



The Role of the Educational Psychologist in a Multi-Agency Team Supporting Children Who Have Experienced Care: An Activity Theory Framework

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Summary

This thesis is comprised of three parts: a major literature review, an empirical research paper and a critical appraisal.

Part 1

This part is divided into three sections that explore the breadth and depth of the topic, as well as the psychological lens adopted for the research study. Part 1 concludes with the academic and professional rationale for the empirical study presented in Part 2.

Part 2

The second part is an empirical research paper. It is a summary of the relevant literature pertaining to Educational Psychologists (EPs) working with Social Workers (SWs) in multi-agency teams (MATs) supporting children who are care experienced (CEC). The chosen methodology and procedure are detailed. Ten semi-structured interviews were conducted with EPs and SWs working in MATs supporting CEC in Wales. The method of data analysis is described, and themes generated are discussed. The findings are reviewed in relation to previous research and psychological theory. Implications for EPs and future research are considered. Part 2 concludes with the discussion of strengths and weaknesses of the research.

Part 3

The final part considers a reflective and reflexive account of the research process, offering a critical analysis of the research with discussion of the possible implications of decisions taken as part of the research process.

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Description
AEP	Association of Educational Psychologists
ALN	Additional Learning Needs
ALNET Act	Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal (ALNET) Act
AT	Activity Theory
BPS	British Psychological Society
CEC	Children who are Care Experienced
CLA	Child Looked After
DCP	Division of Clinical Psychology (BPS)
DECP	Division of Educational and Child Psychology (BPS)
ECM	Every Child Matters (Agenda)
EP(s)	Educational Psychologist(s)
EPS	Educational Psychology Service
HCPC	Health and Care Professions Council
LA(s)	Local Authority/Local Authorities
LAC	Looked After Child
LACE	Looked After Children in Education
MAT(s)	Multi-Agency Team(s)
NAS	National Adoption Service
NICE	National Institute for Health and Care Excellence
SW(s)	Social Worker(s)
TA	Thematic Analysis
TESSA	Therapeutic Education and Support Services in Adoption



The Role of the Educational Psychologist in a Multi-Agency Team Supporting Children Who Have Experienced Care: An Activity Theory Framework

Part 1: Major Literature Review

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Overview of the Literature Review

This literature review comprises three sections:

- Section A provides a narrative review of the role of the Educational Psychologist (EP), multi-agency working and Activity Theory as a lens for research. This section aims to provide appropriate background information discussing the evolving role of EPs working in multi-agency teams (MATs) supporting children who are care experienced (CEC), with reference to the socio-political and legislative influences upon practice.
- Section B is a systematic review, using a thematic synthesis framework to review a selection of current literature which considers the role of the EP working with multi-agency social care teams supporting children who are care experienced. Thirteen studies met the inclusion criteria and were appraised. The systematic literature review offers a deeper examination of the current working practices and considers what EPs can offer in this area.
- Section C evaluates the use of an Activity Theory lens, with reference to what this approach can offer to research.

The literature review concludes with a rationale for the empirical research study discussed in Part 2, and the chosen research questions.

Section A - Narrative Literature Review

1 Introduction

1.1 Aims of the Narrative Literature Review.

Narrative reviews of literature provide “*a synthesis or examination of the literature by considering issues and the development of the research over time*” (Bourhis, 2018, pg. 1076). Background information puts the current research into context with reference to the socio-political landscape of practice development.

1.2 Literature Search Strategy.

Five online academic databases were searched between September and December 2020: Psychinfo, Scopus, Applied Social Science Index and Abstracts (ASSIA), British Education Index (BEI) and Education Resources Information Center (ERIC). Search terms included “multi-disciplinary”, “social care”, “child” and “education”. Truncated terms, such as “psycholog” were also used.

Preliminary searches were conducted using more generic search engines such as the Cardiff University library and Google Scholar. Other relevant websites and databases identified additional literature including relevant websites and the eThos online thesis database. Reference list harvesting broadened the scope of the search, through a “snowballing” technique.

1.3 Focus of Section A.

The review will consider the wider context of the role of Educational Psychologists (EPs), multi-agency working and supporting children who are care experienced. The role of psychologists working within Children's Services is discussed, with specific reference to Wales. Comparisons are drawn to other devolved nations and England where appropriate. The section concludes with discussion of the current context of EPs working with Social Care teams in Wales to support care experienced children.

2 The Role of the Educational Psychologist

Educational Psychology is a relatively young profession, "*born*" in Britain by Cyril Burt in 1913 (Arnold & Hardy, 2017, pg. ix). The role has diversified greatly since the early focus on assessment and testing. Developments have been fuelled by perpetual changes in the social and political climate as well as the growing diversity of the British population.

The EP's role is subject to a debate dating back to the profession's history (see Department of Education and Sciences [DES] 1968; Gillham, 1978; Leadbetter & Arnold, 2013). Maliphant (1997) argued for an expansion of EP practice to support the systemic development of Local Authorities (LAs) over 20 years ago, and this push towards expanding professional responsibilities continues as demand and need diversify in reaction to the ever-changing population. These changes are evident in the reorganisation of Children's Services in the early 21st century, in response to legislative changes such as the "Every Child Matters" (ECM) (Department for Education and Skills [DfES], 2003) agenda and the subsequent "Children Act" (Department of Health [DoH], 2004). This movement saw EPs, previously held in

education departments, engaging in a wider range of work with professionals from a variety of other disciplines within Children's Services, such as Social Care (Fallon et al., 2010). However, the functions of the day-to-day activities of EPs have some transferability between working contexts.

Following the Spending Review in 2010 (HM Treasury, 2010), cuts to LA funding hit budgets for specialist education teams, including Educational Psychology Services (EPSs) (Gibbs & Papps, 2017; Marsh & Higgins, 2018). These cuts impacted the way in which EPSs were able to structure their service delivery, resulting in many gradually turning to a model of delegated funds, through partial or fully traded services (Lee & Woods, 2017). Consequently, EPSs across Wales and England have refined their service delivery models. However, this landscape is continually evolving as both LA and privately traded EPSs continue to re-construct their services in response to changes in school demographics, local and national initiatives, and through sharing best practice.

Many EPSs have developed their service delivery model to support children and young people through a variety of roles, such as main grade EPs, Specialist Senior roles and through forming multi-agency strategic teams that utilise the collaboration and joined-up working of a variety of professionals. This has allowed EPs to offer additional services, for example to Social Care teams. Importantly, collaborative working has remained central to the work of EPs, regardless of role definition (Health and Care Professions Council [HCPC], 2015; British Psychological Society [BPS, 2017).

2.1 The Core Functions of the Educational Psychologist.

Concerns from Scottish EPs around the gap in supply and demand, as well as recruitment issues led to the formation of a Steering Group guided by Eleanor Currie, Director of Education for East Renfrewshire, to review Psychological Services in Scotland. The paper produced, more commonly referred to as the Currie Report (Scottish Executive, 2002), proposed the five core functions of the work of EPs – consultation, assessment, intervention, training, and research – highlighting the central role that EPs occupy within multi-disciplinary teams with colleagues from health, education, social care and third sector agencies to support the needs of children and young people and promote social inclusion (Scottish Executive, 2002).

Arguably these findings are somewhat outdated. The role and function of EPs has been hotly debated since 2002 and views continue to vary widely. The British Psychological Society (BPS), the representative body for Psychologists in Britain, comprises smaller divisions of professionals working in different areas of psychology. The Division of Educational and Child Psychology (DECP) webpage lists (Figure 1) the following as examples of ways in which EPs support stakeholders:

Figure 1

How Can Educational Psychologists Support Stakeholders?

How Can Educational Psychologists Support Stakeholders?

- *"Consultations"*
- *"Multi-agency work"*
- *"One-to-one and small group interventions"*
- *"Psychological assessments"*
- *"Research and evaluation"*
- *"Strategic work"*
- *"Supporting parents"*
- *"Supporting staff development"*

Note. Information taken from DECP (2021, para. 3).

Shield (2019) explored the various practices of EPs when writing for Edpsy.org.uk, an online blog written by and for EPs. He compiled a list (Figure 2) of the variation of EP practice in response to a Twitter post on the topic:

Figure 2

Ways in Which Educational Psychologists are Currently Working

How are Educational Psychologists Working Currently?

- *"Using in-depth group problem-solving processes such as Circle of Adults and Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope*
- *Working alongside children in a nurture room*
- *Presenting at conferences and submitting abstracts for future conferences*
- *Meeting inspiring teachers*
- *Debating the use and abuse of labels*
- *Attending CPD about attachment-based assessment tools*
- *Discussing neuropsychology with colleagues*
- *Facilitating appreciative inquiries with professionals*
- *Carrying out play-based assessment*
- *Engaging in action research, examining doctoral theses, and writing research papers for academic journals*
- *Using Video Interactive Guidance (VIG) as an intervention for parents*
- *Leading staff development in areas such as mental health, attachment theory, developmental trauma, reading/literacy interventions, and responding to sexual behaviour in children*
- *Reviewing the progress of children looked after in new school placements*
- *Training and supervising Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs)*
- *Developing self-esteem projects*
- *Having peer supervision with colleagues*
- *Visiting nurseries, primary schools, secondary schools, colleges and universities"*

Note. Taken from Shield (2019, para. 4).

This suggests that the role and function of the EP varies between LAs and private practitioners. This is perhaps due to a combination of factors including variations in legislative and LA initiatives, managerial influence and community demands and needs. Nonetheless, as reference continues to be made to Currie's proposed core functions, it could be argued that they have remained robust as a combination of these elements continue to underpin the diverse and developing EP role. Therefore, these five core functions are the framework adopted for this paper.

The literature has also seen a development in the narrative around the practice of EPs working at the individual, group and managerial/systemic levels which has established across the UK nations (e.g. Education Scotland, 2019; Welsh Government; 2016b, Education Authority, 2020).

2.2 Educational Psychology Practice: Working with Others.

Working effectively with others is a fundamental requirement of Practitioner Psychologists (HCPC, 2015). As detailed in the HCPC Standards of Practice, they must *“be able to contribute effectively to work undertaken as part of a multidisciplinary team”* (HCPC, 2015, pp. 11). The HCPC stipulates the requirement to *“be able to work, where appropriate, in partnership with service users, other professionals, support staff and others”* (2015 pp.11). Moreover, the HCPC states that practitioners must also *“understand the need to build and sustain professional relationships as both an independent practitioner and collaboratively as a member of a team”* (2015, pp.11). Therefore, psychologists must evidence sufficient competence to acquire and maintain registration and meet the fundamental regulations set out by the HCPC as is required to use the protected title of “Educational Psychologist”. The BPS has similar requirements and its Practice Guidelines state that *“in order to meet the complex needs of clients fully, Psychologists will often be required to work collaboratively with other professionals from their own or other agencies”* (BPS, 2017, pp. 25).

2.3 The Developing Role of Educational Psychologists in Wales.

The socio-political context of education and social care services in Wales differs to other devolved nations, due to the devolution of legislative powers (Figure 3).

Figure 3

Socio-Political Context: Devolution of Legislative Powers

Socio-Political Context: Devolution of Legislative Powers

- Following the September 1997 devolution referendum, The National Assembly for Wales was established and evolved through the "Government of Wales Acts" 1998 and 2006 (UK Government, 2013) which afforded Wales the power to make specific legislative decisions (Welsh Government, 2016c). The affirmative result of the May 2011 referendum led to the enablement of The National Assembly for Wales to legislate in 20 areas of local services including local government, health services, education, and social care. The "Government of Wales Act 2006" was further amended by the "Wales Act 2017" (2017c), which moved to a reserved powers model, meaning that The National Assembly for Wales may legislate on any matter, except for areas the UK Parliament has reserved (Welsh Government, 2016c). These amendments to the legal systems enable Wales to hold the legislative power over both education and social care. Therefore laws in these areas differ from those in England and other nations of the UK. This literature review seeks to explore the role of the EP engaging in multi-agency work with Social Care in Wales.

The Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP), in collaboration with the Welsh Government (2016b), published a document clarifying the role of EPs in Wales. This identified how (as well as more general work within education settings) EPs can engage in work with groups of children and young people, such as children in care, young offenders, and those with English as an additional language (Welsh Government, 2016b). The document details how EPs facilitated and participated in multi-agency meetings and developed working relationships with colleagues from LA Social Care departments. It appears that the role of EPs in Wales is transient; constructed by professionals, and responsive to local incentives and projects.

The incoming “Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal” (ALNET) Act will also impact on EP functions with changes such as widening the age bracket to work with children and young people aged 0-25 years. This also proposes to change the process to acquire specific and specialist support for Additional Learning Needs (ALN), and increasing collaboration between agencies (Welsh Government, 2018). EP practice will need to be re-negotiated accordingly. However, the current and future role of EPs in Wales, according to legislation (Welsh Government, 2004; Welsh Government, 2018), does not explicitly involve children who are care experienced or working in multi-agency teams (MATs) with Social Workers (SWs). The incoming ALNET Act currently proposes six ways in which EPs will work with children and young people, involving the identification of additional learning needs, contributing towards the statutory assessment process, and advising on appropriate additional learning provision (Welsh Government, 2021). Whilst EPs working in MATs supporting CEC may be offering these services, their strategic involvement is not a statutory role at present. The current picture of EPs working in this way in Wales is therefore unclear, however more clarification is awaited with the publication of the ALNET Act.

3 Multi-Agency Working

3.1 What is Multi-Agency Working?

Working collaboratively with stakeholders is long established both within Educational Psychology and wider support services for children and young people. Joint working has undergone significant development since the “Children Act 1989” (HM Government, 1989), when collaboration was identified as a statutory obligation for

professionals to “*work together better*” when supporting children and young people (Cheminais, 2009, p.1).

Despite the wide range of information and practice guidelines available for multi-agency working, there is no clear definition of the term. However, the following explanation (Figure 4) is accepted for the purpose of this research paper:

Figure 4

Definition: Multi-Agency Working

Definition: Multi-Agency Working

- *“Multi-agency working enables different services to join forces in order to prevent problems occurring in the first place. It is an effective way of supporting children, young people and families with additional needs and helping to secure improved outcomes”.*

Note. Taken from Children’s Workforce Development Council (2008, pg. 5).

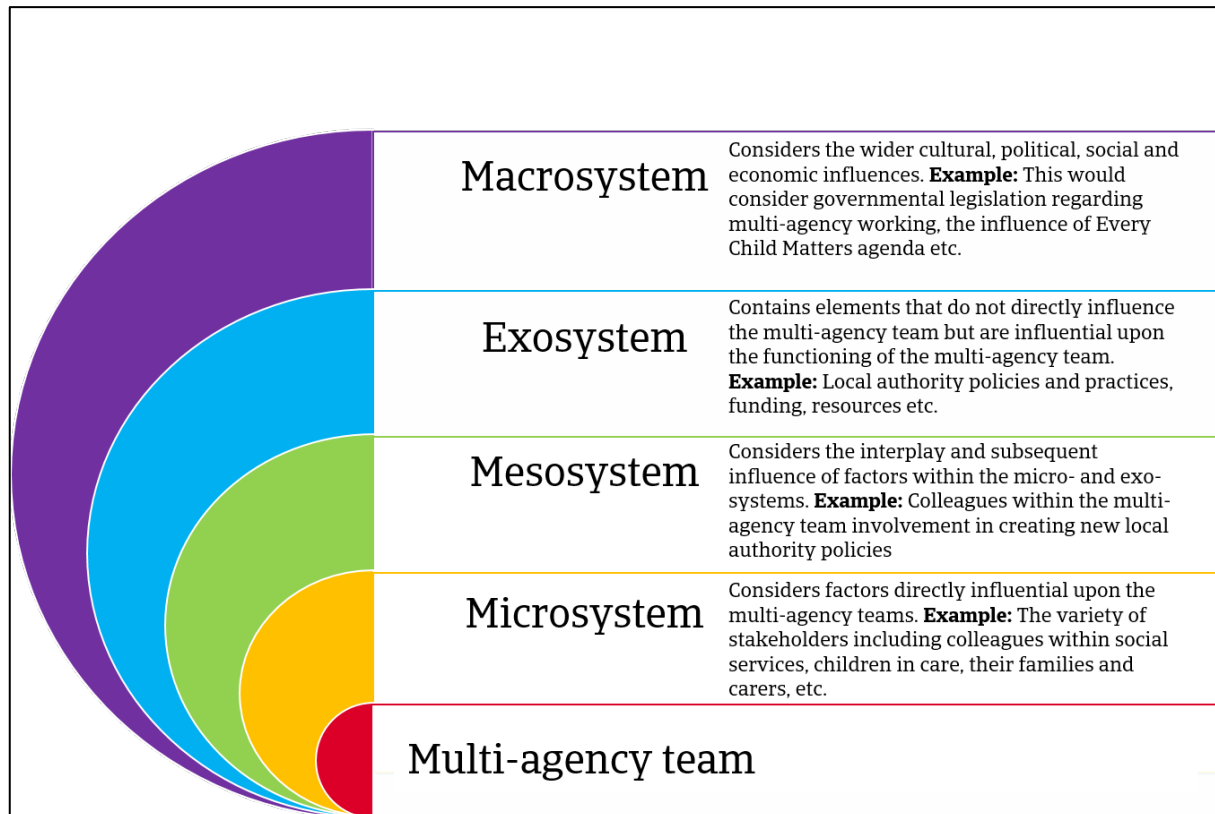
The literature generally takes a positive stance towards the collaboration of professionals in providing a more effective and efficient service. However, the degree to which this is evidence-based has been debated (Hughes, 2006) and it could be suggested that effectiveness and outcomes are better demonstrated by practice-based evidence than the alternative. Therefore, it is important to recognise the intricacies of MATs as developing as an entity of their own.

3.2 Multi-Agency Teams (MATs) as Systems.

MATs can be understood as 'systems', providing support to children in care and families via a matrix of interacting elements which have mutual influence upon one another (Bateson, 1972). Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) can be used to explore how MATs function in this way. In the centre of the system typically lies an individual or group, influenced to varying degrees by several factors: direct, indirect, or due to systems influencing one another. An example of ecological systems theory applied to multi-agency working is represented in the figure below (Figure 5).

Figure 5

Illustration of a Multi-Agency Team as a System using Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System Theory (1979)



Note. Model is adapted from Bronfenbrenner (1979).

There have been several influences upon multi-agency working in the UK. One of the most radical changes in practice was called for following the tragic death of Victoria Climbié in 2000, due to the lack of coordination of the professional services involved.

3.3 Every Child Matters (ECM).

Following Victoria Climbié's death, the ECM agenda (DfES, 2003) was introduced to address the gaps in communication and joined-up working between agencies such as health, education and social services, therefore, creating better multi-agency links (Her Majesty's Stationery Office [HMSO], 2003). The Laming Report (HMSO, 2003) stated that a multi-agency approach to work was the most appropriate way to support children and families (Greenhouse, 2013). The ECM agenda and "Children Act" (2004) triggered a reorganisation of the delivery of Children's Services in England towards a more collaborative approach to problem-solving. A systemic approach to working allows for the consideration of important contextual factors (Hartnell, 2010): key to understanding and working with systems around the child. This contrasts with the more traditional "within child" view by recognising that problems are not solely due to factors within the child's control (Greenhouse, 2013).

3.4 Multi-Agency Working: What Works?

The Home Office (2014) report on models of multi-agency working for safeguarding concluded that three main factors underpinned this work: collaborative decision-making, sharing information and offering coordination of interventions. The report detailed how multi-agency working existed on a spectrum ranging from co-located teams engaging in "live" MATs to current practices where joint working and collaboration was central. Best practice for multi-agency working is understood to comprise informal communication (Moran et al., 2006), clear aims and roles (Sloper, 2004), respect and a shared vision among professionals (Carter et al., 2007). Therefore planning, communication and strategic management for the development of a MAT appear to be of fundamental importance to its efficiency. However, simply

working together does not equate to working collaboratively. The literature suggests that collaborative working can be difficult when there is a clash of professional philosophies (Freeman et al., 2000) which impact the team dynamics, such as the more directive models of working typically associated with multi-agency health teams. Therefore, true multi-agency working may require co-constructing team goals as well as acceptance and celebration of the variety of perspectives that professionals offer.

The degree to which individuals supporting children and young people engage in multi-agency working varies greatly by professional discipline. Multi-agency working is integral to Social Care practices, as SWs are required to plan and assess collaboratively for children and young people under section 17 of the “Children Act” 1989. Similarly, the NHS has committed to providing integrated healthcare and support through multi-disciplinary working (NHS England, 2018). However, professional collaboration practices vary greatly between service delivery models. Cultural and philosophical differences between professional disciplines can create difficulty when establishing new practices as a team of multi-agency colleagues (Leadbetter, 2006).

3.5 Clashing or Collaborating?

It has been claimed that joint working is reliant upon the merging of professional skills and knowledge (Rushmer & Pallis, 2002) and cultural differences in occupation are reported to be a barrier to effective multi-agency working (Brown & White, 2006). This could be due to a clash in the worldviews that professionals hold. A worldview can be understood as (Figure 6):

Figure 6

Definition: Worldview

Definition: Worldview

- *“a set of assumptions about physical and social reality that may have powerful effects on cognition and behavior”.*

Note. Taken from Koltko-Rivera (2004, pg. 3).

One way of exploring worldviews is by understanding the ontological and epistemological assumptions that are taken by professionals from different disciplines. The literature proposes four hybrid social work ontological frameworks: “Interpretivist – Therapeutic”, “Individual-Reformist”, “Neoliberalist-Managerialist” and “Socialist-Collectivist” (Ornellas et al., 2018). The authors argue that a shift is happening towards the Socialist-Collectivist which acknowledges the structural, macro causes of oppression whilst also recognising the individual’s agency. This perspective argues that SWs are aware of both external and internal factors affecting service-users, therefore providing them with macro and micro lenses through which to view problems. Similarly, EPs’ adoption of a social constructionist position sits at a more macro, or meta, level in comparison to the other positions discussed. For example, the use of frameworks for Educational Psychology practice, such as the Constructionist Model of Informed and Reasoned Action (Gameson & Rhydderch, 2008), which is underpinned by social constructionist principles (e.g. Burr, 2015), offers practitioners the ability to hold multiple, and often opposing, hypotheses, or truths, in mind. It is possible and perhaps expected that working with conflicting views and managing cognitive dissonance is therefore part of the EP role.

