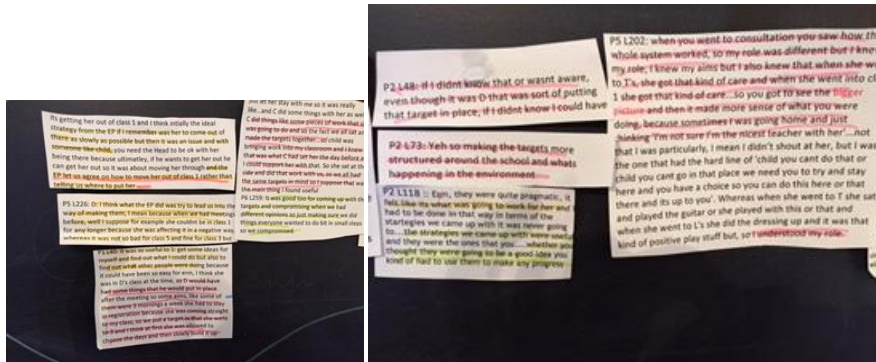
supported by an outside professional

The outside professional checks in each week how strategies have been implemented and if they have worked

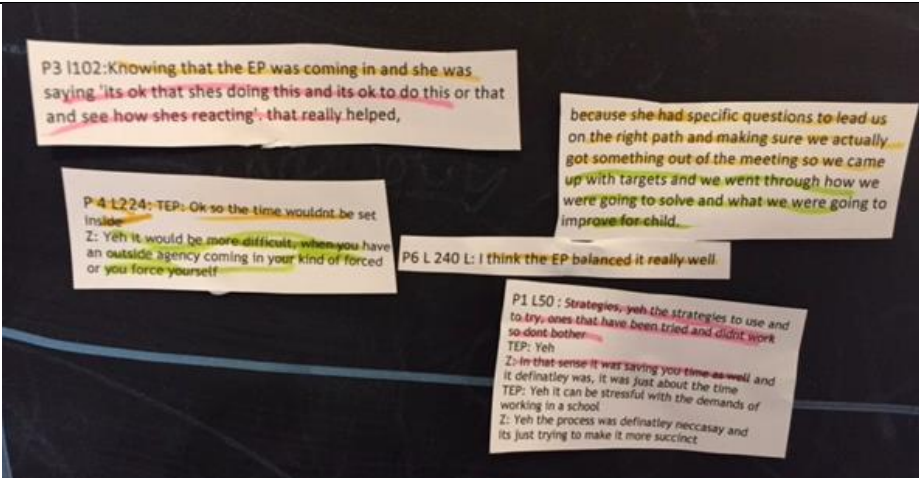
Participants are more likely to implement strategies if they know they will be asked to discuss within the group

This CMO was well evidenced and therefore remained unchanged

Program Theory 3: Generation of Strategies

CMO	Context	Mechanism	Outcome	Evidence
1	A range of professionals attend the group consultation	Skills and experiences are shared, new and existing strategies are discussed	Learning about new interventions and strategies occurs, strategies are trialed with the child and potentially with other children in the future	
2	The problem solving process encourages participants to discuss and scrutinize their own strategies	Strategies are generated by all participants whom are part of the organization and will be involved in the implementation, everyone is clear on their role	Participants feel enabled and empowered to implement strategies, they have ownership over the strategy	

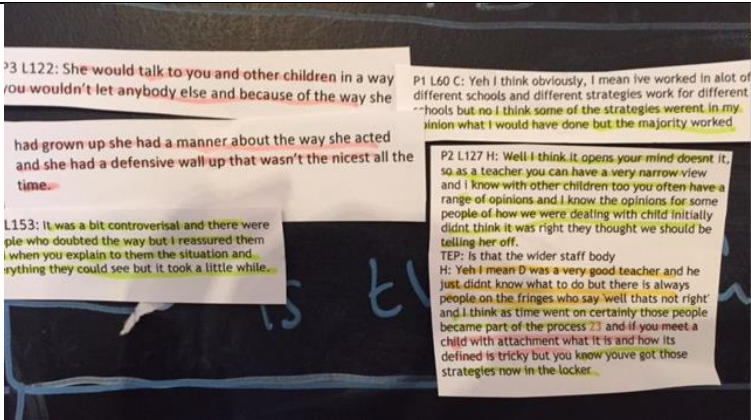
--	--	--	--	--

3	The sessions are regular and supported by an outside professional	The outside professional checks in each week how strategies have been implemented and if they have worked	Participants are more likely to implement strategies if they know they will be asked to discuss within the group	
---	---	---	--	---

Additional CMO moved from 'reflection and self awareness'

Context	Mechanism	Outcome	Evidence
---------	-----------	---------	----------



<p>The problem solving process is reflective in terms of individual participant and organizational factors relating to behaviour</p>	<p>Participants discuss the nature and meaning of behaviour, including the child's background and the systems around the child</p>	<p>Causal attributions for the behaviour begin to change and this influences individual and organizational strategies</p>	
--	--	---	---



## Analysis and interpretation of evidence for Outcome Theme ‘Generation and Implementation of Strategies’

A decision was made to amalgamate CMO8 and CMO 9 Table 4.6 Below displays CMO as presented in program theory 2:

**Table 4.6:** Extract from Program Theory 2

Context	Mechanism	Outcome	CMO number
Child/ren discussed present similar needs	Participants are able to identify similar traits in other children in their organisation	Strategies are applied to a wide range of children	8
A range of professionals attend the group consultation	Skills and experience are shared, existing and new strategies are discussed	Learning about new interventions and strategies occurs, strategies are explored and trialed	9

No evidence exists within the interview data for the context or mechanism for CMO 8 and they were therefore removed, this is because the consultation group within the current research did not discuss a range of children. However, participant L talked about ‘if they were to get another child like ‘child’, they would be better prepared, which provided evidence for the outcome of CMO 8:

*P5 L195: so all these strategies and things you can do because if we get a child again we have got these ideas now that sort of we could use*

*TEP: So you feel more equipped to deal with another child who has similar presenting issues?*

*L: Yes, yeh because I think with out the meeting we would have just sort of had a go ourselves*

The researcher therefore looked at how/where this outcome could be incorporated and decided to combine CMO 8 and CMO 9, slightly adjusting the outcome to incorporate the idea of potentially using newly learned strategies in the future with other children:

### **New combined CMO 8/9:**

**Context:** A range of professionals attend the group consultation

**Mechanism:** Skills and experiences are shared, new and existing strategies are discussed

**Outcome:** Learning about new interventions and strategies occurs, strategies are trialed with the child and potentially with other children in the future

A range of evidence was found that related closely to CMO 9. For example participants L reflects on the value of having a range of professionals attend the group and the ideas that were generated as a result:

*P1 34: "L: well first it was nice just to talk together as professionals like not just the teaching staff and also the people who were looking after her in after school club and things like that and also the EP there, that was really nice to get her professional opinion and views and guidance so it was just nice to sort of talk our ideas through because like I said you don't get time to talk to each other about it and people had some really good ideas"*

**Analysis and Interpretation of CMO 10 and 11**-these CMO configurations were amalgamated following analysis and are therefore discussed together). Table 4.7 below displays CMO 10 and CMO 11 as presented in Program Theory 2:

**Table 4.7:** extract from Program Theory 2

Context	Mechanism	Outcome	CMO number
The members of the group are aware of organizational structures	Strategies discussed are relevant and relatively simple to implement within the structure of the organisation	Participants feel enabled and empowered to implement strategies	10
The problem solving process encourages participants to discuss their own strategies	Strategies are generated by all participants whom will be involved in the implementation, everyone is clear on their role	Participants feel enabled and empowered to implement strategies, they have ownership over the strategy	11

Some evidence exists that is unique to the mechanism of CMO 10, however no evidence exists that participants directly attribute the relevance of strategies to organizational structures as assumed for the context of CMO 10. Much of the evidence in terms of context highlights the 'process' and 'time' to discuss strategies as a catalyst for the group planning together and being clear about individual roles in the implementing of strategies. Furthermore, the outcomes for CMO 10 and CMO 11 are the same, with an addition of ownership over strategies implied in the outcome of CMO 11.