The degree to which professionals are introspective about the application of these theoretical positions to their engagement with other professionals is unclear. Put simply, whilst professionals may profess that they consciously adopt a specific stance to working with service-users, this does not mean that they employ these perspectives when working with other professionals. This can lead to difficulties in multi-agency working when the co-construction of issues is understood to be a fundamental building block in the MAT system, due to conflict between professional approaches. Evidently, the integration of multiple agencies coming from a variety of backgrounds and informed by different policies, procedures and schools of thought is not without its challenges. This is not necessarily to the detriment of the team, as Halsey et al. (2005) suggested that differences within MATs may enhance outcomes. Hymans (2006) investigated factors linked to team success and reported that expertise and professional diversity should be acknowledged within MATs to work most effectively. For Behaviour and Education Support Teams, multi-agency working is reported to enable effective and valuable sharing of expertise between professionals through group discussions which colleagues viewed as a particularly rewarding experience (Halsey et al., 2005). This study found that despite the challenge of merging professional disciplines, the multi-agency model enabled greater flexibility and creativity, enabling professionals to work in novel and interesting ways.

3.6 The Influence of the ECM Agenda on Educational Psychology

Practice.

The work of Local Authority (LA) EPs has naturally been influenced by changes proposed in the ECM agenda. It has been suggested that EPs' work has taken a more integrated stance than solely joined-up working practices in Children's Services (Greenhouse, 2013) with the development of formalised MATs. Historically, multi-agency work has been praised for its efficiency in responding to service-users' needs (Miller & Ahmad, 2000). The use of MATs is widespread, and Practitioner Psychologists must evidence their adherence to professional standards (HCPC, 2015). MATs can provide a forum for interdisciplinary discussion (Marks et al., 1995) and allow the opportunity for co-constructing issues, context and problem-solving, similar to the Social Constructionist principles applied to Wagner's model of consultation (Wagner, 1995; 2000; 2017).

3.7 Educational Psychologists in Multi-Agency Teams.

As previously discussed, engagement with MATs is a fundamental element of the role predating the influence of the ECM agenda, when considering good practice for EPs (Kelly & Gray, 2000). The ways in which EPs work with and contribute towards multi-agency working varies both by locality and the focus of the work. The Association of Educational Psychologists (2008) investigated the practice of EPs in a variety of multi-agency setups in England and commissioned research into EPs working within Sure Start settings (Davis et al., 2008), fostering and adoption (Norgate et al., 2008), and children in care (Norwich et al., 2008). Research conducted in 2009 found that EPs were also contributing to multi-agency work in Early Years, Behaviour and Education Support, Child Development Centres, Child

and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), and health teams (Gaskell & Leadbetter, 2009).

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence stresses the role of Psychologists and psychological support for looked after children and young people (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence [NICE], 2010). Moreover, a recommendation is made for Children's Services management to "*focus on effective partnership and multi-agency working*" (NICE, 2010, pg.18) to best meet the needs of children and young people who are looked after.

3.8 Educational Psychologists in Multi-Agency Teams in Wales/

The literature provides several examples of how EPs can contribute to MATs in Wales. Joint working is fundamental to the EP role enabling better collaboration between different services and agencies. For example, EPs in Wales can contribute towards multi-agency work with health boards for the provision of services such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) diagnostic pathways, where EPs can feed into the assessment of needs and decision-making processes (Holtom et al., 2019).

EPs are part of the multi-agency support for pre-school children in Wales, from more disadvantaged areas through initiatives such as Flying Start (Welsh Government, 2017a). This multi-agency approach sees colleagues from Health, Education and Social Care contexts collaborating to offer early intervention for language, cognitive, social, emotional, and physical needs (Slade, 2019).

The current picture of EPs working in MATs supporting children and young people who have experienced care is unclear. This is partly due to the use of terms such as “Child Psychologist” and “Practitioner Psychologist” which can be used to advertise job vacancies. This lack of clarity raises questions of definition and makes it difficult to unpick the unique contribution of Psychologists from different disciplines.

To further examine the role of EPs in working with children who have experienced care in Wales, it is important to consider the wider context. Therefore, pertinent legislation, terminology, prevalence, outcomes, and the role of education are discussed.

4 Supporting Children who are Care Experienced (CEC)

4.1 Children who are Care Experienced.

A child or young person under the age of 18 years is considered “looked after” by a LA in the instance where they are subject to a Care Order or Interim Care Order under Section 31 of the “Children Act” 1989 or is provided accommodation by the LA for a continuous period of more than 24 hours under Section 76 or 77 of the “Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act” 2014. (Welsh Government, 2016a).

Children and young people who meet the description of “looked after” are commonly referred to as Looked After Children (LAC). In Wales, the term Child Looked After (CLA) has risen in popularity more recently as an informal person-first alternative. It is important to note that legislation uses the term “Looked After Child” or “LAC” and therefore the literature uses inconsistent terminology. The term “Care Experienced” is becoming more a widely accepted umbrella term by children and young people

themselves (TACT, 2019), as the term “Looked After Children” has been recognised for its negative connotations (e.g., TACT, 2019). “Care Experienced” has been defined as (Figure 7):

Figure 7

Definition: Care Experienced

Definition: Care Experienced

- *“Those who are care experienced generally does include care leavers, but also a wider population of people who were in care at some point in their childhood, as well as those who were in care for only a short period of time or left care before the age of 16”.*

Note. Taken from Shotton (2019, pg. 7).

The current paper adopts the term “Care Experienced Children” (CEC) to refer to any child or young person who has experienced the care system. However, when the correct legal term “Looked After Child” is used in the literature and it is unclear whether this includes children who are permanently placed or adopted, the term “Looked After Child” will be used instead.

Due to the devolved context, the legislation around social care differs between England and Wales (Figure 8).

Figure 8

Background Information: Social Care Legislation in Wales

Background Information: Social Care Legislation in Wales

- The "Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act" 2014 (Welsh Government, 2016a) came into force from 2016 and provides an updated and modernised legal framework for social service law in Wales. One of the main objectives of this legislation is to promote the effective and efficient partnership working of professionals with one another (Welsh Government, 2020). Cooperation between Local Authorities, health boards and NHS trusts are a fundamental part of the Act. Professionals from these services are legally required to form multi-agency partnership boards, which are responsible for the integration of services for children and young people with learning disabilities and complex needs, amongst other responsibilities (Welsh Government, 2015a). Welsh Government guidance states that *"The key aims of cooperation, partnership and integration can therefore be described as follows: To improve care and support, ensuring people have more say and control; To improve outcomes and health and wellbeing; Provide coordinated, person centered care and support; Make more effective use of resources, skills and expertise"* (Welsh Government, 2020 pg.3). Regional multi-agency partnership boards have been tasked with establishing structures of sub-groups, for whom they are accountable (Welsh Government, 2020). Sub-groups are required to prioritise the integration of preventative and reactive services, particularly those for children and young people with disabilities, illness, care experience, at risk or in need of care and support, and those with behavioural and emotional needs (Welsh Government, 2020). Multi-agency collaborative work is central to social care legislation in Wales and therefore, Local Authority professionals working with children and young people in care or at risk of coming into care are expected to work in this way.

4.2 Prevalence.

Wales has some of the highest proportions of Looked After Children across the UK (Welsh Government, 2019a) and these rates continue to grow, as do rates across the nations of the UK (Wales Centre for Public Policy, 2019) (Table 1).

Table 1

The Number of Children Looked After per 10,000 in England and the Devolved Nations

Nation	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
England	60	60	62	64	65
Northern Ireland ^a	66	66	68	71	74
Scotland ^b	149	149	144	141	139
Wales	89	90	95	102	109

Note. Data included in this table is taken from Department for Education (2017; 2019a), Department of Health (2021), Scottish Government (2020) and Stats Wales (2019).

^a Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole.

^b Figures have been amended as data is reported per 1,000.

This data must be interpreted with caution as Welsh Government statistics (Stats Wales, 2019) include young offenders under LA and youth detention accommodation. Additionally, there are limitations with inter-reliability, such as the month of the year when data is captured and the length of time in care before children and young people are counted in the statistics. The increase in Wales is happening in the context of a decline in the general population, when compared to an increase in England (Wales Centre for Public Policy, 2019), and therefore support for this vulnerable group requires strategic consideration.

4.3 Outcomes.

The research paints a stark picture in terms of outcomes for children who are looked after and adopted. Children and young people who have experienced care are therefore all susceptible to negative outcomes which could result from their difficult

early experiences before going into care, as well as being influenced by their subsequent placement in LA care. For many there is an implicit assumption that permanence of placement, such as adoption out of care or children under the care of family members with a Special Guardianship Order, will mitigate the impact of any trauma experienced (Gore Langton, 2017). Below is a summary of some of the negative outcomes that CEC experience (Table 2), with signposting to relevant literature.

Table 2

Negatively Impacted Outcomes for CEC

Negatively Impacted Outcomes	Literature
Physical growth (including brain structure and functioning)	Teicher & Samson (2016) Van Ijzendoorn & Juffer (2007)
Cognitive functioning	Palacios & Brodinsky (2010)
Mental health	Howe (2007) Centre for Social Justice (2015)
Emotional and behavioural difficulties	Biehal et al. (2010) Wade et al. (2014)
Attachment difficulties	Moullin et al. (2014) Van den Dries et al. (2009) Walker (2008)
Educational and learning difficulties	Selwyn et al. (2014) Adoption UK (2014) Sturgess & Selwyn (2007) Biehal et al. (2010)
Future (e.g., accessing higher education, offending, becoming NEET)	Department for Education (2019b) Prison Reform Trust (2016) Department for Education (2018)

Research has demonstrated the protective factors that educational experience and achievement offer for developing resilience, improving life outcomes and wellbeing

(Berridge, 2002; Meyer, 1999). It is also important to recognise the positive outcomes that CEC have experienced, as presented below (Figure 9).

Figure 9

Factors Associated with Positive Outcomes for CEC

Factors Associated with Positive Outcomes for CEC

- The younger age of the child at the time of the final Care Order
- Good home and school support
- The carer's facilitation of beneficial contact with the child's family
- The availability of therapeutic support provided through early intervention
- The encouragement of children and young people in regular positive activities
- The consistency of the Social Worker
- The appropriate placement of the child with or without their siblings, to meet their own needs

Note. Information taken from Institute of Public Care (2018).

Research suggests that school staff are the main determinant of educational progress for Looked After Children (Sebba et al., 2015). There are several factors associated with positive outcomes for children and young people, such as having support for their education from an early age and feeling that people genuinely care about them (Sebba et al., 2015). There has also been a political drive to improve the wellbeing outcomes for CEC, such as the raised profile of wellbeing in Social Services legislation such as the "Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act" 2014 (Welsh Government, 2016a), and the development of the "National Standards and Outcomes Framework for Children and Young People in Wales" (Welsh Government, 2019b).

4.4 CEC and Education.

Research suggests that CEC achieve some of the lowest educational outcomes, markedly below their non-looked after peers (Department for Children, Schools and Families [DfCSF], 2010). Fewer than 50% of CEC achieve one GCSE, their likelihood of being excluded from school is higher and they receive less parental interest in their education when compared to their non-care experienced peers (Berridge, 2007). This gap widens across key stages and into higher education (Stein, 2012). More recent research identifies that this remains a concern in the U.K. (e.g. O'Higgins et al., 2015; Sebba et al., 2015) and is particularly pertinent in Wales where the percentage of children placed into care has risen by more than 45% in the last ten years (Welsh Government, 2019d).

It has been claimed that, historically, the education of CEC was not prioritised (Sugden, 2013). The literature portrays a prioritisation of Looked After Children over adopted children by schools when requesting support from outside agencies. Osborne et al., (2009) found that almost twice as much EP time was spent with Looked After Children. More recent research suggests that with the correct support and environment CEC can experience success and fulfil their potential (Templeton et al., 2020). Adoptive families report frustrations with the challenging process of accessing necessary support (Selwyn et al., 2014). Legislation has been passed which aims to prioritise support for CEC in education.

4.5 CEC and Education in Wales.

The Welsh Government has designed legislation to prioritise support for the education of CEC (Figure 10).

Figure 10

Background Information: Education Legislation Supporting CEC in Wales

Background Information: Education Legislation Supporting CEC in Wales

- “Towards a Stable Life and a Brighter Future” was published in 2007 by the Welsh Government and sought to increase the holistic support offered to Looked After Children. This document outlined the statutory, strategic role of the Looked After Children in Education (LACE) Coordinator at the Local Authority level to address the educational needs of CEC (Welsh Government, 2007). This role straddles the social care and education camps to try and foster better communication and a more cohesive approach between professionals supporting CEC and meeting their educational needs. Additionally, the role of the “designated person” for Looked After Children was proposed by the Children and Young Persons Act (UK Government, 2008) as the responsibility for Looked After Children at school-level. The Welsh Government (2017b) published further guidance on this role in 2017 detailing the role, responsibilities, and best practice for school “designated persons”. This document refers to the role of EPs in supporting the “*development, well-being, resilience, learning and achievement*” (Welsh Government, 2017b, pg. 20) of CEC.

A review of the support available for CEC identified how well-placed EPs are to monitor and support CEC and that EPs may have a greater role to play (Sugden, 2013). Many LAs have structured their support for CEC to better meet needs and work proactively with social care teams through maintaining support for EPs with specialisms in this area (Sugden, 2013).

5 Psychologists within Children's Services

5.1 The role of the Psychologist in Children's Services.

The literature demonstrated cross-sectional opportunities that working with CEC offers to Psychologists from diverse disciplines, such as Clinical and Counselling Psychologists (e.g. DECP, 2006; Farrell et al., 2006; Golding, 2010; Swann & York, 2011; Hibbert & Frankl, 2011). The appropriateness and best "fit" of specific disciplines and schools of thought within the psychological profession for this type of work is disputed.

It has been suggested that the Clinical Psychologist role is best placed to provide support to staff supporting CEC, through offering a reflective space, sharing formulations, and discussing the emotional impact of presenting behaviours (Sweeney, 2018). This reflected recommendations from the Division of Clinical Psychology Faculty for Children, Young People, and their Families review (Division of Clinical Psychology [DCP], 2015) of good practice, which highlighted the role of Clinical and Practitioner Psychologists in supporting the understanding of children's complex developmental trauma. Arguably, Clinical Psychologists may be better placed when assessing, formulating, and treating the mental health issues of CEC and this is a role that is held in some Local Authorities' Social Services departments (Golding, 2010). The role and function of Psychologists working with Social Services comprise competencies which can be professed by practitioners from multiple disciplines in psychology. According to the HCPC Practitioner Psychologist core competency framework, Clinical Psychologists are not required to hold expertise in childhood and adolescence, unlike EPs (HCPC, 2015). It is customary for qualified

Clinical Psychologists to further specialise within a particular area or age range; therefore, the title of Clinical Child Psychologist is used to denote this specialism.

The DCP briefing paper for Looked After Children (2009) concluded that Clinical Psychologists are key players in offering support at multiple levels, with relevant skills and knowledge of systems appropriate to planning and providing the effective support of CEC, as well as direct psychological input. This is not unique to the role of the Clinical Psychologist as Practitioner Psychologists also have transferable skills. Exploring the strengths in diversity of the professionals may be a better way to appraise best practice.

EPs working with MATs supporting CEC have reported how they may refer to a Clinical Psychologist as an appropriate alternative (Farrell et al., 2006), due to their similarities in skill and knowledge base. The significant overlap in the work of Psychologists in Children's Services was identified by Farrell et al. (2006) in a review of the functions and contributions of EPs working in this way. Farrell et al. (2006) concluded in their report that it was recommended for professional organisations to discuss the potential merging of Clinical and Educational Psychologists working with child and adolescent client groups. This idea is particularly interesting when considering the competency-based training requirements of Practitioner Psychologists, to meet the necessary criteria for the use of protected titles (HCPC, 2015).

5.2 The Role of the Educational Psychologist in Children's Services.

The involvement of EPs in agencies for health and social care supporting Looked After Children dates back to the 1970s, which is thought to be driven by the growing recognition of the impact of abuse and neglect upon CEC (DECP, 2006). The literature details a variety of ways in which EPs have become involved in supporting CEC, such as through generic school-based casework, the appointment of EPs to specialist roles for Looked After Children within the EPS, engaging with multi-agency or specialist teams or LA level committees focussing on CEC (e.g. Bradbury, 2006; Norwich et al., 2010). Research exploring the role of EPs in specialist roles identified their contributions towards supporting others, delivering training, promoting achievement, providing an overview such as liaising with other services, and participating in panels and forums (Norwich et al., 2010). The changing socio-political landscape has led to reformulation of the EP role (Figure 11).

Figure 11

Background Information: Reformulation of the EP Role

Background Information: Reformulation of the EP Role

- It has been claimed that an identity crisis has run central to the Educational Psychology profession (Parkinson & Brennan, 2020), where the debate around role and contribution has echoed throughout the literature. Fallon et al. (2010) discussed how there has been a prominence of themes in the field of Educational Psychology, relating to the “*reconstruction*”, “*reformulation*” and “*refocusing*” of the EP role (Fallon et al., 2010, pg. 2). Fallon et al. (2010) noted how the role of the EP was further developed following changes in legislation and practice advocating the use of multi-agency working to meet failing child protection needs and strengthen accountability (HMSO, 2003). This change in direction led to Children’s Services becoming one of the greatest employers of EPs (Fallon et al., 2010). By considering the fluidity of the EP role that is positioned between interconnected systems (Norwich, 2000; Stobie, 2002), some clarity can be provided regarding the different contexts in which EPs find themselves working, although this can also lead to great confusion (Ashton & Roberts, 2006) over their distinct contribution. However, with the changing landscape of EPSs practicing in traded models, this may no longer represent current understanding.

A review of the developing role of EPs within Children’s Services (Fallon et al., 2010) identified two future directions for EP work: providing tailored support to children and those who know them best through targeted and specialist levels of support, as detailed in the ECM framework; and work commissioned by parties such as schools or Children’s Trusts. The researchers identified how proactive EPs promote and market their services, conducting work in areas such as training for foster parents, consultation and supervision with staff working in Children’s Residential Homes, advocacy work for CEC facing permanent exclusion, producing court reports and complex casework for CEC and young offenders (Fallon et al., 2010). These

suggestions echo elements of Currie's five core functions of the EP role (Scottish Executive, 2002).

A recent BPS DECP "Debate" article offered an insight into the role of an EP working in a MAT in Children's Services (Bernardo, 2019). The role offered consultation, assessment, intervention and training to the Family Recovery Project, an initiative funded by the UK Government's Troubled Families programme in England, again echoing findings from the Currie report (Scottish Executive, 2002). This role provides psychological support to children and families with complex needs. The author suggested that EPs are well-placed to engage in these roles due to their training in systemic practice, psychological knowledge and understanding, as well as expertise in child development, trauma, and attachment. The unique contribution of the EP is argued, despite the area being regarded more traditionally as the work of Clinical Psychologists (Bernardo, 2019). A Division of Educational and Child Psychology working party investigation (DECP, 2006) concluded that the appointment of an EP to a specialist post for CEC is best practice, however practice continues to vary widely as these posts are not yet statutory in England or Wales.

6 The Role of Psychologists Working with Multi-Disciplinary Social Care Teams in Wales

The Welsh Government (2016b) and AEP publication, discussed previously, noted the role of EPs in supporting CEC and Social Services, as well as their strategic engagement with MATs supporting children and young people with complex needs (Welsh Government, 2016b). This suggests that the Welsh Government and AEP view EPs as being well-placed to engage in MAT working to support CEC. Practice

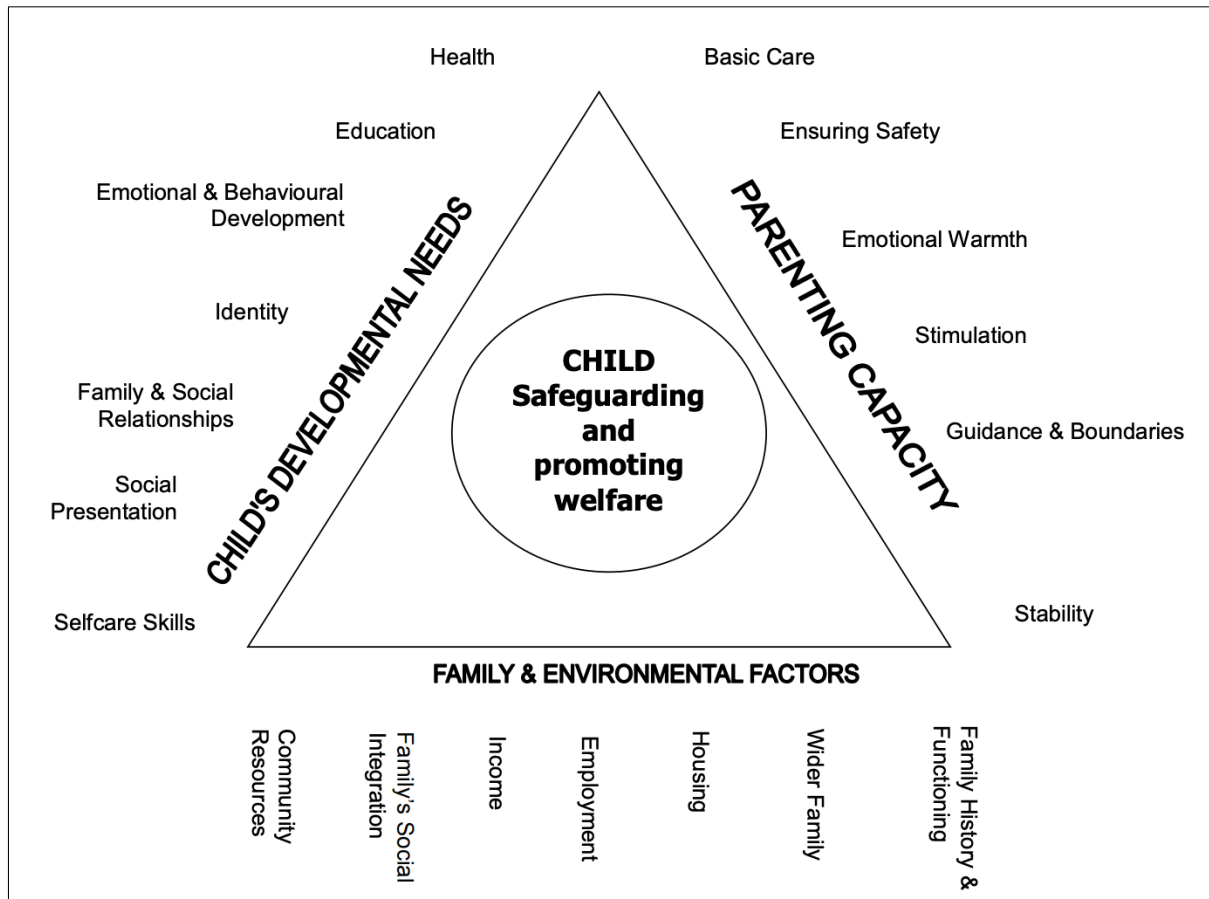
in this area has developed in response to demand and need, such as the need for additional support for adoption.

Governmental initiatives to improve the support for adoptive families in Wales saw the creation of the National Adoption Service for Wales in 2014. This organisation oversees the five regional LA collaboratives which offer support to adoptive families from MATs including Social Workers and Psychologists (National Adoption Service [NAS] 2021). Sixty-six percent of adoptive families in Wales face struggles accessing timely, professional support that is adequately funded (Therapeutic Education and Support Services in Adoption [TESSA], 2020) and therefore TESSA was introduced in 2019 as a multi-agency strategy to target and deliver support to families who need it most, as well as reducing the stigma around accessing support. Research into the provision of adoption support in Wales found that, despite the relatively limited access to Clinical and Educational Psychologist support, it was highly valued by stakeholders (Ottaway et al., 2014).

It could be argued that the potential role of Psychologists, especially EPs, in providing support for CEC, has been broadened through the introduction of the “Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act” (2014) (Welsh Government, 2016a) and the introduction of a new framework for the assessment and care planning for children and their families (Figure 12).

Figure 12

Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act (2014) Assessment Framework (Welsh Government, 2015b)



Note. Information taken from Welsh Government (2015b, pg. 35).

Also, it could be proposed that the primary role for the majority of EPs in relation to this framework stems from supporting a child's developmental needs, but with less capacity to explore wider parenting, family and contextual factors. Contrastingly, the EP role working with MATs supporting CEC would be well-placed to provide broader psychological input on the assessment and intervention of parenting capacity, as well as addressing relevant family and environmental factors in addition to their skills in exploring and supporting child development. Working in this way could therefore provide more holistic support, by taking a systemic or "meta" perspective. This

framework is subject to scrutiny however, as the terminology such as “parenting capacity” and the factors which it comprises as a measure of competence and safety are social constructs and are culturally and historically bound (Burr, 2015) to Western parenting ideals. EPs are arguably well-suited to working with constructs such as these, as they are trained to take a critical stance to taken for granted knowledge (Burr, 2015), such as the meaning that language can convey.

7 The Current Context

It is important to note here, that the literature covered thus far reflects a world before the Covid-19 pandemic, where both Education and Social Care were functioning in a very different context. Suffice to say that the long-term impact of the pandemic on CEC is relatively unknown at present. However, the closure and reduced direct contact that schools and professionals have had with CEC, as an already identified vulnerable group, could have significant implications both academically and psychologically for their wellbeing. Pre-existing vulnerabilities may be liable to further exacerbation, within a context of reduced support. The working relationships of EPs and SWs supporting CECs in MATs will therefore play a crucial role in attempting to remediate a situation of unprecedented proportion and complexity.

8 Summary

This narrative literature review has discussed the development of multi-agency working with a focus of working in Wales, specific to the role of EPs supporting CEC. The sharing of perspectives and professional practices is said to enable better planning and delivery of support for CEC, families, and carers. Multi-agency working is reported to promote better and more positive outcomes for children and young

people. Whilst the current literature review has explored how this style of working has developed and how EPs can contribute towards MATs, it is argued that the detail of the EP contribution and current practice is unclear and is worthy of further exploration which will now be addressed through the lens of a systematic review of the literature. Due to the dearth of research exploring the current landscape in Wales, the systematic literature review aims to explore the wider practice of EPs in this area.

Section B – Systematic Literature Review

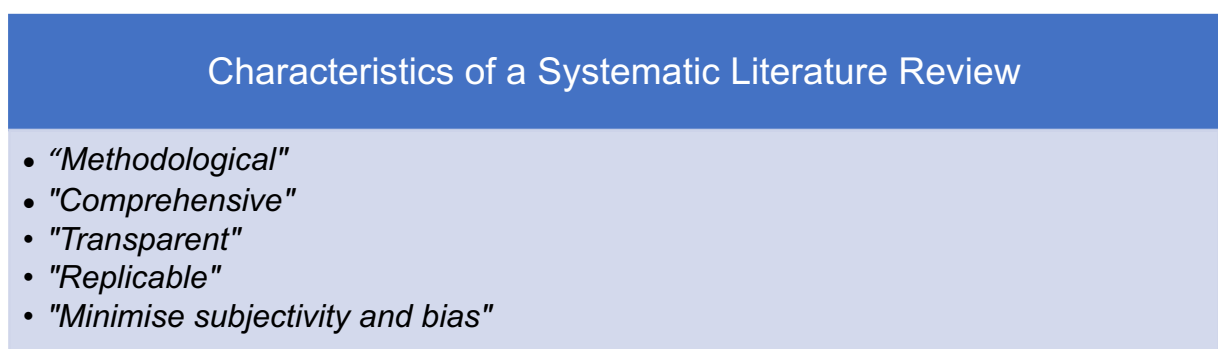
1 Introduction

1.1 Aims of the Systematic Literature Review.

Systematic literature reviews offer a summary of “research evidence that address a clearly formulated question using systematic and explicit methods to identify, select, and critically appraise relevant research, and to collect and analyse data from the studies that are included in the review” (Cochrane, 2011, para. 88). Due to the use of explicit and systematic techniques, different to traditional narrative analyses, systematic reviews are often considered to be the “gold standard” of literature appraisal (Cooke et al., 2012, pg. 1435). Systematic literature reviews are considered to comprise several characteristics (Figure 13).

Figure 13

Characteristics of a Systematic Literature Review



Note. Information taken from Siddaway et al. (2019, pg. 751).

The current study aims to explore the present research landscape and therefore it is argued that reviewing all relevant studies, regardless of underpinning conceptual and

methodological assumptions, is the most representative method of capturing current practice. It is with this understanding that a thematic synthesis of literature was chosen as an appropriate and creative method of identifying and constructing an interpretation (Montuori, 2005) of the available literature to better understand current practice.

1.2 Literature Search Strategy.

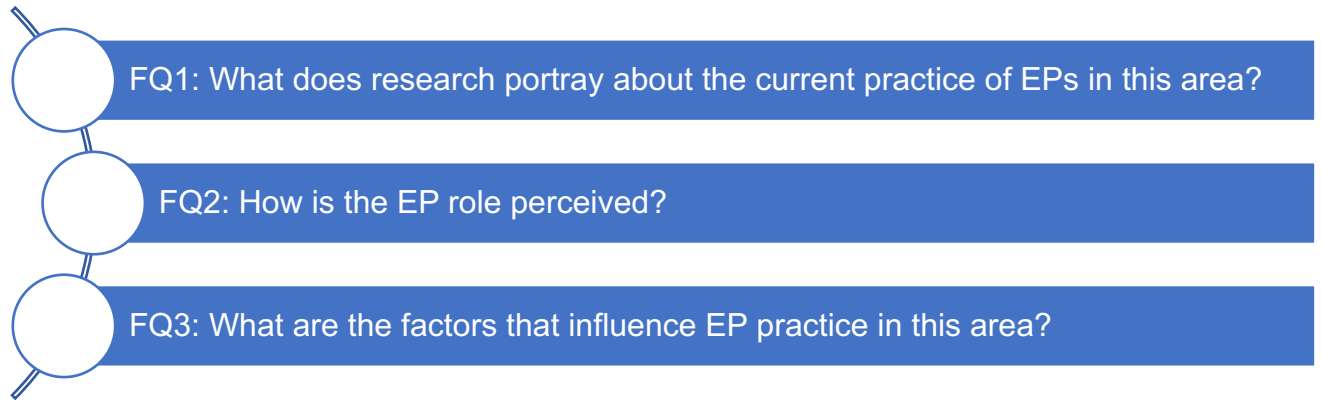
Searches were conducted using online academic and generic search engines. Full details of the search strategy are presented (Table 3).

1.3 Focus of Section B.

The narrative review aimed to provide context and breadth of information around the social and political developments of practice. Due to the dearth of research exploring the current landscape in Wales, the systematic literature review aims to explore the wider practice of EPs working with Social Workers supporting CEC, through answering the following focus questions (FQs) (Figure 14):

Figure 14

Systematic Literature Review Focus Questions (FQs)



2 Method

The thematic literature synthesis enabled the review of both qualitative and quantitative research, modelled on the six-step framework (see Table 3) by Woods et al. (2011a).

Table 3

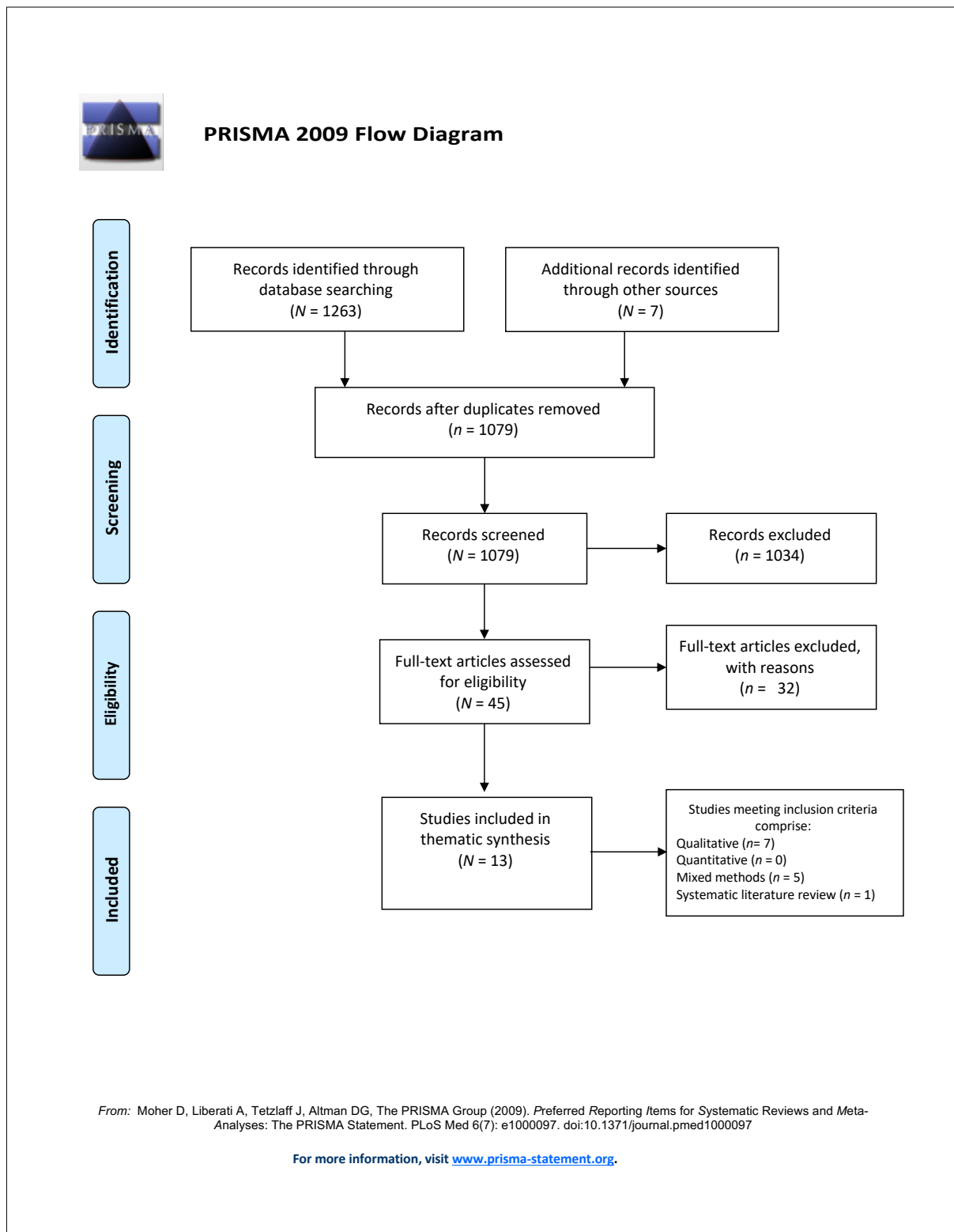
Thematic Literature Synthesis Framework

Stage	Description	Details
1 & 2	Literature searching and reference harvesting.	<p>Literature searches were completed between September and December 2020. A variety of online academic databases were used to gather information including ERIC, BEI, ASSIA, Psycinfo and Scopus. Initially search terms were “Multi disciplinary OR multidisciplinary OR multi agency OR multiagency OR inter professional OR interprofessional AND social services OR social care OR social work* OR children's services AND psycholog*”. This yielded 3,282 articles which upon sifting indicated that the search terms required refining (many articles were focussed on physical and mental health, offending etc.). Therefore, search terms were amended to include “AND (child* OR education OR school)”, which yielded a total of 1,263 results, excluding duplicates (see Appendix A for more details on the search strategy).</p> <p>Preliminary searches were conducted using more generic search engines such as the Cardiff University library and Google Scholar. Other relevant websites and databases identified additional literature including the AEP and BPS websites, NICE guidelines, eThos online thesis database. Only peer-reviewed articles were included in the final list of included papers. Reference lists were also examined to identify and harvest further papers of interest.</p> <p>A summary of the process is provided to detail replicability (Siddaway et al., 2019), using the PRISMA guidelines (Figure 15).</p>
3	Sifting process of research (inclusion and exclusion criteria).	<p>Literature gathered through the systematic search process and additional sources was reviewed for eligibility. After duplicates had been removed, the literature was sifted again based on the following inclusion and exclusion criteria:</p> <p><u>Inclusion criteria:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explores current practice of Educational Psychologists and Social Workers in multi-agency teams, focussing on how they support children who are care experienced. • Is an empirical study (uses a robust method of data collection i.e. is replicable and trustworthy research). • Published after 2000. • English language. <p><u>Exclusion criteria:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Position papers that do not include empirical research. • Non-peer reviewed.

		Forty-five papers were remaining after the inclusion and exclusion criteria had been applied. These papers underwent an additional sifting process (see Figure 15) where title, abstract and full articles were reviewed to include directly relevant literature only, resulting in the final inclusion of 13 articles. A list of excluded articles with reasons is presented in Appendix B.
4	Development of coding framework to evaluate research studies.	The coding framework was devised based on that of Woods et al. (2011a). Both descriptive and evaluative information was gathered about each of the included papers. Descriptive information is summarised in Table 4, along with an appraisal of the Weight of the Evidence (WoE) they each presented (Gough, 2007).
5	Coding of research studies.	Coding included the thorough evaluation and appraisal of papers to identify information of relevance. Codes were then reviewed through an iterative process to identify themes in the literature. A thematic map of the literature was produced.
6	Presenting review findings.	Presented below.

Figure 15

PRISMA Diagram



3 Presentation of Findings

3.1 Overview of Included Studies.

A summary of the included studies is presented below (Figure 16).

Figure 16

Overview of Included Studies

Overview of Included Studies

- Thirteen studies were identified through the literature sifting process, as detailed in the PRISMA (Moher et al., 2009) diagram (Figure 15). All of the studies were research articles from academic journals, published between 2000 and 2020. The majority of studies ($n = 7$) were published between 2006 and 2010, which is likely to reflect an increase in research in this area following the publication of the "Every Child Matters" initiative in 2003. Studies originated from the UK ($n = 12$), and the USA ($n = 1$). The papers comprised a variety of research designs, using qualitative ($n = 7$) and mixed methods ($n = 5$). Allen and Bond (2020)'s literature review was included as the systematic nature of their research process was felt to meet the inclusion criteria in terms of empirical rigour. One limitation of the inclusion of their paper is that it reviews literature by German et al. (2000) and Woods et al. (2011b). Therefore, it is possible that information gleaned from this paper could bias the balance of themes constructed; however, it is argued that the use of the Weight of Evidence (Gough, 2007) framework redresses this somewhat.

Participants

- Psychologists and Social Workers were frequently cited participants, however others included Kinship Carers, Adopters, and a variety of professionals from health, education, social care and more widely within Children's Services. Some studies refrained from explicitly citing professional roles, instead providing information about the types of MATs that professionals were working in e.g. CAMHS, Looked After Children (Leadbetter, 2006). The paper by Woods et al. (2011b) was published in the "School Psychology International" academic journal and therefore has adopted the term of "School Psychologist" in place of "Educational Psychologist" to appeal to a wider audience. As the research paper was conducted in the UK, the current study uses the term "Educational Psychologist" for clarity.

Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

- Data was commonly collected via interviews, surveys, questionnaires and focus groups and analysed using a variety of techniques such as narrative, content analysis, discourse analysis and thematic analysis. It is worth noting that researchers cited a variety of approaches to using thematic analysis and therefore those using this technique are not necessarily directly comparable.

3.2 Quality of Research.

The quality of the included studies was appraised, as presented below (Figure 17).

Figure 17

Quality of Included Studies

Gough's Weight of Evidence (WoE) Framework

- The included studies were appraised using Gough's (2007) Weight of Evidence (WoE) framework, which assessed methodological quality (WoE A) and relevance of findings related to the current review question (WoE C) using an evaluative framework. Due to the limited scope of the study, further investigation of the appropriateness of forms of evidence used to answer research questions (WoE B) was not warranted as method and methodology was discussed in the body of the systematic literature review.
- The framework devised was based on that of Woods et al. (2011a), where quantitative studies could score a maximum of seven points (see Appendix C) and qualitative studies could score a maximum of 12 points (see Appendix D). For studies using mixed methods or Q Sort methodology, studies were dual coded and both scores are presented. A coding framework, specific to the review question, was developed to appraise the relevance of research findings (WoE C) (see Appendix E) and studies could be awarded a maximum of eight points. All papers were then awarded ratings of "High", "Medium" or "Low" for WoE A and WoE C.

Methodological Quality (WoE A)

- Five qualitative studies scored highly for their methodological quality (WoE A). Discrepancies were observed between the methodological quality of quantitative and qualitative elements in the mixed methods and Q Sort studies where all quantitative elements were awarded "Low" and "Medium" ratings, whereas 80% of qualitative elements were awarded "High" ratings and only one study (Osborne et al., 2011) was awarded a rating of "Medium". The quantitative scoring framework suggests that a lack of control/comparison groups and outcome measures contributes to the lower scoring of this element of these research studies. The paper by Norwich et al. (2010) was awarded full marks, making it the highest scoring paper for WoE A, which may result from the fact that it was a piece of commissioned research. Sturgess & Selwyn's (2007) research scored the lowest for qualitative WoE A due to the lack of information provided on the method of data analysis.

Relevance of Findings (WoE C)

- Four studies scored highly for their relevance of findings (WoE C), three "Medium" and one "Low". Hymans' (2008) study was the highest scoring, with full marks. Daniels (2011) was the lowest scoring due to the difficulty determining whose perspectives were being presented, as the participant roles were not explicitly named. Additionally, implications for Psychologists were not provided; however, this is likely due to the ambiguity over the participant sample.

A summary of the included studies is detailed in Table 4.

Table 4

Characteristics of Included Studies

Author and Year	Country	Research Focus and Design	Participant Characteristics	Analysis	Limitations	WoE A	WoE C
Allen & Bond (2020)	England	<p>Systematic literature review exploring research considering the role of EPs in child protection and safeguarding.</p> <p>Critical Interpretative Synthesis (CIS) (systematic review) reviewing mixed methods and opinion papers.</p> <p><u>Research question</u> How has the role of the Educational Psychologist in relation to child protection and safeguarding been conceptualised over time within the professional research base?</p>	24 papers included.	Reciprocal Translational Analysis	The CIS review has limited replicability. Inclusion and exclusion criteria may have impacted the identification of relevant articles.	10 (High)	5 (Medium)