CMO 10 and 11 have therefore been combined to create a configuration that includes the mechanism from CMO 10: The resulting combined CMO was as follows

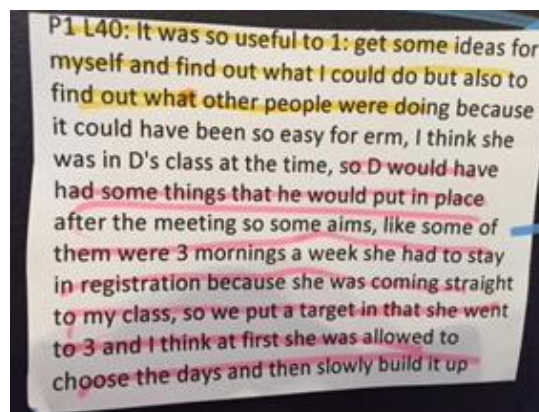
**Context:** The problem solving process encourages participants to discuss and scrutinize their own strategies

**Mechanism:** Strategies are generated by all participants who are part of the organization and will be involved in the implementation, everyone is clear on their role

**Outcome:** Participants feel enabled and empowered to implement strategies, they have ownership over the strategy

The data extract pictured in figure 4.10 Below displays supporting evidence that participant C found the group helpful in getting ideas and strategies for herself, but also further reflections are made that participant D was also involved in some group problem solving that resulted in some context specific strategies being generated:

**Figure 4.10:** Data extract from participant C



Participant H also highlights that the EP was not directive in giving strategies:

*P3 L212 H "the EP didn't come in and tell us what to do...well she couldn't because it might not work so what's the point. You know were teachers and we are highly skilled at dealing with behaviour because we do it all the time"*

Participant D reflects on the idea that being part of the consultation group helped him to understand his role, which is relevant to the mechanism of CMO 11 above:

*P1 L 67 D: "Whereas when she went to T she sat and played the guitar or she played with this or that and when she went to L's she did the dressing up and it was that kind of positive play stuff but, so I understood my role"*

Participant D also provides further evidence of the outcome of the new CMO 10/11, when he discusses how the consultation group helped him to 'make sense' of what he was doing which enabled him to emotionally cope with implementing strategies, because he could see the bigger picture.

*P5 L202: D "when you went to consultation you saw how the whole system worked, so my role was different but I knew my role, I knew my aims but I also knew that when she went to T's, she got that kind of care and when she went into class 1 she got that kind of care...so you got to see the bigger picture and then it made more sense of what you were doing"*

## **CMO 12**

CMO 12 is presented in program theory 2 as:

**Context:** The sessions are regular and supported by an outside professional

**Mechanism:** The outside professional checks in each week how strategies have been implemented and if they have worked

**Outcome:** Participants are more likely to implement strategies if they know they will be asked to discuss within the group

This CMO was well evidenced and therefore no changes or refinements were made. Some of the supporting evidence is presented and discussed below:

**Figure 4.11:** Data extracts as evidence for CMO 12

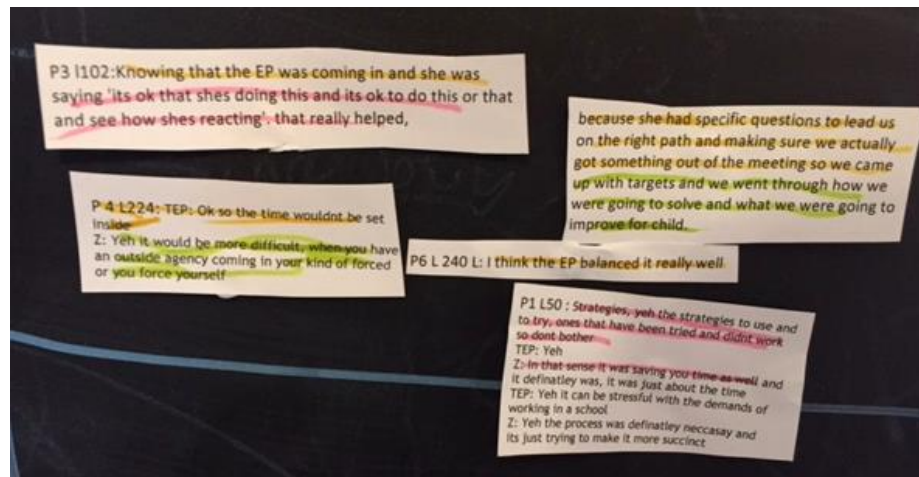


Figure 4.11 displays a range of evidence that suggests participants felt under greater obligation to implement strategies because they knew the EP facilitator would be attending the group each week and time would be dedicated to discussion of whether strategies have been affective or not. Participants also reflected on how useful it was to have time to reflect on the impact of strategies and how the EP balanced this position well so that participants didn't feel scrutinized.