<p>Bradbury (2006)</p>	<p>England</p>	<p>Exploring the EP's role in Corporate Parenting.</p> <p>Qualitative.</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews.</p> <p><u>Research question:</u> What is the unique contribution the Educational Psychologist can make as corporate parent?</p>	<p>Three EPs in Child in Public Care (Children under the care of the Local Authority) posts.</p>	<p>Thematic Analysis</p>	<p>Small sample size may hinder representativeness of findings to other LAs and specialist roles. The recording of data by relevance is subjective to the researcher and therefore not represent participants' views of what information is relevant to know.</p>	<p>10 (High)</p>	<p>6 (High)</p>
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<p>Cunningham & Lauchlan (2010)</p>	<p>Scotland</p>	<p>Exploring support for kinship carers to children in early years.</p> <p>Qualitative.</p> <p>Two case studies and a questionnaire.</p> <p><u>Research Questions:</u> Why and how do children end up in kinship care? Why might children in kinship care not achieve their full educational potential? How can children in kinship care and their families be best supported to encourage positive educational outcomes?</p>	<p>39 participants (EPs, SWs and kinship carers).</p>	<p>Case studies reported with narrative approach.</p> <p>Questionnaire's outcomes presented using descriptive data.</p>	<p>Data collection method (postal open-ended questionnaires sent) could impact the detail of participant responses provided and therefore effect interpretation. The voice of the child or young person in kinship care is absent.</p>	<p>11 (High)</p>	<p>7 (High)</p>
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<p>Daniels (2011)</p>	<p>England</p>	<p>Analysing professional learning (thinking and speaking) in settings subject to new legal requirements for multi-agency working in children’s services.</p> <p>Qualitative.</p> <p>Workshop series using Developmental Work Research (DWR) technique.</p> <p>Using “mirror data” technique (use of interview and previous workshop data) which participants actively analysed using Activity Theory.</p> <p>Research questions not stated.</p>	<p>Three Local Authorities involving range of professionals working in different areas of Children’s Services.</p>	<p>Selective structural analysis using Activity Theory and cognate concepts to provide mirror data and analysis of audio-visual recordings.</p>	<p>Research questions are not stated for transparency and subsequent critique. The DWR workshops were conducted over a 12 month period and the article does not state whether there was any fluctuation in participant attendance and whether this may have impacted the data collected, the analysis and any implications.</p>	<p>7 (Medium)</p>	<p>2 (Low)</p>
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<p>German et al. (2000)</p>	<p>England</p>	<p>Role of EPs in Child Protection.</p> <p>Qualitative.</p> <p>Questionnaires comprising narrative and audit information, and semi-structured interviews.</p> <p><u>Research questions:</u> How have Educational Psychology Services (EPSs) responded to issues in child protection?</p> <p>What are the practical working ways in which EPs are involved in child protection?</p> <p>What are the similarities and differences between EPS based EPs and EPs working for social services?</p> <p>What skills do EPs think they have to offer in the area of child protection?</p> <p>What do Education Welfare Officers (EWOs) and Social Workers (SWs) think EPs have to offer in the area of child protection?</p>	<p>Three phases:</p> <p>(1) Survey of 100 Principal EPs.</p> <p>(2) Interview 19 EPs with responsibility for child protection.</p> <p>(3) Survey 11 Senior SWs and 11 Senior Educational Welfare Officers.</p>	<p>Thematic Analysis</p>	<p>Themes constructed from the data were not further investigated to explore any variation in participants' interpretation of the questions. The researchers did not provide the interview and survey questions for transparency and subsequent critique.</p>	<p>10 (High)</p>	<p>5 (Medium)</p>
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<p>Hymans (2006)</p>	<p>England</p>	<p>Exploring participant constructs around factors contributing to successful multi-agency working.</p> <p>Quali-quantitative.</p> <p>Q-Sort.</p> <p>Research questions not stated.</p>	<p>54 professionals from MATs from a variety of disciplines including health, education, social care and the police.</p>	<p>Factor Analysis</p>	<p>Limitations are placed on data gathered through the Q-Sort methodology as participant responses are pre-determined. Statements were not derived from the respondents and therefore subject to misinterpretation or misunderstanding.</p>	<p>Quant 3 (Medium)</p> <p>Qual 11 (High)</p>	<p>6 (High)</p>
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Hymans (2008)	England	<p>Examining constructions of own and team roles for professionals engaging in multi-agency family support team.</p> <p>Mixed methods.</p> <p>Interviews (qualitative).</p> <p>Used Personal Construct Psychology to elicit bi-polar constructs about their professional role and the role of the MAT. Constructs were then rated (individually and as a group) against 7-point scale using repertory grid (quantitative).</p> <p>Research questions not stated.</p>	10 participants (including SWs Assistant SWs, Educational and Clinical Psychologists and Family Therapist).	<p>Principal components analysis and idiographic analysis of repertory grids.</p> <p>ANOVA of whole team constructs.</p>	The inclusion of Assistant SW in the participant sample may have impacted the range and depth of responses when compared to qualified and more experienced professionals. The constructs identified may have limited stability over time.	<p>Quant 4 (Medium)</p> <p>Qual 9 (High)</p>	7 (High)
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Leadbette r (2006)	England	<p>Multi-agency working and professional identity (part of a national four-year project).</p> <p>Qualitative.</p> <p>Interventionist Developmental Work Research (DWR) methodology, which included interviews, series of DWR workshops and between session activities.</p> <p>Ethnographic data (still being collected at the time, as part of larger project).</p> <p>Research questions not stated.</p>	<p>Five MATs (consisting of 8-20 participants in each).</p> <p>Teams are: CAMHS mental health team, YOT, LAC, generic team from an integrated children's service and extended school team.</p>	Activity Theory	<p>The researcher does not specify at which point the research was conducted during the four-year long project. The article states that project is still at the preliminary stages with some groups but did not state whether this included participants in the current study.</p>	8 (Medium)	3 (Medium)
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<p>Norwich et al. (2010)</p>	<p>England</p>	<p>Practice issues for EPs working with Children in Care.</p> <p>Mixed methods.</p> <p>Online survey.</p> <p><u>Research questions:</u> What specific kinds of involvement do EPs have in direct and indirect services for children in care?</p> <p>What training have they had relevant to these roles?</p> <p>How do EPs with specialist roles and positions in EP services operate?</p> <p>In what range of MATs do EPs participate and what are their roles and contributions?</p> <p>What tensions do EPs experience in their working relationships with other professionals and children's services workers?</p>	<p>107 EPs from five LA Educational Psychology Services.</p>	<p>Descriptive statistics.</p> <p>Thematic Analysis.</p>	<p>The online survey method may impact the detail of participant responses provided and therefore effect interpretation. Interview data was also gathered but not presented in the article.</p>	<p>Quant 2 (Low)</p> <p>Qual 12 (High)</p>	<p>5 (Medium)</p>
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<p>Osborne et al. (2009)</p>	<p>England</p>	<p>Role of EP in multi-disciplinary work related to fostering and adoption.</p> <p>Mixed methods.</p> <p>Questionnaire (quantitative and qualitative questions).</p> <p>Research questions not stated.</p>	<p>Principal/ EPs from 84 Local Authorities in England.</p>	<p>No information provided.</p>	<p>No information was provided regarding the research questions and method of analysis, therefore limiting the ability to contextualise the research findings and implications. The response rate of 56% may suggest that a different method of data collection would have been more effective.</p>	<p>Quant 2 (Low)</p> <p>Qual 7 (Medium)</p>	<p>5 (Medium)</p>
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<p>Stone & Charles (2018)</p>	<p>USA</p>	<p>Exploring collaboration between school SWs, School Psychologists (SPs), Teachers, and Principals.</p> <p>Qualitative.</p> <p>Open-ended online survey.</p> <p><u>Research Questions:</u> What types of collaborative activities do school SWs describe doing with others in school?</p> <p>What factors appear to shape collaboration?</p>	<p>66 Participants in total, comprising 39 School SWs, 14 Teachers, five SPs, four Principals.</p>	<p>Open coding scheme, saturation analysis.</p>	<p>Concept of saturation to analyse data stems from ideas around achieving validity which is a quantitative ideal. There are limitations to the findings as purported practice and actual practice may differ.</p>	<p>10 (High)</p>	<p>4 (Medium)</p>
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<p>Sturges & Selwyn (2007)</p>	<p>England</p>	<p>Examines support provided by Social Services Departments (SSDs), Health, Education and CAMHS for children after first year in adoptive placements.</p> <p>Qualitative.</p> <p>SSD case files read, and data gathered on children's family background and use of services prior to adoption (audit).</p> <p>Questionnaire to adopters.</p> <p>Interviews with adopters.</p> <p>Research questions not stated.</p>	<p>SSD documents detailing services provided to 80 children assessed.</p> <p>Interviews with 54 adoptive parents investigated services provided to 64/80 children post order.</p>	<p>Audit data.</p> <p>No information given on questionnaire and interview analysis – detailed discussion of views provided.</p>	<p>No information was provided regarding the research questions and method of analysis, therefore limiting the ability to contextualise the research findings and implications. Adopters constructs around the support they received may differ from professionals' views about what was offered and therefore their views could provide more information about whether there is a discrepancy.</p>	<p>6 (Medium)</p>	<p>3 (Medium)</p>
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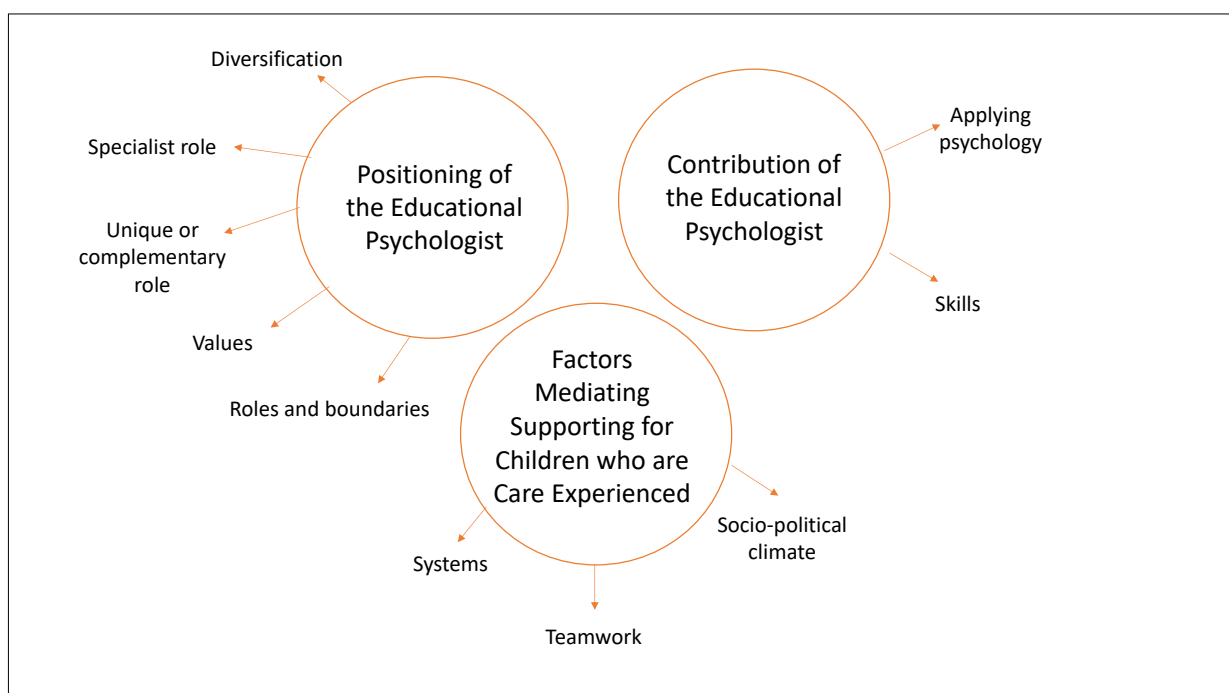
<p>Woods et al. (2011b)</p>	<p>England</p>	<p>Exploring the role of the School Psychologist (SP) in child protection and safeguarding.</p> <p>Mixed methods.</p> <p>Three stages: Focus group, questionnaire and site visits reported as case studies (documentary analysis, observations, and interviews).</p> <p>Research questions not stated.</p>	<p>Focus group: Nine participants (five Principal SPs or their delegates, one strategic level officer in Children's Services and three AEP Safeguarding Project Steering Group members).</p> <p>Questionnaire: Responses from 56 UK Local Authorities.</p> <p>Site visits: Four LA School Psychology Services.</p>	<p>Focus group: Content Analysis.</p> <p>Questionnaire: Thematic Analysis and descriptive statistics.</p> <p>Site visit: Reported as narrative case study.</p>	<p>No information was provided regarding the research questions therefore limiting the ability to contextualise the research findings and implications. Thematic Analysis data is presented solely as a narrative account and therefore it is difficult to ascertain the analysis holistically.</p>	<p>Quant 2 (Low)</p> <p>Qual 9 (High)</p>	<p>5 (Medium)</p>
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3.3 Identification of Themes.

Three main themes were identified in the thematic literature synthesis, as detailed in Figure 18.

Figure 18

Themes Constructed from the Systematic Literature Review



3.3.1 Theme 1: Positioning of Educational Psychologists.

This theme demonstrates how EPs have adapted to the demands of working with other agencies through the diversification of their responsibilities and taking on specialist positions. Issues related to the definition of roles and boundaries are discussed, as well as the complementary and unique role that EPs can offer.

Additionally, the importance of values was identified as influencing the positioning of EPs, both by EPs and other professionals.

3.3.1.1 Diversification.

The work of EPs is historically seated within school support systems, addressing the educational needs of children and young people (see Allen & Bond, 2020). In their systematic literature review, Allen & Bond (2020) identified papers discussing the repositioning of EPs away from their more traditional observation and assessment roles in education to multi-agency ways of working (e.g. Billinge, 1992; Boyle & Lounds, 1992). Research findings from Woods et al. (2011b) suggested the potential for the EP role to develop beyond the “*traditional*” (pg. 370) role, into multi-agency and community-based positions. Allen & Bond (2020) commented upon the transient nature of the EP role, in responding to ongoing changes within the wider socio-political context. Systemic thinking would offer Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) Ecological Systems Theory as a lens to view this, where the EP role is held centrally within the microsystem and develops and diversifies through the influence of change and development within the wider macrosystem and exosystem (e.g. the reorganisation of Children’s Services). Whilst most work supporting CEC was identified as school-based, participants in the study by Norwich et al. (2010) reported working in more specialist multi-agency positions as well as being members of LA committees and teams. The work of EPs appears to be diversifying further into roles more typically associated with Clinical Psychologists (e.g. working with sexually harmed young people) (Woods et al., 2011b), Forensic Psychologists (e.g. two thirds of participants reported their involvement in court work such as an expert witness), Counsellors and Family Therapists (German et al., 2000).

3.3.1.2 Specialist Roles.

The emergence of specialist roles is a further development in the diversification of Educational Psychology. Specialist roles are recognised as being beneficial and the commissioning of EPSs to appoint these roles justified this (Norwich et al., 2010). Allen & Bond (2020) identified the “*drift*” (pg.11) of EPs into more strategic roles. Many participants in specialist roles had not been in them for a significant amount of time and Norwich et al. (2010) suggest recency of the development of specialisms of this type in EPSs. Bradbury (2006) interviewed EPs who supported Children in Public Care and found that all participants regarded this work as a specialism due to the specialist skills and knowledge that they had developed. Seventy percent of participants in Norwich et al.’s (2010) study felt that they were not using specialist skills when working with children in care. This study suggested however that this response may be skewed as participants were a mixture of EPs with generic, specialist and managerial responsibilities, as well as trainee EPs. Therefore, the 30% who disagreed with this statement may simply reflect responses from EPs working in specialist roles. Discussion of the specialist role of EPs in this field echoed throughout the literature, as EPs took up a variety of positions both officially as specialists and unofficially as an area of their particular interest (German et al., 2000).

3.3.1.3 Roles and Boundaries.

Tensions around ascertaining professional roles and their boundaries raised issues in ensuring that the role of the EP was not duplicating the work of others (Bradbury, 2006). EPs experienced difficulties in identifying a clear role for themselves, such as in their work with children in kinship care (Cunningham & Lauchlan, 2010). Clarity of

role and working processes was understood to be key to enabling EPs to be “*given a chance and support to show what they can do in helping the team meet its objectives*” (Hymans, 2006 pg. 32). This implies that definitions should be agreed early into a team’s conception, to combat tacit assumptions (Daniels, 2011), thus promoting efficiency. Such tensions were also identified by German et al. (2000) where participants commented that a specialist EP role in child protection was not adequately defined thus impacting perceptions around capability. This could lead to professionals feeling pigeon-holed and therefore limiting the expansion of their role (Hymans, 2008), or lead to issues around the ownership of specific areas of work by certain professionals (Osborne et al., 2009). It is apparent that the role of the EP is both influenced by their own constructions and those of other professionals.

3.3.1.4 A Unique or Complementary Role?

A long-standing concern was noted how EPs, SWs and senior managers are unsure about what EPs can offer that is distinctly different to their colleagues (Osborne et al., 2009), including designated teachers (Norwich et al., 2010) and other non-Psychologists (Bradbury, 2006). However, EPs can offer a more “*analytical and proportional*” (Woods et al., 2011b, pg. 369) view which complements the forensic nature of the SW’s role. In comparison to other professionals, the EP role in corporate parenting is reported to offer skills in problem-solving, negotiation and a breadth of relevant knowledge, as well as offering a meta-perspective to the work (Bradbury, 2006), therefore suggesting that there is a unique role for EPs working in this arena.

3.3.1.5 Values.

The issue of professional values impacting the positioning of the EP in work with CEC was prominent; however, this had both advantages and disadvantages. Leadbetter (2006) reported how team functioning was impacted by professional philosophy and beliefs about team membership (Freeman et al., 2000), which suggests that personal values are heavily influential to the working practice agreed by professionals when disciplines are merged. Some professionals found it particularly helpful to discuss their personal values explicitly with team members, as it enabled negotiation of working practices and identification of shared values of the MAT members (Daniels, 2011). However, EP participants in Hymans' (2008) study indicated tensions between constructs of establishing team working practices with their values and ideals of the role of the Psychologist. This suggests that, whilst professionals may differ in their professional roles, commonalities in underlying values are viewed as a desirable quality for MATs.

3.3.2 Theme 2: Contribution of the Educational Psychologist.

This theme considers how EP work is viewed, with reference to what is valued and suggestions for future development of the EP role as part of a MAT supporting CEC.

3.3.2.1 Skills.

Skills were not explicitly investigated in all the research studies, but it was nevertheless discussed frequently by both participants and researchers to better understand the role. EP strengths in communication were understood to be essential for collaborative working in addition to other interpersonal skills in rapport building

which led to the development of trusting working relationships (Osborne et al., 2009). Professionals recognised the skill development of others through working openly, enabling them to offer alternative perspectives (Osborne et al., 2009). In child protection work, EPs utilise skills in knowledge, reconstructing perspectives, assessment, and training (German et al., 2000). EP participants in this study identified how they contributed to multi-agency work with systemic skills, good professional links and being adept at working with a variety of professionals. Furthermore, it was reported that Educational Welfare Officers and SWs identified how EPs were competent in child protection, such as delivering therapeutic interventions, utilising skilful communication, assessment, and intervention as well as their proficiency in advising on the effects of abuse on emotions and behaviour. Whilst some participants recounted their specialist knowledge about children in care (e.g. knowledge of attachment and trauma needs), participants in research conducted by Norwich et al. (2010) felt that they were not using specialist skills over and above those utilised when working with children and young people with additional learning needs more widely. Communication is a fundamental element of the EP role. Kinship carers identified several ways in which they felt EPs could offer better communication to support them in meeting the needs of families, such as providing clearer explanations of the EP role, improved inter-agency liaison, providing positive feedback, and demonstrating better listening skills with carers (Cunningham & Lauchlan, 2010).

Woods et al. (2011b) highlighted the contribution of EPs to strategic planning, general operational management and utilising expert interpersonal skills. This suggests that EPs are well-placed to not only engage in multi-agency work but to

contribute towards the management of MATs due to their skills in taking a meta-perspective. The distinctive contribution of the skills brought by EPs was deliberated in the literature. Although EP participants identified the usefulness of their contribution, they were not confident that the skills they brought to work in the areas of fostering and adoption were unique to their role, particularly with a limited capacity (Osborne et al., 2009). It could be disputed that with experience, EP skills become habitual and are therefore difficult to ascertain. Again, the argument for establishing a single practitioner title for Psychologists working with children and young people is relevant to consider here, as Woods et al. (2011b) suggest that EPs are developing skills more traditionally associated with clinical psychology, such as therapeutic practices and contributing to multi-agency working.

3.3.2.2 Applying Psychology.

EPs applied psychology during specific activities and areas of work. German et al. (2000) and Woods et al. (2011b) reported that the EP role in child protection and safeguarding comprises the five core functions of EP work, as proposed by Currie (Scottish Executive, 2002): consultation, assessment, intervention, training, and elements of research. Allen & Bond (2020) identified subsequent developments in terminology, as formulation was cited more explicitly as an activity conducted by EPs which feeds into the assessment process. In child protection work, EPs cited the use of drawing-based activities and cognitive assessments to explore needs (German et al., 2000). In kinship care work, EPs were identified as contributing to the arrangement of specialist placements, monitoring, and reviewing educational progress as well as elements of core EP work (Cunningham & Lauchlan, 2010).

Here, SW and Kinship Carer participants reported that they would benefit from future

EP input to support the management of emotions, supporting Carers themselves and raising awareness of the issues faced by children in kinship care with school staff. Therapeutic interventions were frequently cited in the literature, as well as behavioural approaches, counselling interventions, family therapy and mediation (German et al., 2000). Consultation, intervention, and training were discussed as being delivered both individually by EPs and as an aspect of joint work, whereas assessment, or formulation, and research elements of the role appeared more often be completed individually by EPs, and outcomes reported back.

A move towards preventative work was identified. This included systemic work with schools, providing training to staff, supporting learning and behaviour (Allen & Bond, 2020) as well as *“altering people’s values, beliefs and attitudes”* (Norwich, 2005, pg. 390). This echoes perspectives that EPs should state the need for more preventative and proactive work over the current role firefighting at crisis point (Bradbury, 2006). EPs can contribute to work at a variety of levels, and Bradbury (2006) identified the contribution of psychological thinking to work (e.g. when attending panels) which offers something additional and different to other education professionals. One participant stated that working in this way was particularly valuable as EPs can contribute at both the individual and systemic levels of engagement.

Participants in specialist roles for Children in Public Care (Bradbury, 2006) discussed how the time allocation had a significant impact on their capacity to engage in work. Despite this, providing training was cited by all participants as being the most dominant part of their work (e.g. Norwich et al., 2010). It is possible that time and capacity issues impacted opportunities for individual work and therefore upskilling

others was the most beneficial use of time. Moreover, should the EP role not be contributing anything additional or different to that of other professionals involved, there is a case for reviewing working practices to evaluate efficiency, particularly when time and capacity are precious (Osborne et al., 2009). There is nevertheless a requirement for professionals to be adequately supported with sufficient training, appropriate supervision and to feel competent to carry out the role (Fallon et al., 2010).

3.3.3 Theme 3: Mediating Factors Supporting CEC.

This theme encapsulates the systemic and socio-political factors which influence the EP role. These factors can be both within and outside of the MAT.

3.3.3.1 Systems.

The development and maintenance of systems to support practice was a prominent theme in the literature. Significant changes were identified in LA Children's Services systems over the last 30 years, as well as the professionalisation of disciplines such as social work and educational psychology (Allen & Bond, 2020), which could be viewed as paving the way for professionals engaging in project-type work with MATs. As teams and systems began to form, through agreement of clear protocols, policies, procedures and developing codes of conduct (Hymans, 2008), their professional identity was established. For child protection and safeguarding, proposals have been made for a move to working with more systemic, community psychology approaches which utilise social justice principles to improve access to marginalised communities (Allen & Bond, 2020). Where systems are well-established, it appears that this could be in part due to the managerial backing of higher LA professionals to offer

appropriate continued professional development opportunities for EPs in specialist roles, such as through secondment opportunities to develop child protection policies, guidance and training in other organisations (Woods et al., 2011b).

EPs are heavily involved in systems work with schools, particularly in the upskilling of staff and promoting whole system approaches to working both reactively and proactively through delivering training packages (e.g. Norwich et al., 2010; Osborne et al., 2009). This can nevertheless be problematic, as EPs report struggles with communication, consistency, clarity, efficiency and identifying responsibility (Norwich et al., 2010). The literature suggested that equal priority was not given to the various types of work supporting CEC in the wider LA systems. Osborne et al. (2009) note the apparent higher priority given to fostering over adoption services evident in reports of time allocation and contend that this could be due to more established systems of support for foster families. Research with adopters asserts difficulty in accessing adequate and timely access to services (Sturgess & Selwyn, 2007).

These participants stated frustrations regarding the poor understanding of services around the specific needs of adopted children, which may offer an explanation as to why long waiting lists, under-resourcing and high thresholds to accessing support have not been addressed. Both papers suggest that support for adopters is reactive, rather than proactive, despite the evident and important issues faced by adoptive families.

3.3.3.2 Teamwork.

Research exploring the extent to which EPs work with other professional groups supporting CEC varies in the literature and this is hypothesised to be influenced by

the professional responsibilities of research participants, such as generic EPs versus those in specialist roles (Norwich et al., 2010). EPs appear to most frequently liaise with professionals from health, education and social care and have working relationships with professionals such as the police, guardians, CAMHS, youth justice, Clinical Psychologists, and the NSPCC among many others (see Woods et al., 2011b; Bradbury, 2006; German et al., 2000).

EPs working in specialist corporate parenting roles identified working with other professionals for activities such as special groups, panels and in networking meetings (Bradbury, 2006). In this study, EPs named SWs, CAMHS workers and Advisory Teachers as the professionals with whom they liaise directly, however the quality of communication was variable despite being crucial to their role (Norwich et al., 2010). In child protection work, EPs commonly worked with SWs at case conferences, reviews, and planning meetings (German et al., 2000). Daniels (2011) highlighted the contradictions that can arise when professionals from a variety of disciplines come together and the difficulty this places on team management, suggesting that systems may negatively impact collaboration. However, research into kinship care support suggests that EP multi-agency working is underdeveloped when compared to SWs (Cunningham & Lauchlan, 2010).

The literature positioned EPs as a bridge between services and other professionals. EPs appear to be well-placed for this work due to their ability to utilise psychological skills in promoting cohesion and reducing tensions between professionals (Bradbury, 2006). Future developments hope to promote EPs to better communicate by acting as a bridge between Kinship Carers and schools (Cunningham & Lauchlan, 2010).

The literature reflects EPs working in a plethora of ways to support CEC, with practices and teams set up varying greatly between LAs and between target populations.

The difference in worldviews appeared to offer some explanation for the difficulties associated with uniting colleagues. Hymans (2008) considered the impact of different assumptions about professional conduct between colleagues originating from different professional disciplines and backgrounds. A clash of ideologies could result in tensions in collaboration, such as where views and assumptions around diagnosis and within-child factors vary (German et al., 2000). Worldviews and professional values can be closely affiliated and Leadbetter (2006) discussed the influence of personal philosophies and beliefs on the distribution of expertise in MATs. However, difficulties in collaboration were not only due to “within professional” factors, as somewhat unsurprisingly time and capacity pressures were identified as a cause for tension (e.g. Osborne et al., 2009). More specific tensions were reported to include issues of control and expertise (Norwich et al., 2010) and due to the variation in professionals’ prioritisation of work (Osborne et al., 2009).

The literature referred to group formation as an ongoing process, referencing Tuckman’s (1965) stages of group development. Hymans (2008) offered this as a limitation of his findings because the constructs participants identified and agreed may not have been static as the permanency of views develop as team practice and processes become more established and embedded. The development of multi-agency working and MATs are an evolving process. This notion of movement is also identified by Leadbetter who discussed the evolving nature of “*becoming multi-*

agency” (2006, pg. 54). She relates to theories of Tuckman and Jensen (1977) and Engeström (2005) to describe the shift of positioning within teams, also noting the discursive changes in identity professionals undergo as part of this process.

Leadbetter posits that, initially, professionals overtly state individual professional identity but then use collective terminology as teams become more established, before reverting to using the first person but as part of a newly formed individual identity within the group. Leadbetter identified how Engeström referred to this as the “*I-we-I*” (Leadbetter, 2006, pg. 57) shift.

3.3.3.3 Socio-Political Climate.

Much of the literature discussed the relevance of government policy and legislation on the provision of support. Allen & Bond (2020) reported how changes in legislation impact the positioning of EPs from working with Social Services to relocating to education-based work before the “Children Act” 2004 and ECM agenda (2003) saw EPs moving away from their home in education departments to engaging in multi-agency work with diverse professionals. In their systematic review, the researchers also identified changes in the dialogue around “child protection” moving towards a safeguarding agenda. The literature detailed the impact of the “Children Act” 2004 on promoting multi-agency links, whilst influencing the types of work with which EPs would become involved, as well as the growing emphasis on the rights of children and parents (German et al., 2000). Adoption legislation has changed significantly as Sturgess & Selwyn (2007) noted the introduction of the “National Adoption Standards for England” (DoH, 2001), “Adoption and Children Act” in 2002 (DoH, 2002) and the “Adoption Support Services Regulations” (DoH, 2003), resulting in the expectation for LAs to offer a full range of adoption services since December 2005.

The adequacy of provision was considered by Bradbury (2006), where one participant stated that current CAMHS provision was lacking; however, changes may have been on the horizon with the mental health green paper (see DfCSF, 2007) which emphasised multi-agency working. Bradbury commented on the location of health as distant from professionals currently working with CEC, but the children's centres proposed in the ECM agenda (2003) may offer an opportunity for the unification of education, health, and social care provision. The Q Methodology used by Hymans (2006) proposed two factors regarding local and national targets and identified how these could be achieved through "*effective communication for sharing good practice*" (pg. 31) and through "*agreeing strategic objectives for service delivery*" (pg. 31), although it was unclear whether EPs were members of the MATs within which these views originated. This research suggests the factors identified could offer something to strategic planning for MATs conceived as a result of ECM (2003). Some LAs were reported to be ahead of local and national strategies (Daniels, 2011), reflecting the variations between the reactive and proactive work of different LAs.

Cunningham and Lauchlan (2010) discussed the provision of localised support in Scotland from LAs, where Kinship Carers reported wanting more local resources, guidelines and procedures. The researchers also identified how discrepancies in the financial support provided to Kinship Carers based on the classification of the Care Orders was an issue to Carers, not only in this LA but across Scotland. The literature portrayed a mixed picture of the involvement of EPs in the development of policies relevant to their area of work. For example, in child protection work policies were

often created by Social Services professionals without consultation with EPs who were expected to follow this guidance, resulting in dissatisfaction with the policy (German et al., 2000).

4 Discussion

The reviewed literature highlighted the variety, contributions and tensions faced by EPs working in MATs supporting CEC, as well as difficulties experienced within Social Care and multi-agency working. The results are discussed in relation to the focus questions (FQs) below.

4.1 FQ1: What does research portray about the current practice of EPs in this area?

The literature paints a transient picture, as the work of EPs in MATs supporting CEC has undergone significant “*diversification*” impacting the “*positioning of the EP*” (Allen & Bond, 2020).

MAT working is highly complex and fraught with difficulties if “*roles and boundaries*” are unclear (Daniels, 2011) and poorly communicated. The integration of individuals from different professional disciplines can create tension due to differences in policies and procedures; however, as teams become more established, individuals are able to develop their professional identities as team members (Hymans, 2008). EPs were able to use their training and expertise by working with “*systems*” at both the micro and macros levels.

EPs work with many stakeholders from diverse backgrounds and disciplines (see Woods et al., 2011b; Bradbury, 2006; German et al., 2000). Therefore, “*teamwork*” and communication skills are essential for building effective working relationships.

4.2 FQ2: How is the EP role perceived?

The systematic literature review has identified that EPs contribute “*skills*” that are core to the wider profession (German et al., 2000; Woods et al., 2011b) as well as those specific to the MAT context, such as therapeutic work (German et al., 2000). EPs contributed at the individual (e.g. German et al., 2000), group (e.g. German et al., 2000; Bradbury, 2006) and systemic level to promote change and better outcomes for CEC and those supporting them. Some contribute to strategic planning (Woods et al., 2011b) and the operational management of MATs and appear well-placed due to their skillset. However, systemic practice varies widely. EPs also offered less visible contributions such as interpersonal skills like listening, communication and building rapport, which are imperative to effective team working (Osborne et al., 2009). Additionally, EPs offered influential alternative perspectives (Osborne et al., 2009).

The literature considered how EPs are skilled in “*applying psychology*” through incorporating the five core functions of EP role (German et al., 2000; Woods et al., 2011b), formulation (Allen & Bond, 2020) and providing psychological input to meetings and panels (Bradbury, 2006). Training was a large element of the job and was viewed as an effective use of EP time (e.g. Norwich et al., 2010; Osborne et al., 2009). Specific tools were used to explore needs (e.g. German et al., 2000). EPs also provided professional judgements as part of the monitoring and review of

educational progress (Cunningham & Lauchlan, 2010). The literature debated whether the EP offered “*a unique or complementary role*” to the contributions of other professionals.

4.3 FQ3: What are the factors that influence EP practice in this area?

Four factors were identified as being influential to the practice of EPs; facilitating change, negotiation, advocacy, and identity are discussed below.

4.3.1 Facilitating Change.

As discussed, the landscape of practice has undergone significant change due to the “*socio-political climate*” and legislative and professional developments. This transient backdrop requires EPs to employ a flexible response (Allen & Bond, 2020), due to myriad of moving parts within the MAT, LA, and wider “*systems*”. Furthermore, the professions of educational psychology and social work have developed alongside the transformation of Children’s Services (Allen & Bond, 2020), and are likely to continue developing as research informs practice. Tensions were identified arising from the merging of disciplines within MATs (Leadbetter, 2006), which has consequences for “*teamwork*”. The literature identifies how, for EPs, change in working practice can influence the wider discipline of Educational Psychology, as it has implications for the training and development of EPs both during and post qualification (Leadbetter, 2006; Woods et al., 2011b).

There was a tacit assumption that change is a “given” when working in this way, perhaps as the “*contribution of the EP*” role is to facilitate change through core functions of their position (Birch et al., 2015; Boyle, 2011; Dunsmuir & Kratochwill,

2013). Change is achieved through consultation, assessment, intervention, training and research (Scottish Executive, 2002), and by adopting frameworks for practice underpinning the assumption that change is a key issue promoted through problem solving (see BPS DECP, 2002; Kelly et al., 2017). EPs are trained explicitly on working with change and thus can demonstrate adaptability and resilience when it inevitably impacts practice.

4.3.2 Negotiation.

The landscape of change requires ongoing negotiation, related to the “*positioning of the EP*” and their role (Allen & Bond, 2020), as well as other stakeholders (Leadbetter, 2006), team values (Daniels, 2011), and the use of skills and distribution of work within the team as this promotes efficiency. Likewise, the time and capacity of EPs were limited, causing tension (Osborne et al., 2009), and therefore careful negotiation about the strategic use of EP support is necessary to ensure efficient use of finite resources. Issues of prioritisation (Osborne et al., 2009), control and expertise (Norwich et al., 2010) also presented tensions requiring negotiation between MAT professionals. There is scope for EPs to negotiate which services they can offer, such as therapeutic work, as identified by Sturgess & Selwyn (2007). There is likely to be room for further role negotiation in the Welsh context due to the incoming ALNET Act (Welsh Government, 2018) and subsequent widening of the EP’s remit.

4.3.3 Advocacy.

The thread of advocacy wove through the data, capturing the essence of how EPs work to promote the identification and intervention (German et al., 2000) of the

needs as well as the views (Norwich et al., 2010) of CEC by drawing upon their specialist “*skills*”. The literature stresses the importance of this, as it can enable systemic and lifelong change for children, young people and their families; for example, through mediation (German et al., 2000), and can support the stability of residential placements, promoting better consistency and continuity for children and young people. What is evident in the literature is how EPs feel that engaging in this work is critical in identifying and addressing the needs of some of the most vulnerable and often powerless children and young people in society.

4.3.4 Identity.

Changing practices in the socio-political landscape, involvement in more discrete pieces of work, and offering a “*unique or complementary role*” that is distinctly different to others in the MAT impacts upon the identity of the EP. “*Identity*” is of clear importance to individuals working collaboratively, both in terms of their own professional identity and that of the MAT. There appears to be a constant shift of identity for both individuals and teams, which could reflect the transient nature of team formation (Tuckman, 1965; Tuckman & Jensen, 1977), as discussed by Leadbetter (2006) and Hymans (2008). There is a strong sense that MAT members desire agreement and confirmation of a universally accepted identity, which is possibly related to professionals’ understanding and feeling of competence in their role.

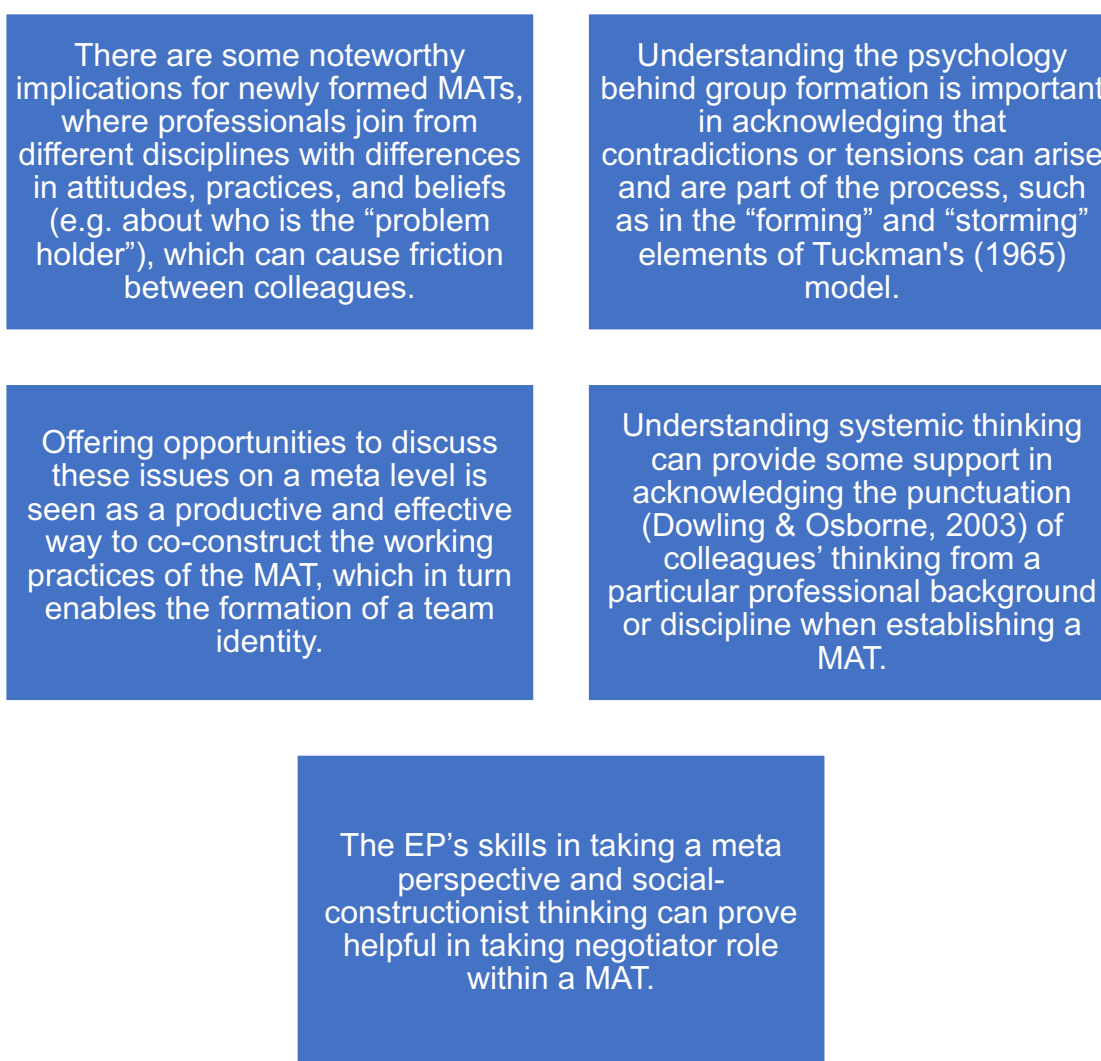
5 Implications

The systematic review of the literature has identified implications for policy and practice (Figure 19), as well as implications for research.

5.1 Implications for Policy and Practice.

Figure 19

Implications for Policy and Practice



5.2 Implications for Research.

Adopting epistemological standpoints such as social constructionism and constructivism may offer a greater understanding of the process of different

professional disciplines coming together. This could be achieved through exploring the degree to which views are held and developed based on previous and current understanding of individual and group professional alignments, such as EPs sitting on Social Work teams, SWs sitting in Youth Justice Teams etc.

The socio-political landscape has changed considerably since the ECM agenda was published in 2003, and therefore further research into current practice could offer a beneficial update into the understanding of how EPs are currently working. This legislation is only applicable to England; and devolved nations have localised policy and practice. For example, in Wales the “Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act” 2014 (Welsh Government, 2016a) and the Welsh Government (2016b) review of the role of EPs in Wales provides more information about the devolved context. Research into the devolved context, such as Wales, would add to current understanding.

6 Limitations

Key limitations due to the narrow scope of the systematic review are presented (Table 5).

Table 5

Key Limitations of the Systematic Literature Review

Limitation	Explanation
Exclusion of papers referring to Psychologists that were not EPs	The narrow scope of the systematic review criteria excluded studies that did not refer to EPs. Therefore, high quality studies considering the role of Psychologists from other disciplines were not included. This is noteworthy as the literature referred to the work of Clinical and Forensic Psychologists in this area.
Exclusion of position papers	Some position papers were excluded due to limitations with their methodological rigour. These could have provided important and relevant insights into the current working practices of EPs supporting CEC through multi-agency working.
Exclusion of non-peer-reviewed studies	This exclusion meant that relevant conference papers, academic magazine articles, book chapters and dissertations were not examined.

7 Conclusion

The work of EPs in MATs supporting CEC appears to be a varied and growing area, where the role of EPs is continually diversifying, creating a need to negotiate and re-negotiate tasks and roles. This is heavily influenced by socio-political initiatives and legislative changes to support the needs of vulnerable children, their families, and Carers. Ongoing changes in practice require EPs to utilise their negotiation skills to work effectively and efficiently to advocate for CEC. This in turn impacts the EP's identity as a professional and as a MAT member. EP work supporting CEC is regarded as highly important in offering something potentially different from how professionals and teams are working; namely, offering a meta perspective and applying psychological thinking to inform practice. Despite difficulties and tensions reported in multi-agency working, the literature identified how stakeholders found this support desirable and useful.

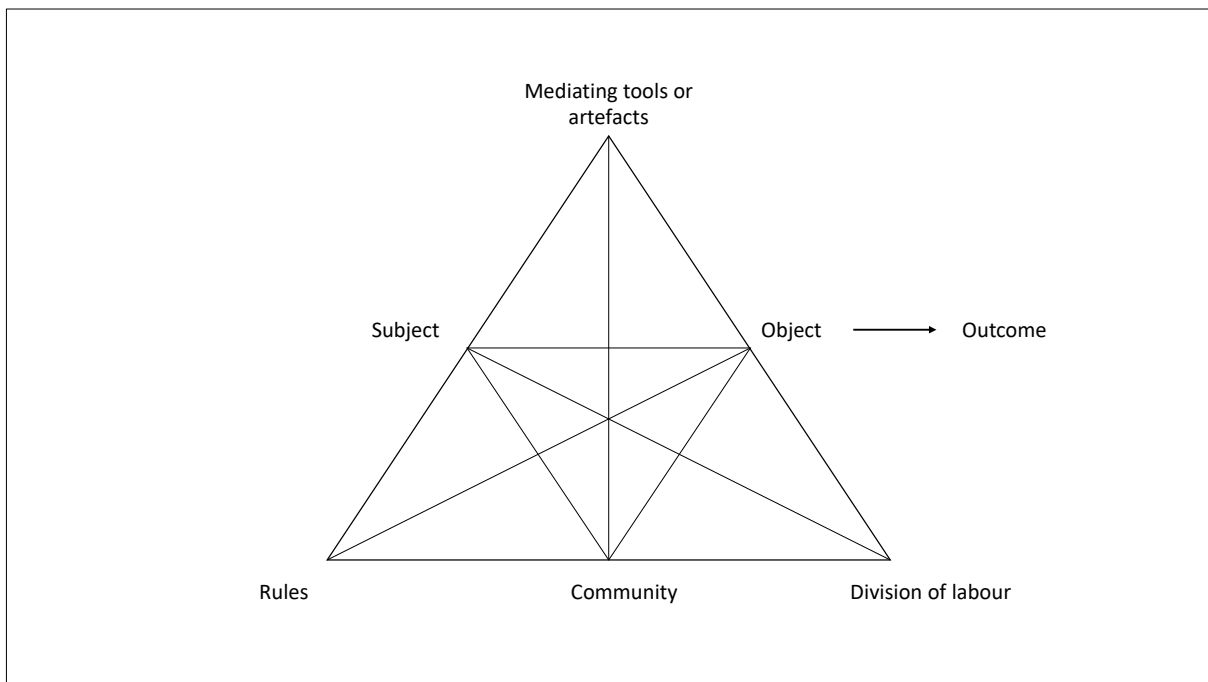
Section C – The Potential Contribution of Activity Theory as a Lens for Research

1 What is Activity Theory?

Activity Theory (AT) considers the links between social, cultural, and historical factors influential upon the processes of learning and development (Leadbetter, 2017). It has been claimed that the development of AT was driven in response to flaws in the behaviourist stimulus-response theories of human behaviour, for which mediation or artefacts that influence action are not accounted (Bakhurst, 2009). AT developed from the original ideas of Soviet Psychologist Vygotsky and was further influenced by peers from the early 20th century: Leont'ev and Luria (Engeström et al., 1999). Vygotsky's ideas have been continually developed and can be understood as follows (Figure 20):

Figure 20

Second Generational Model of Activity Theory



Note. Information taken from Engeström (1987, pg. 78).

Engeström reported that AT is based on the following five principles (Figure 21):

Figure 21

Engeström's Five Principles of Activity Theory

	Principle
1	The activity system is the predominant focus of analysis.
2	Activity systems are a "multi-voiced" community of perspectives and histories.
3	The historicity of the system should be recognised.
4	Contradictions, or tensions, contribute to the transient nature of the activity system.
5	Contradictions are a key part in the process of change, and through exploring contradictions, new understandings, motives and objects may evolve.

Note. Information taken from Engeström (1999b).

Daniels (2001) posited that Engeström's five principles provided a manifesto for the present understanding of AT.

2 Activity Theory as a Lens for Research

AT offers a useful reflective framework for research across disciplines which involve elements of human activity, such as education, psychology, information technology and management (Hashim & Jones, 2007). This framework is reported to be of value when exploring the social development of individuals and systems where change is an integral element of the work (Hashim & Jones, 2007), and therefore is highly applicable to the discipline of Educational Psychology.

The use of AT as a framework for research was spotlighted in 2005, when the BPS Division of Educational and Child Psychology (DECP) published a special issue of their quarterly journal, focussing on the applicability of AT to the field. The journal suggested applications of the framework to explore issues such as the use of language by teachers during school consultations (O'Brien & Miller, 2005) and its application in assessing children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (Flynn, 2005). Although AT has been used by researchers to unpick the work of EPs in MATs, subsequent research predominantly looks at the functions and performance of MATs more generally e.g. using strengths-based approaches (Colville, 2013), professional identity (Leadbetter, 2006; Gaskell & Leadbetter, 2009), multi-agency work related to specific issues such as behaviour support (e.g. Greenhouse, 2013), and evaluating interventions (e.g. Cane and Oland, 2015; Green & Atkinson, 2016; Kirven & Oland, 2013). More recent relevant research (Curtin, 2020) explored perceptions of the role

of the EP engaging in multi-agency work supporting children in care in Ireland. This research utilised the AT framework to create interview questions exploring the constructs of Educational, Clinical and Counselling Psychologists on their multi-agency work with SWs. This lens was reported to enable a deeper exploration of both internalised and externalised factors impacting the activity system as well as acknowledging the active role of participants as agents of change (Engeström, 2001) in their work with MATs (Curtin, 2020).

3 Activity Theory as a Lens Exploring Multi-Agency Working

Greenhouse (2013) highlighted how theoretical frameworks such as socio-cultural AT provide a useful framework for understanding the tools, practices and historical relationships present when integrating agencies. AT can offer a constructive framework for unpicking the complexities of multi-agency work whilst simultaneously considering the historical, cultural, social, and contextual factors at play. In the changing landscape of education and ever-expanding and diversifying discipline of Educational Psychology, AT can offer a platform for exploring the widening context of the EP role as part of multi-agency working (Leadbetter et al., 2005).

A review (Farrell et al., 2006) of the EP role found that other professionals were able to identify and analyse the basic psychological functions of work that they felt an EP had contributed towards significant and distinctive outcomes for children and young people. AT provides a platform to explore the relevance of this finding, applied to the current social and political climate of multi-agency work supporting CEC in Wales.

Academic and Professional Rationale for Current Study

Whilst the literature reviewed provides beneficial insight, it is not directly applicable to the devolved Welsh context, as much of the research discussed was conducted in England or further afield. Other research in this area is relatively out-dated and the landscape has changed significantly since this time, predating current legislation and professional guidance (e.g. “Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act”, 2014; “Social Care Wales: The Social Worker: Practice guidance for Social Workers registered with Social Care Wales”, 2019; “Education (Wales) Act” 2014).

The systematic literature review indicated that the positioning of EPs within MATs is both a source of tension and support. EPs are reported to offer skills, knowledge and experience which is unique and complementary to the work of other professionals, through the application of psychology to assist problem solving and intervention. Systemic understanding is applied adeptly, as EPs can support a variety of stakeholders working at multiple levels within LA systems to facilitate positive change for CEC, their families, and Carers. EPs are therefore considered to offer a valuable contribution to MAT working to support CEC.

AT has been identified as a means for exploring the social, cultural, and historical factors influential upon multi-agency working. It can offer a potentially powerful means to explore the joint working of EPs and SWs within MATs and allows for a deeper analysis of the factors mediating those professionals’ constructs of the role of the EP. Additionally, AT could strengthen the ability to explore constructs formed as part of both individual and social experience, attitudes and understanding. Therefore,

the research will adopt AT as it is a powerful lens to explore MATs and has not previously been used in the context of EPs in Wales.

In summary, the literature indicates a lack of understanding of the current role of EPs working in MATs supporting CEC that is relevant to the legislative and socio-political context of Wales, a devolved nation. This gap in the literature provides justification for further research exploration to better understand how the role of the EP is constructed and what implications this has for practice.

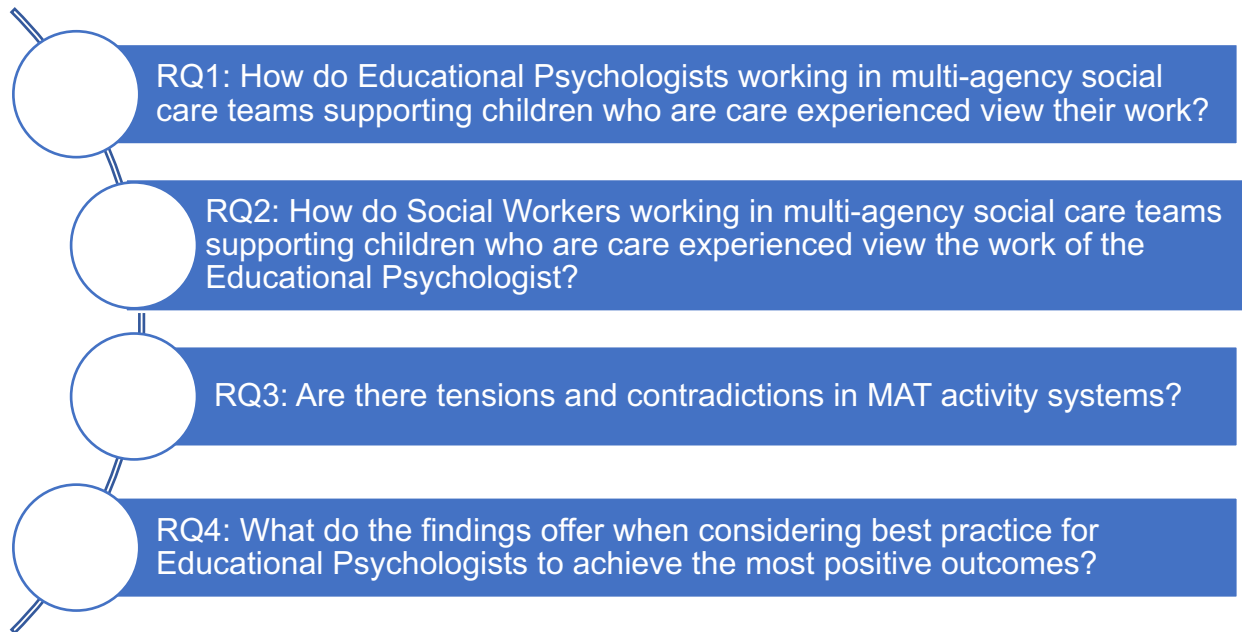
Research Questions

This research project seeks to address the current gap in literature by exploring the role of the EP working with multi-agency social care teams supporting CEC, through the lens of AT. This enables the exploration of relevant influential factors from the perspective of the EP and SW working within the same team.

The current study will be guided by the following research questions (Figure 22):

Figure 22

Research Questions (RQs)



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The Role of the Educational Psychologist in a Multi-Agency
Team Supporting Children Who Have Experienced Care: An
Activity Theory Framework

Part 2: Empirical Paper

Word Count: 8505 words

1 Abstract

Context: Collaborative approaches with multi-disciplinary professionals are both a requirement for professional registration and best practice guidance for Educational Psychologists (EPs).

After the tragic death of Victoria Climbié in 2000, Children's Services underwent significant reorganisation to foster better multi-agency approaches when supporting children who are care experienced (CEC).

Wales has some of the highest rates of CEC in the UK. The contribution of EPs to multi-agency teams (MATs) supporting CEC has been recognised. EPs are considered well-placed to engage in work of this type; however, as this is not a statutory requirement of the role, the landscape of current practice is unclear.

Objectives: The study applied an Activity Theory (AT) approach to better understand how EPs and Social Workers (SWs) viewed the role of the EP in CEC MATs.

Methodology: Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with five SW and EP pairs from MATs in Wales. EP and SW transcripts were analysed separately using reflexive Thematic Analysis. Findings are presented in two thematic maps as well as in application to AT.

Results: Analysis of EP data constructed two overarching themes encapsulating views of the function of the EP role at the individual and systemic levels. Analysis of SW data constructed two overarching themes capturing views of the EP's unique contribution as well as broader themes around collaboration in MATs.

Implications and Conclusions: EP and SW views are considered individually and in terms of emergent tensions and contradictions utilising the AT framework. Best practice for EPs is considered, including their role at different levels, and integrating models of practice. Suggestions for using AT to support MAT initiation and functioning are provided.

2 Terminology

2.1 Care Experienced Children (CEC)

A child or young person under the age of 18 years is considered “looked after” by a Local Authority (LA) when they are subject to a Care Order or Interim Care Order under Section 31 of the “Children Act 1989” (HM Government, 1989) or is provided accommodation by the LA for a continuous period of more than 24 hours under Section 76 or 77 of the “Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act” 2014 (Welsh Government, 2016a).

Shotton (2019) defined “care experienced” as children and young people

who are care experienced generally does include care leavers, but also a wider population of people who were in care at some point in their childhood, as well as those who were in care for only a short period of time or left care before the age of 16. (pg. 7)

The current study adopts the term “care experienced children” (CEC) to refer to children and young people who are currently in care, those who have been fostered and adopted, as well as those who have previously been in care such as care leavers.

2.2 Multi-Agency Teams (MATs)

A multi-agency team (MAT) is the formal arrangement of practitioners working collaboratively at several levels towards a common purpose, often under the supervision of a team leader (Children’s Workforce Development Council [CWDC]

2007). Professionals may “*maintain links with their home agencies through supervision and training*” (CWDC, 2007, pg. 1).

The current study adopts this term in reference to the planned collaborative working practice of Social Workers (SWs) and Educational Psychologists (EPs) in supporting CEC.

3 Introduction

The current study aims to explore how EPs and SWs view the role of the EP in MATs supporting CEC. A summary of the reviewed literature (see Part 1) is presented. This introduction will consider how EPs have become involved in MAT working, and how EPs are able to contribute to MATs supporting CEC. Research into current EP practice is summarised and the adoption of an Activity Theory (AT) lens is discussed. This section concludes by presenting the academic and professional rationale for the current study, and the chosen research questions.

3.1 The Developing Role of the Educational Psychologist (EP)

Since being “*born*” in Britain by Cyril Burt in 1913 (Arnold & Hardy, 2017, pg. ix), Educational Psychology has undergone significant changes. This has been largely due to the growing diversity of the British population and development in the social and political climates. This has led to a professionalisation of the EP role (Allen & Bond, 2020) and ongoing debate regarding functions and contributions.

An expansion of practice was called for in response to the development of Local Authorities (LAs) (Maliphant, 1997), fuelling claims for services to act in response to demand and need. This was then followed by Children's Services undergoing significant reorganisation in response to legislative changes such as the "Every Child Matters" (ECM) (Department for Education and Skills [DfES], 2003) agenda and subsequent "Children Act" (Department of Health [DoH], 2004). The new arrangements resulting from this saw EPs diversifying and professionals taking up more specialist and strategic positions to support CEC (Fallon et al., 2010). Subsequently, many Educational Psychology Services (EPSs) have developed their service delivery model to incorporate specialist and multi-agency responsibilities. Collaborative working has remained fundamental to the practice of EPs, regardless of role (HCPC, 2015; BPS, 2017).

3.2 Working with MATs

A requirement of the role of the EP is to demonstrate effective team working skills. The Health and Care Professionals Council (HCPC, 2015) "Standards of Practice for Practitioner Psychologists" states that practitioners must also "*understand the need to build and sustain professional relationships as both an independent practitioner and collaboratively as a member of a team*" (2015, pp.11). Sufficient evidence of competency must be provided by psychologists to acquire and maintain registration with the regulatory board allowing use of the protected title of "Educational Psychologist". Good practice guidelines from the BPS state that "*in order to meet the complex needs of clients fully, Psychologists will often be required to work collaboratively with other professionals from their own or other agencies*" (BPS,

2017, pp. 25). Therefore, collaborative working with professionals from within and outside of the discipline of psychology is fundamental to the practice of EPs.

3.3 MATs Supporting CEC

The work of EPs continues to diversify and develop, and it is argued that working in MATs is one area where this is evident. The Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP), in collaboration with the Welsh Government (2016), reported on the skills of EPs in facilitating and participating in multi-agency work to support children, young people and their families, in collaboration with colleagues from LA Social Care departments. In Wales, the incoming “Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal (ALNET)” Act details further developments in the EP role, due to widening the age bracket from 0–25 years and changes in the process for identifying and supporting Additional Learning Needs (ALN) (Welsh Government, 2018a, 2018b).

The “Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act” 2014 (Welsh Government, 2016a) offered an updated framework for social services law in Wales, which intended to promote effective and efficient partnership working between professionals (Welsh Government, 2020). Wales is reported to have some of the highest numbers of Looked After Children across the UK (Welsh Government, 2019), which continues to grow. This increase is taking place in the context of a decline in the population when compared to an increase in England (Wales Centre for Public Policy, 2019).

Strategic consideration should therefore be made as to best practice, and EPs are well-placed to monitor and support CEC, such as through the involvement of EPs with specialist roles (Sugden, 2013).

3.4 How Does Research Portray the Role of EPs Supporting CEC?

A systematic review of the empirical literature (see Part 1) considered how EPs contribute to MAT working with SW colleagues to support CEC. The review identified how EPs often provide core functions of the EP role (German et al., 2000; Woods et al., 2011), as well as specialist knowledge, skills, and techniques (see Bradbury, 2006; Norwich et al., 2010; Allen & Bond, 2020). Moreover, research into this area suggests that EPs can contribute at the individual, group, and systemic levels to promote change and better outcomes for CEC (German et al., 2000; Bradbury, 2006; Woods et al., 2011). However, MAT working was constructed to be fraught with problems, due to difficulties in establishing clear roles and responsibilities (Bradbury, 2006; Daniels, 2011), merging disciplines (Leadbetter, 2006), and EPs often having little contact with peers in similar positions. Notably, the research into EPs supporting CEC in MATs is dominated by voices from England and there is a clear gap in the literature which explores the practice of EPs in the devolved context of Wales, where significant changes to practice and legislation are being rolled out.

3.5 Activity Theory as a Lens for Research

Activity Theory (AT) has developed from the original ideas of the Soviet Psychologist Vygotsky (Engeström et al., 1999), and considers the links between social, cultural, and historical factors that are influential in the processes of learning and development (Leadbetter, 2017). AT can be used as a reflective framework which offers a valuable tool for exploring the social development of individuals and systems working with change (Hashim & Jones, 2007). The framework has been utilised to explore multi-agency working in the field of Educational Psychology, such as using

strengths-based approaches (Colville, 2013), professional identity (Leadbetter, 2006; Gaskell & Leadbetter, 2009), behaviour support (e.g. Greenhouse, 2013) and evaluating interventions (e.g. Cane and Oland, 2015; Green and Atkinson, 2016; Kirven and Oland, 2013). More recently, AT has offered a useful lens to explore the work of Psychologists working with SWs in MATs supporting CEC in Ireland (Curtin, 2020).

3.6 Academic and Professional Rationale

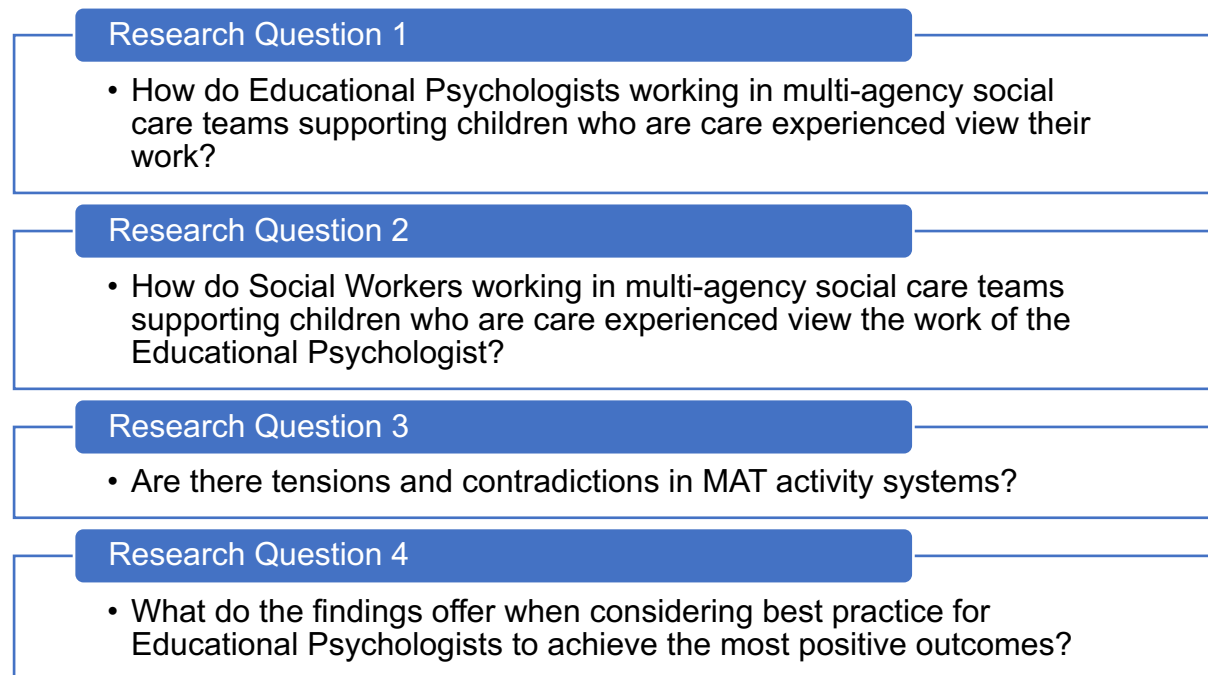
Multi-agency working is a fundamental part of the EP role. The literature review in Part 1 indicated that there was no current research exploring the role of the EP working in MATs with SWs supporting CEC that is relevant to the legislative and socio-political context of Wales, a devolved nation. It appears that EPs working in this way were often doing so without reference to colleagues in similar positions and therefore there was a sense of ambiguity around what is happening across the country. AT offers a novel lens when considering the EP role, as it can help to explore the often complex and dynamic systems within which EPs and MATs work. Thus, this research project could offer a reference point for practice. Consequently, a gap in the literature had been identified, to which the current research aims to contribute.

3.7 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions (Figure 23):

Figure 23

Research Questions



4 Methodology

4.1 Research Paradigm

A paradigm, according to Kuhn (1962), comprises the beliefs, values, assumptions, and practices of the researcher. The research paradigm can be understood and explored in terms of the ontological and epistemological stances that the researcher takes (see Figure 24).

Figure 24

Ontological and Epistemological Stances Adopted

Ontology: Critical Realism

- Critical realism sits on a continuum between relativism, which considers that reality varies based on human interpretation and understanding (Braun & Clarke, 2013), and realism, which assumes one existing and accessible truth. For this research, critical realism has been adopted as it acknowledges truth as being both objective (i.e. whether the participant is engaged in multi-agency work with a social care team) and subjective (i.e. perspectives of the EP role and the purpose of their work etc. as well as interpretations of the meaning of "multi-agency").

Epistemology: Social Constructionism

- The application of AT to inform thinking in this research project has made it difficult to adopt one particular epistemological stance as underpinning the researcher's approach explicitly. The difficulty lies in the inextricably linked nature of the individual to wider contextual factors. Hansson (2014, pg.11) explains that "a socio-cultural/cultural-historical approach to studying activity and mind suggests a parallel focus on the interrelatedness between individual and societal development". In this way, a participant could be understood to be the "individual" and the MAT as the "society", as participants' personal constructions are shaped and developed through their knowledge and experience of working with others in the team. Berger & Luckmann (1966) argued the notion that reality and knowledge are socially constructed, positing that the allegedly objective social world is continually re-constructed, which in turn becomes a reality to which people respond. In this way, Berger & Luckmann proposed that through the socialisation of society, subjective truths construct the objective social world within which we are raised. Therefore, this suggests that a person is an active agent continually constructing their world whilst also being constrained by the frameworks of meaning through which they were socialised into society (Burr, 2015). It is with this understanding that a social constructionist epistemological stance has been adopted for this research. This stance recognises that participants' beliefs are constructed not only through their experience of working in a MAT but also through the dialogue of the interview itself.

Combined, these epistemological and ontological stances assume that knowledge is both objective and subjective and that participants' constructions of reality determine the degree to which their views represent their own reality.

4.2 Research Design

An experiential qualitative approach was adopted as the research aimed to elicit, explore, and prioritise meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This approach acknowledges that the lens through which meaning is viewed is tinted by historical, cultural, and contextual factors. Moreover, this approach embraces the messy and contradictory nature of human meaning and experience (Shaw et al., 2008) which will be further explored within the framework of AT. The research questions sought rich and detailed information which warranted a qualitative approach to analysis enabling exploration of nuance and subjectivity through interviews.

The study sought to interview EP and SW pairs working in the same MATs. These participants were chosen as they worked directly with one another within the MAT, and with service users, such as foster and adoptive families. As each pair of participants worked in the same MAT, a risk of social desirability bias was possible for interviewing pairs together. The researcher chose to interview all participants separately for this reason. Semi-structured interviews are said to be a suitable research approach for the following reasons (Figure 25):

Figure 25

Appropriate Use of Semi-Structured Interviews

Appropriate Use of Semi-Structured Interviews

- *“If you need to ask probing, open-ended questions and want to know the independent thoughts of each individual in a group”*
- *“If you need to ask probing, open-ended questions on topics that your respondents might not be candid about if sitting with peers in a focus group”*

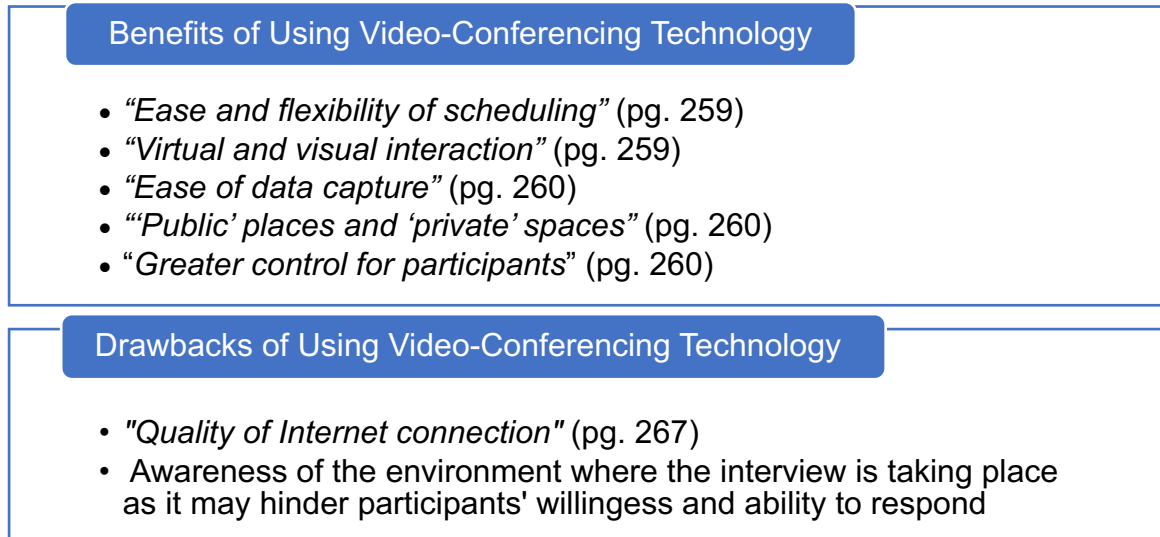
Note. Taken from Adams (2015, pg. 494)

Semi-structured interviews enabled further discussion of relevant information, based on participant responses to the questions. It is for these reasons that semi-structured interviews were felt to be the best fit for the current study. It was hoped that participants would be able to choose whether they would prefer to conduct the interview in person or online using video-conferencing technology, subject to Covid-19 pandemic restrictions.

All interviews were conducted online using video-conferencing technology, which is professed to offer the following benefits and drawbacks (Figure 26):

Figure 26

Benefits and Drawbacks of Using Video-Conferencing Technology



Note. Taken from Hanna and Mwale (2017).

4.3 Measure

Kallio et al.'s (2016) five-phase framework for semi-structured interview development was adopted to enhance methodological rigour, as presented below (Figure 27).

Figure 27

Kallio et al.'s (2016) Framework for Developing a Semi-Structured Qualitative Interview

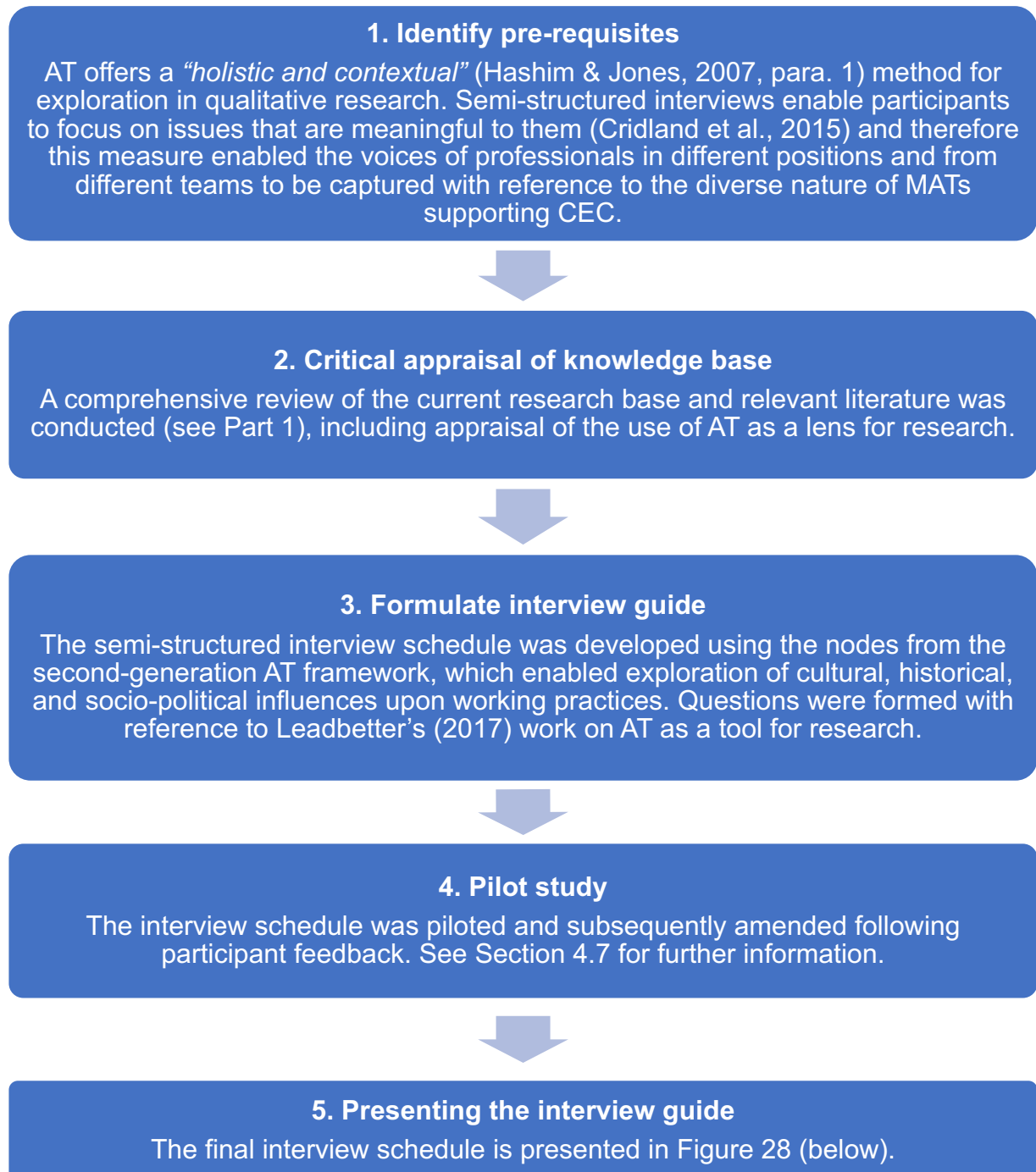
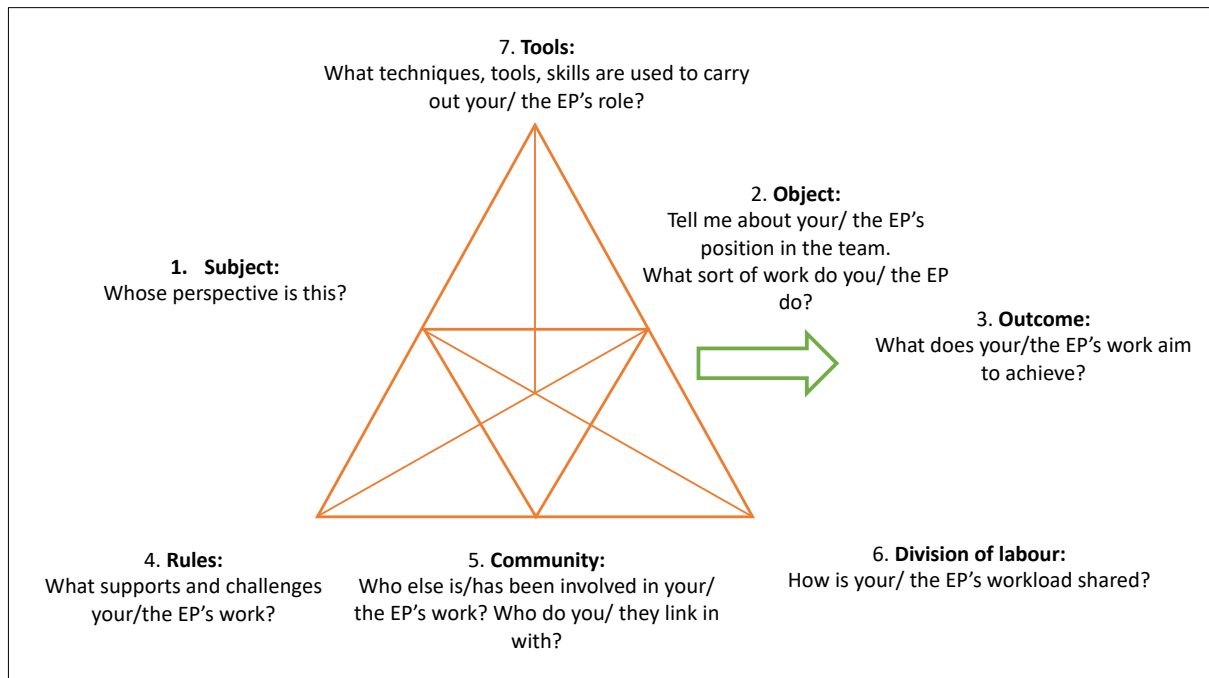


Figure 28

Interview Questions



Participants were also asked to provide a brief overview of their MAT and its focus.

4.4 Recruitment and Inclusion Criteria

Participant inclusion criteria comprised the following (Figure 29):

Figure 29

Participant Inclusion Criteria

Participant Inclusion Criteria

- Must be a qualified Social Worker or Educational Psychologist. The study will allow professionals who hold the title of “Practitioner Psychologist” to take part as long as they are qualified Educational Psychologists by background.
- Must be actively working in a multi-agency team with Social Workers and Practitioner Psychologists/ Educational Psychologists.
- Educational/Practitioner Psychologists can be based in either the Education or Children’s Services department within a Local Authority but must engage in work with a multi-agency team (which includes at least one Social Worker), where the focus of the team is on social care e.g. LAC/CLA, fostering, adoption etc.
- Must have been in current post for at least six months.

Participants were recruited through a combination of volunteer and snowball sampling techniques, as presented in Table 6.

Table 6*Participant Recruitment Strategy*

Participant Recruitment Strategy				
Date	Method of Contact	To whom	Participants Recruited	Participant Details
May 2020	Email	Children's Services Managers in all 22 Local Authorities in Wales	4	EPS1 EP (LA1EP) and SW (LA1SW) EPS2 EP (LA2EP) and SW (LA2SW)
July 2020	Email	Principal Educational Psychologists in remaining 20 Local Authorities	4	EPS3 EP (LA3EP) and SW (LA3SW) EPS5 EP (LA5EP) and SW (LA5SW)
July 2020	Email	Professional contacts using snowball sampling	2	EPS4 EP (LA4EP) and SW (LA4SW)
Total participants			10	

4.5 Participants

Ten participants were recruited in total: one EP and one SW from five different LAs in Wales. Below is a summary of the characteristics of participant involvement in MATs for each LA, as well as the focus of the MAT (Table 7). The models of multi-agency working underpinning each MAT have also been categorised based on Atkinson et al.'s (2002) five classifications.

Table 7*Summary of MAT Characteristics and Participant Involvement*

Local Authority (LA)	Characteristics of EP Involvement	Characteristics of SW Involvement	Model of MAT	Focus of MAT
LA1	Specialist Senior Educational and Child Psychologist, Systemic and Family Psychotherapist. Role based in EPS but work exclusively in specialist role for looked after children, within Social Care department.	Senior Social Work Practitioner based in MAT. Access EP as member of MAT.	Coordinated delivery	Long-term looked after children
LA2	Specialist Senior Educational Psychologist (Looked After Children). Role sits across Education and Social Services. "Out on loan" to Social Services from EPS on permanent basis.	Social Worker working with Corporate Parenting Team. Access EP as member of wider MAT, by request.	Consultation and training/ centre-based delivery	Looked after and adopted children
LA3	Educational Psychologist (Welsh Government Funded Family Project). Role based in Welsh Government Funded Family Project sub-group team "Family Achievement Programme", based within Social Care.	Social Worker. Access EP as member of MAT.	Operational-team delivery	Parenting and family support
LA4	Psychologist. Employed by adoption services umbrella, within "Adoption Support Service" MAT as "Psychologist". Role created in response to Welsh Government initiatives.	Social Worker. Access EP as member of MAT.	Operational-team delivery	Adoption

LA5	Senior Educational Psychologist. Role based in EPS but engages with residential fostering panel as the representative for Education, as part of Senior EP role.	Team Manager (Social Worker). Access EP as member of wider MAT, by request as well as during residential fostering panel meetings.	Decision-making group	Residential fostering (e.g. children's homes)
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No information was gathered regarding participant age, gender or background.

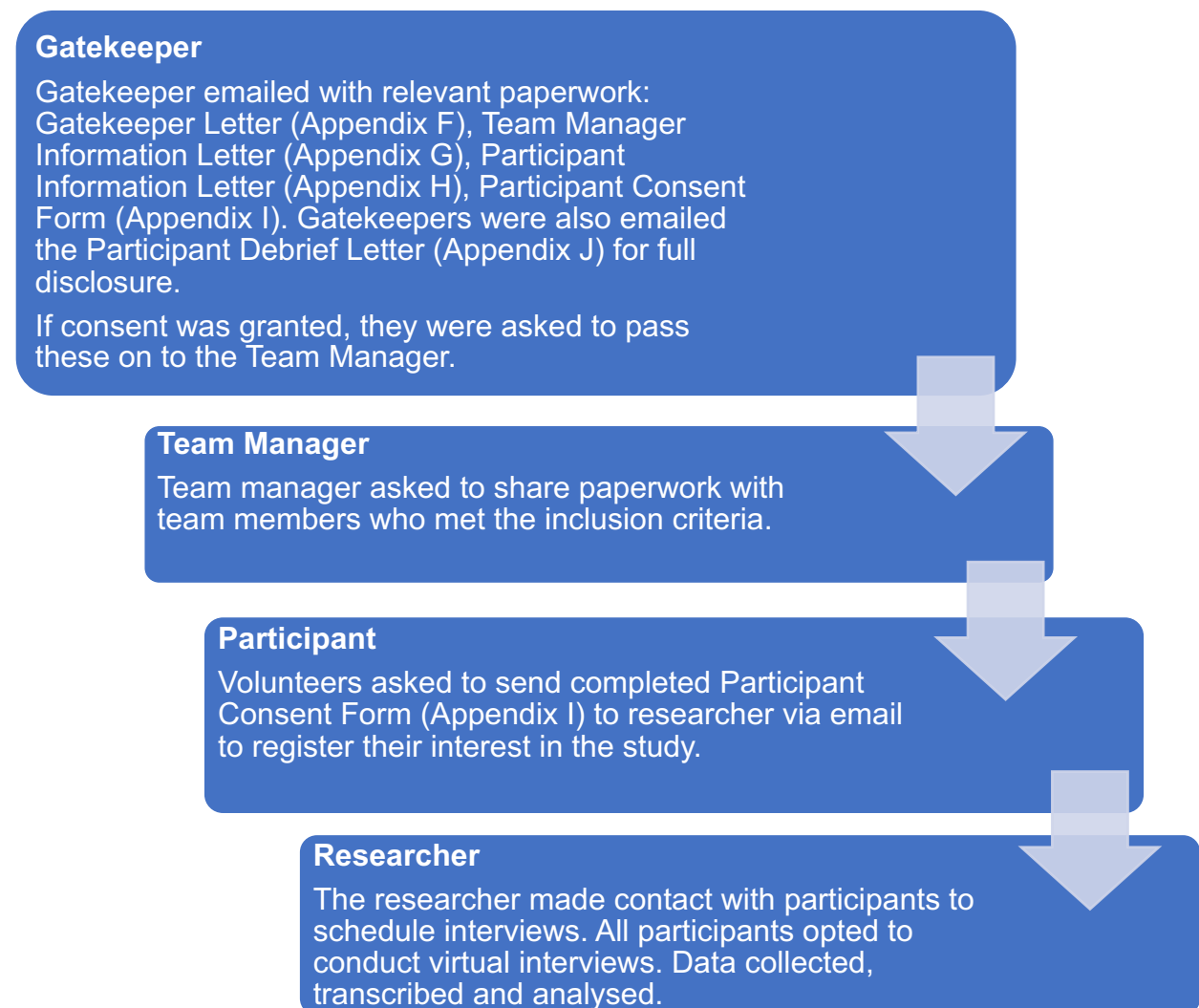
Alternative participants were also considered, such as Principal EPs; however, these were disregarded as they did not work directly with SWs and service users, thus would not provide the same insight.

4.6 Procedure

The first point of contact for each wave of recruitment, as stated in Table 6, was provided with the following information via email (Figure 30):

Figure 30

Recruitment Procedure



4.7 Pilot Study

The first interview with each EP and SW was used as a pilot study to discuss the clarity and construction of questions with participants. This led to a minor revision of the wording of some of the questions. Revisions did not change the nature of the questions and therefore the interviews were considered appropriate to include in the final pool of data.

4.8 Data Collection

Interviews took place online using video-conferencing software where participants could choose an appropriate venue. Interviews were semi-structured with three initial questions to clarify the focus of the MAT, its location in the LA structure and the professionals involved in the team. Following this, open-ended questions were asked, relating to each of the nodes of the Activity Theory (see Figure 28). Interviews were recorded using video-conferencing software. Interviews lasted an average of 47 minutes. Four weeks after the interview date, a notation system (Appendix K) was used to transcribe interviews (Appendix L). Audio recordings were permanently deleted upon transcription.

4.9 Data Analysis

Interview transcripts were analysed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis (TA), in accordance with Braun & Clarke's (2013; 2020) six-step framework. The analysis was conducted using a combination of qualitative data analysis software Nvivo (Version 12) and manual analysis, to ensure that the researcher remained active in the process (Braun & Clarke, 2020).

TAs were conducted separately for EP and SW participants as this allowed full immersion in the constructions of each group, in keeping with the social constructionist epistemology. This design acknowledged the "*historical and cultural specificity*" (Burr, 2015, pg. 3) of each profession and how knowledge and understanding are artefacts of professional culture (Burr, 2015). There is a risk that this would be lost in combining responses into one TA. The researcher considered

conducting five TAs, one for each MAT; however, it was felt that this would lead to more disparate implications for EPs where work focussed on specific target populations (e.g. adoption) in the context of geographical areas of Wales.

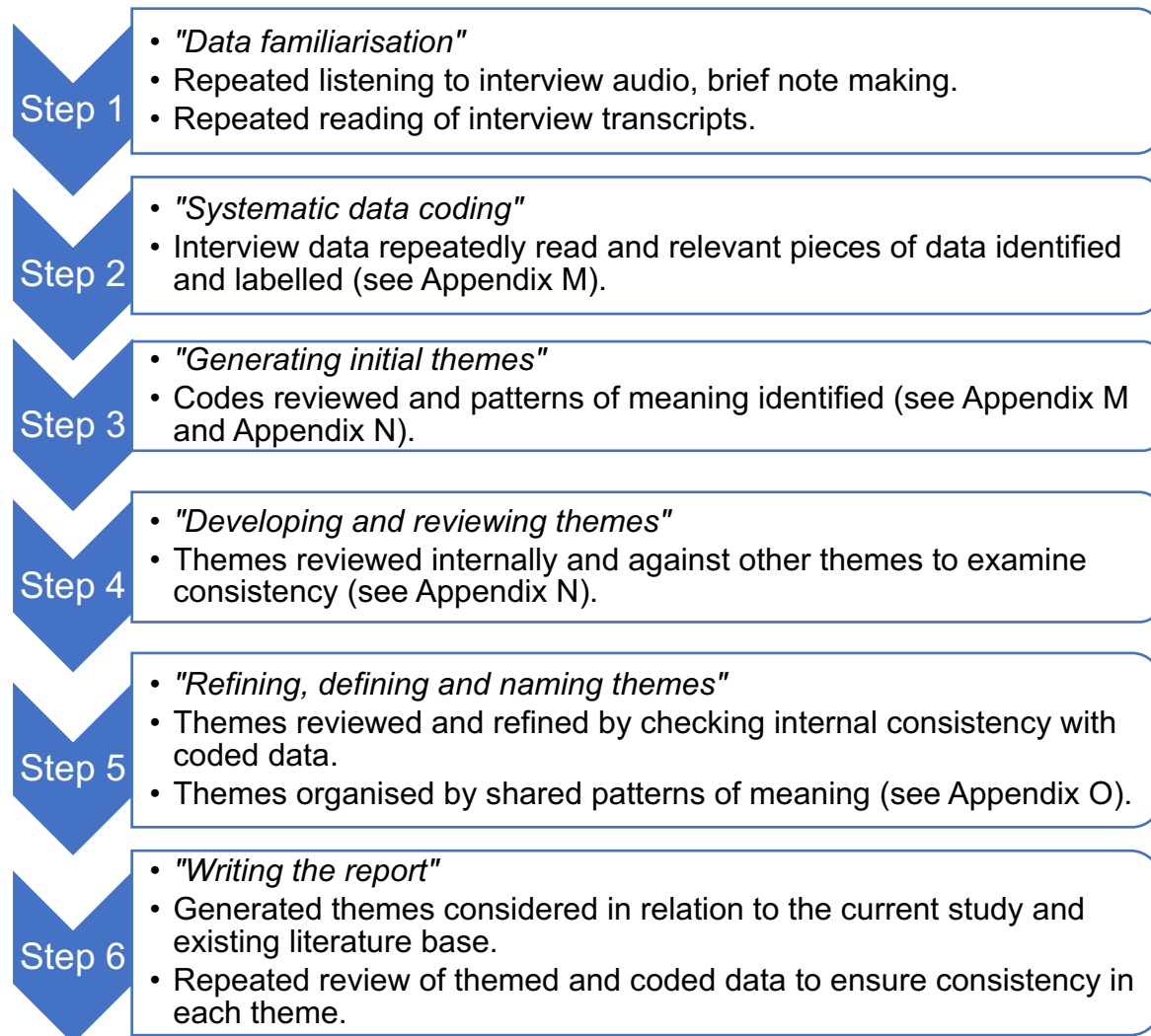
The inductive approach to analysis comprised semantic, complete coding to identify matters of relevance to the research questions. This method was chosen as it enables the analysis to be informed and driven by the data, rather than pre-existing theory. Despite this, the researcher acknowledges the potential for implicit bias in the analysis through using the AT lens. A deductive or theoretical approach, driven by the AT framework was disregarded due to concerns about limiting the breadth of themes generated.

The researcher went through a process of “repeated reading” (Braun & Clarke, 2006) for further familiarisation and greater immersion in the data, before conducting complete coding of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This technique was used to identify any data relevant to the research questions to recognise semantic meaning.

The TA process is summarised below (Figure 31).

Figure 31

Braun & Clarke's Framework for Thematic Analysis (2020, pg. 4)



4.10 Ethical Considerations

The research was carried out in accordance with the British Psychological Society Code of Ethics and Conduct (BPS, 2018) and the Health and Care Professionals' Council Code of Practice (HCPC, 2016). Additionally, ethical approval was granted for

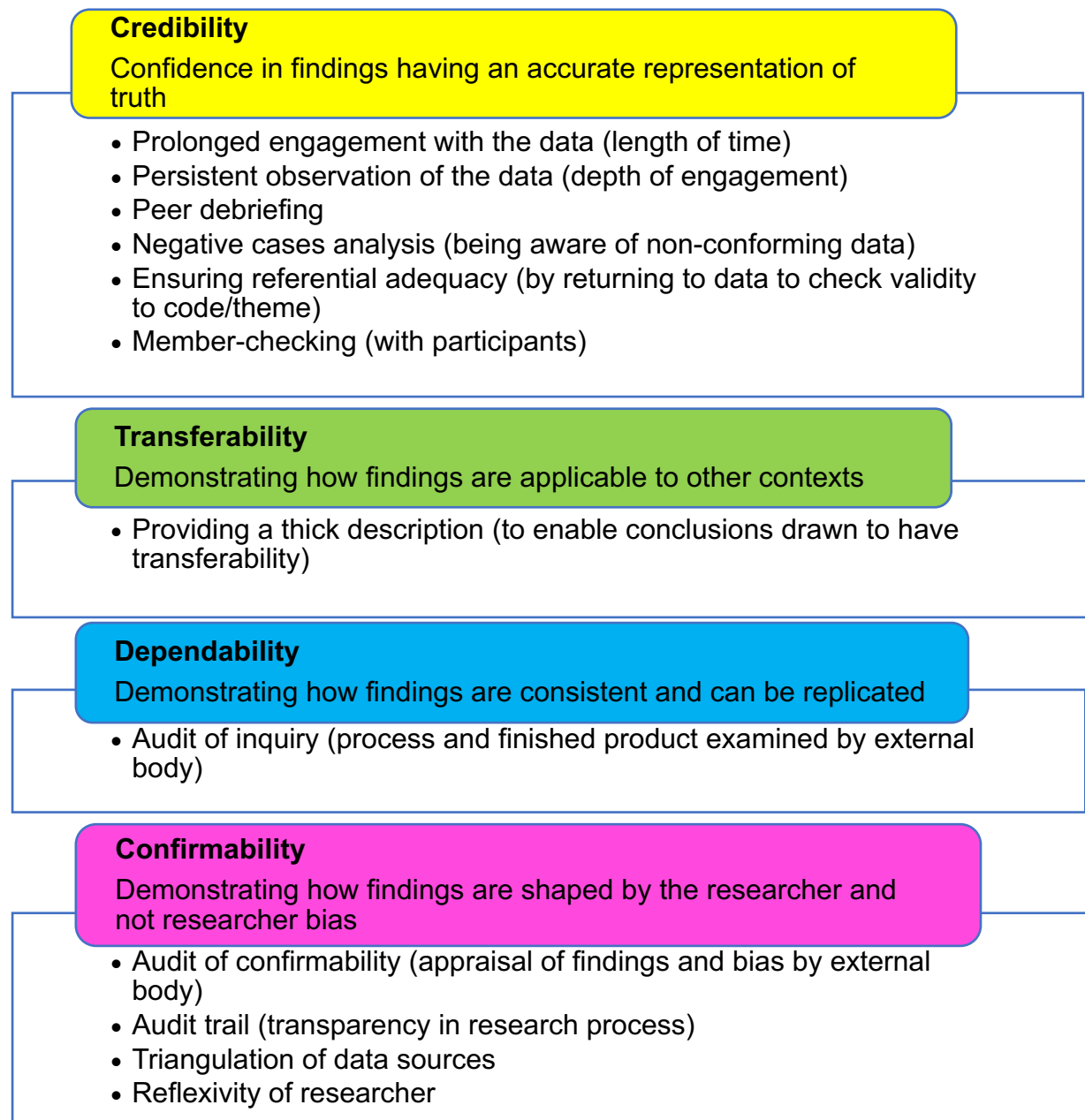
this research project by Cardiff University Ethics Committee (Appendix P). The key ethical considerations are outlined in Appendix Q.

4.11 Validity, Reliability and Trustworthiness

The formal criteria of validity and reliability used to assess the quality of quantitative research are not considered to apply to qualitative research studies in the same way due to the inherently different nature of each research methodology. Braun & Clarke (2013) suggest that appraising trustworthiness therefore offers a more applicable framework for assessing the quality of research, capturing the relevant elements of quantitative validity and reliability. Lincoln and Guba (1985) identified four components of trustworthiness that map onto the concepts of validity and reliability (Figure 32).

Figure 32

Components of Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985)



The researcher adopted Nowell et al.'s (2017) framework for identifying trustworthiness in TA through evidencing trustworthiness in all six steps of Braun & Clarke's TA procedure, with reference to the criteria set out by Lincoln & Guba (1985). The researcher has used a colour-coding system to identify how each of the

four criteria for trustworthiness are evidenced in the current research project (see Table 8). It is important to note that, despite the linear depiction of the process of establishing trustworthiness, Nowell et al. (2017) highlight the iterative and reflectiveness of the process of research development, as the researcher's immersion in the data comprises a more holistic and repetitive flow between stages rather than is suggested by the sequential diagram. A summary of the evidence for establishing trustworthiness at each stage of the TA is presented below (Table 8). More information is presented in Appendix R.

Table 8

Evidence for Establishing Trustworthiness at Each Stage of the Thematic Analysis

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5	Stage 6
Credibility	X	X		X	X	X
Transferability						X
Dependability	X	X	X	X	X	X
Confirmability	X	X	X	X	X	X

5 Analysis

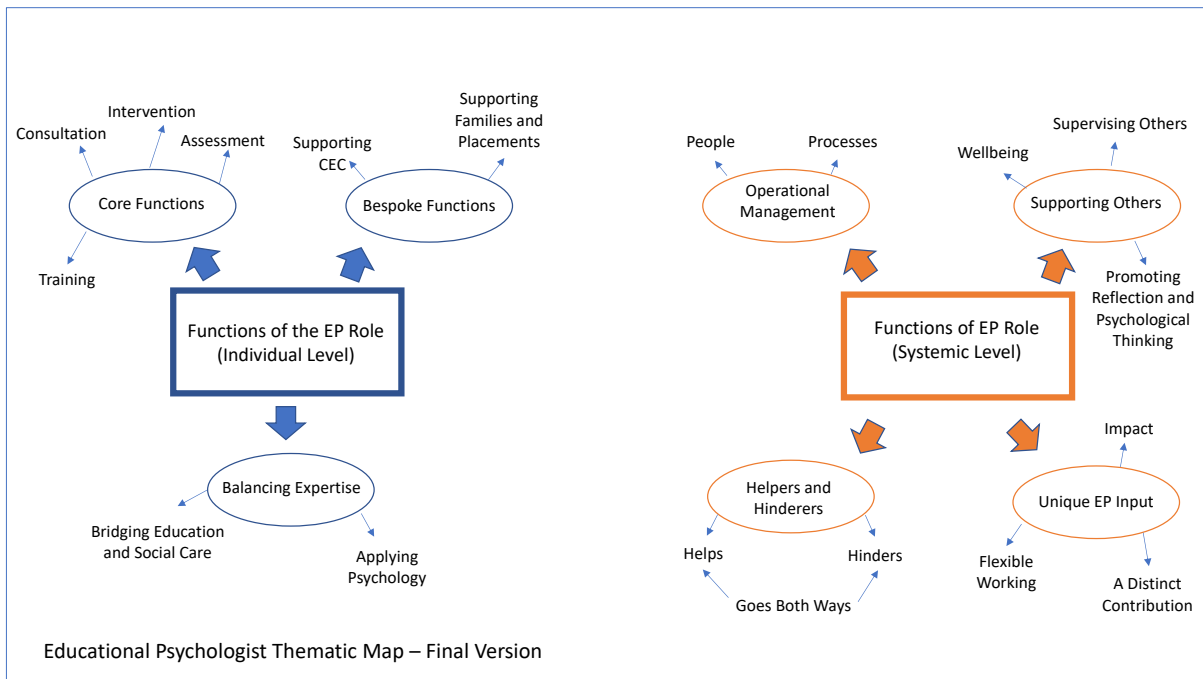
Two thematic maps were produced comprising EP data (Figure 33) and SW data (Figure 34). These depict how the TAs were constructed by the researcher and detail the structure of the overarching themes which contain main themes and sub-themes. Brief verbatim quotes are used to give a voice to the research participants (Yardley, 2000), reflecting the language and views expressed. Findings from the analyses were compared to identify tensions and contradictions between the views of the two groups of professionals are reported. Research questions are addressed in the discussion section.

5.1 Thematic Analysis of Educational Psychologist Interviews

The analysis of EP interview data is presented as a thematic map below (Figure 33).

Figure 33

Educational Psychologist Thematic Map



5.1.1 Function of the EP Role (Individual Level).

This overarching theme considers how EPs offer contributions on an individual level to stakeholders such as CEC and SWs. EPs were found to offer both core functions, akin to the wider profession, as well as functions bespoke to the MAT context. Participants contributed expertise in the fields of psychology and education thus offering Social Care colleagues a bridge between systems.

5.1.1.1 Core Functions.

Information is presented in Table 9.

Table 9

“Core Functions” Illustrative Quotes

<p>This theme highlights participants’ reference to elements of the EP role, as identified by the Currie report (Scottish Executive, 2002). It is interesting to note how research was not identified as a noteworthy element of their role, despite the significant development of the profession since 2002 and the different context of the EP role working in CEC MATs.</p>	
Subtheme	Illustrative Quotes
<p><u>Consultation</u> Participants discussed the use of consultation, both as explicit practice as well as an approach used in a variety of interactions with team members and stakeholders. It was a first line of intervention, prior to EPs taking on work, reported to offer valuable reflection time and an opportunity to explore issues more deeply. Consultation was considered a discrete method of assessment and intervention and did not necessarily lead into further EP involvement.</p>	<p><i>“The whole kind of basis of the work is done on an initial consultation discussion with the Social Worker to raise concerns and then a decision about how to move forward with my involvement or not(.) So, you know, work can stop at any of those points.” LA2EP</i></p> <p><i>“I will do a consultation with them about what the issues might be, and then perhaps, you know, we share some ideas about what things that they can try, erm, to do with the family, so it might be give them some ideas around parenting strategies and things that they can discuss, or a particular piece of work they could do, erm, since they already have the relationship with the family and they’re working with them(.) Erm, then we’d review that(.)” LA3EP</i></p>
<p><u>Assessment</u> EPs reported using a variety of tools, resources and approaches to assess problem situations. A variety of psychological theory and models are drawn upon when conducting assessments, which enable practitioners to unpick issues to a deeper level. Some assessment tools and techniques are those used by the wider profession whereas other tools are more role specific.</p>	<p><i>“A lot of the other stuff is just the skills are ((pause)) or the tools are systemic skills, really, which are things like using genograms obviously, therapeutic genograms.” LA1EP</i></p> <p><i>“Normal EP assessment tools, where required ((.))” LA2EP</i></p> <p><i>“And then what their internal working model is quite likely it to be so how they would view themselves and others and, you know, so so when faced with it with a case, that’s what I would normally do is find out about the early history, map that out, what does that mean in terms of their internal working model?” LA4EP</i></p>
<p><u>Intervention</u> Participants identified how EPs offer interventions to problem scenarios by using specific techniques, conversational styles, and therapeutic skills. EPs portrayed how interventions were</p>	<p><i>“Erm, I’m doing narrative therapy, which again is systemic, but alongside the Social Workers all the time(.)” LA1EP</i></p> <p><i>“I do quite a lot of life story type work with children(.)” LA2EP</i></p>

non-prescriptive and were conducted in collaboration with stakeholders.	<i>“perhaps a bit of motivational interviewing as well(.)” LA3EP</i>
<p><u>Training</u></p> <p>All participants identified ways in which they offered opportunities to upskill others. EPs were able to deliver both direct training, as well as implicit professional development for stakeholders by encouraging them to utilise and build upon skills that they already had.</p>	<p><i>“It can be training for Foster Carers.” LA2EP</i></p> <p><i>“It can be training with schools around an individual child's needs, it can be training with schools more generally around trauma and attachment focused work(.)” LA2EP</i></p> <p><i>“The team have all had DDP level one training, they've all had Theraplay training(.) So I think maybe sometimes it's reminding them that they've got those skills.” LA4EP</i></p>

5.1.1.2 Bespoke Functions.

Information is presented in Table 10.

Table 10

“Bespoke Functions” Illustrative Quotes

Participants discussed the bespoke functions that EPs provided, specific to the CEC MAT context. Supporting CEC includes considering the appropriateness and effectiveness of residential and school placements, as well as supporting wider family systems in a way that differs from the core functions of the wider profession.	
Subtheme	Illustrative Quotes
<p><u>Supporting CEC</u></p> <p>This considers the function of EPs engaging in direct work supporting CEC as well as advocating for their needs. Advocacy included reviewing the appropriateness of education settings, as well as family and residential placement settings. Participants referred to the complexity and challenges that supporting CEC posed, due to the impact of factors such as trauma on behavioural needs.</p>	<p><i>“it can be work with schools and to support the learning of a looked after child.” LA2EP</i></p> <p><i>“We also sort of do a lot of work around anxiety, that's another sort of one that keeps coming up quite a lot so we've got particularly non-school attenders, erm, and trying to sort of problem solve and figure out what's happening there(.)” LA3EP</i></p> <p><i>“I might allocate it to another member of the team to go, “oh, can you just check out the education provision for that child? You know, can we look at the Estyn reports, or the Care</i></p>

	<p><i>Standard in Wales, or you know, can we get a bit (.) But what are other people telling us about that? And can we go and have eyes on?" 'Cause sometimes those settings are charging us an arm and a leg for the education provision." LA5EP</i></p> <p><i>"It kind of recognises that often by the time children can enter residential care, it's because their behaviours are, you know, quite challenging and hard to manage and yet those are exactly the children who need the nurturing, loving home life." LA5EP</i></p>
<p>Supporting families and placements Participants reported how supporting families was a fundamental element of their role and offered specific support, such as family mediation. There was a need to reduce the stigma around asking for help when needed. EPs identified that the frequency of placement breakdown was an issue and a focus on working through issues with families was the most effective way to support families experiencing difficulties. Moreover, education for prospective Foster Carers and adoptive parents around the potential difficulties they may face was viewed as an essential, and often missing, piece of the puzzle. Support was offered in a variety of ways including through supervision for families with whom CEC reside.</p>	<p><i>"So our focus is, erm, it's really, kind of, preventing some sort of family breakdown." LA3EP</i></p> <p><i>"Helping them, sort of normalising the need for support so they don't adopt, and then, like six months later, really feel that they need support but feel that they can't ask because they've had to show themselves and jump through so many hoops to be adopters that they failed by saying, "I need a little bit of help here" is somewhere like a failure, so it's getting away from that." LA4EP</i></p> <p><i>"the aim was to provide therapeutic supervision and support to families." LA5EP</i></p>

5.1.1.3 Balancing Expertise.

Information is presented in Table 11.

Table 11

“Balancing Expertise” Illustrative Quotes

<p>The role of EPs in imparting knowledge, offering insight, and providing advice was reported to be two-fold. Participants worked as both applied psychologists, and therefore moved away slightly from the “Educational” discipline to work holistically, as well as acting as a point of reference and support to colleagues from backgrounds outside of education who valued the insight that EPs could provide on educational systems and procedures. There was a tension felt by LA5EP, in offering these two perspectives as their role felt more education-focussed than that of other participants.</p>	
Subtheme	Illustrative Quotes
<p><u>Applying Psychology</u> EPs identified how psychology was applied using specific questioning and psychological models to explore needs, plan and deliver interventions, as well as communicating how psychology can offer understanding. Participants reflected upon how their role became less distinct when other professionals developed their ability to apply psychology as part of their practice. The “educational” element of the EP role was less pronounced here as practitioners were functioning as “Applied Psychologists”. For some participants this created tension, particularly if they held dual roles in both the multi-agency team and the EPS which was situated in the Education department. Participants portrayed a sense that this element of their contribution to the MAT was more of the “P” than “E” in Educational Psychology.</p>	<p><i>“I’m saying, well, hang on a minute let’s look at what’s going on for the child(.) Let’s look at why the parent’s behaving the way they are(.) Isn’t it better to tackle the parents, you know, and support them to see things differently? And then it’s going to have a knock-on effect on the child((pause)) OK, what’s the impact on the child? Look at their developmental stage.”</i> LA1EP</p> <p><i>“And this work is all about relationships, isn’t it? It’s about relationships with Social Workers, it’s about having that – building up that relationship and trust with staff and Carers so it allows you to use your psychology in a really satisfying way, I think(.)”</i> LA2EP</p> <p><i>“It feels like, you know, trying to make a distinctive sort of contribution to the team but also I’m trying to make sure that’s distinctive to the EP role in Education.”</i> LA3EP</p>
<p><u>Bridging Education and Social Care</u> EPs were able to act as a valuable bridge between systems, by contributing knowledge of the education system to MAT members who were commonly from a Social Care background. Some participants were able to offer more psychological input (e.g. unpicking behavioural presentations), whereas others were speaking from more of an education perspective around processes and systems (e.g. how to request a</p>	<p><i>“I think the model of working bridging the Social Care team and the Education team is so valuable(.) Yeah, because you know children’s difficulties at school don’t come out of nowhere(.) They come out of difficulties, you know, in their life circumstances etc(.) And having worked in this way for a number of years now it gives a whole new dimension to the Educational Psychologist’s work, ‘cause you extend your kind of remit for that child way outside the school context and setting.”</i> LA2EP</p>

<p>statutory assessment). The former position was more prominent when the EP was the only team member from an education background, signifying that their role included teaching others about education and systems. The analysis highlighted how there was a tension for EPs when contributing educational expertise as there was an uncertainty whether they were best placed and whether this support could be offered by another professional from the Education department. In contrast to the first subtheme, participants portrayed a sense that this element of their contribution to the MAT was more of the “E” than “P” in Educational Psychology.</p>	<p><i>“It’s only by being with Social Workers do you realise that and I suppose my role with the (.) social care teams are to try (.) They see education quite simplistically ((pause)) I: OK LA5EP: and so the role is to kind of say, “well, actually, I hear what you’re saying bu--” you know, it doesn’t quite work like that or they’ll (.) you know (.) so I suppose it’s kind of trying to (.) trying to help each other get a bit of a worldview.”</i> LA5EP</p> <p><i>“Why Educational Psychology? I think we’re in Learning, Education and Inclusion, erm, we haven’t had a LAC Coordinator for some time, so I don’t know if we were to re-look at it again where it would be a role more suited to somebody like a LAC Coordinator.”</i> LA5EP</p>
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5.1.2 Function of the EP Role as Part of a Team (Systemic Level).

The analysis identified the critical role of EPs working on a systemic level, both within the multi-agency team and the LA. This role included providing stakeholders with opportunities for professional development, to encourage the development of their knowledge and skillset. In this way, the EP contribution was considered successful when members of MATs from non-psychology backgrounds assimilated the application of psychology into their own practice.

5.1.2.1 Operational Management.

Information is presented in Table 12.

Table 12

“Operational Management” Illustrative Quotes

<p>Participants referred to the operational and logistical management of service that MATs provided. Whilst EPs rarely had sole responsibility and oversight of the MAT, managerial, logistical, and operational issues were important considerations for EPs who reflected upon the impact that these had on their practice and capacity.</p>	
Subtheme	Illustrative Quotes
<p><u>People</u> Participants discussed the role of others in the team in terms of the functions offered by different professionals, including the various disciplines of Psychologists involved. The difficulties which arise when professional disciplines are merged are discussed (e.g. education, psychology and social care). This subtheme also encapsulates participants’ views on their involvement in this type of work, and the considerations made for an EP to take up this role. Collaboration was a crucial element of EPs’ work (e.g. through collective problem solving, panel discussions, facilitating the collaboration of other professionals etc.). EPs most commonly worked with professionals from health (e.g. CAMHS, Clinical Psychologists), social care and colleagues from LA services for children and young people (e.g. Youth Offending, Play Service, Youth Services). Collaboration with Education usually saw EPs working with LACE teachers and school staff. Collaboration with EP colleagues from the EPS was rare. Joint working was viewed positively by all participants, who reported the positive impact this had on their work.</p>	<p><i>“Many heads are better than one(.)”</i> LA1EP</p> <p><i>“joint working is, in my opinion, brilliant(.)”</i> LA1EP</p> <p><i>“it’s like that, sort of, erm, so managing the differences in work disciplines maybe, is that the way to say it? I’m not sure(.)”</i> LA4EP</p> <p><i>“I don’t know, I think, erm, in, erm, in adoption, that they’ve got, erm, various different projects going on as well, so, erm (.) that involve Psychologists (.) so, it’s taken me ages to get my head around this, but I think I sort of understand it now.”</i> LA4EP</p> <p><i>“I’ve done quite a bit, erm, linking with CAMHS, so I think Social Workers get incredibly frustrated when they’re working with parents and the parents feel that it’s a CAMHS referral or there’s mental health issues and they feel that they just, you know, banging, erm, and you know, not getting anywhere with the referrals, so I’ve done quite a lot of breaking things down, looking at the evidence and then liaising with CAMHS by writing letters in a different way than a Social Worker would write it.”</i> LA4EP</p> <p><i>“it’s kind of trying to (.) trying to help each other get a bit of a worldview.”</i> LA5EP</p> <p><i>“they also struggle with this kind of sometimes different approach to a child’s</i></p>

	<p><i>behaviour then perhaps they have been trained in.”</i> LA5EP</p>
<p><u>Processes</u> Participants discussed the processes involved in the running of the MAT as a system, such as involvement in the allocation of casework. A degree of distance was implied when considering the initial review of cases and allocation to workers, and a sense of ambivalence was noted regarding best practice. Here, preventative work was identified as desirable; however, there were discrepancies between LAs. Despite this, there was an understanding that working preventatively provided optimal outcomes and reduced the need to work reactively. Participants reported that the conception of MATs often arose from emerging demand and needs, which continued to grow. Due to this, LAs were reported to consider the most cost-effective and time-efficient ways of utilising Psychologist input to maximise their use of resources.</p>	<p><i>“And I think it was just [name of Senior Manager] read the book and I just qualified or I was just qualifying as a Family Therapist, kind of was the catalyst saying, “well, let’s have a go”(.) You know, I don’t know if it would have gone anywhere otherwise, maybe it would have done but I haven’t got a clue(.) But it’s worked out, right place right time which is how often the way it is in Wales, I think(.)”</i> LA1EP</p> <p><i>“It’s a prevent-preventative service, so we offer, sort of, a step up to social care and a step down to, erm, from social care(.)”</i> LA3EP</p> <p><i>“The things that I’m meant to make a difference to are the sort of costings around adoption support breakdown(.) So, it’s ((pause)), it’s looking at putting support in really, really early on throughout the adoption journey to try and reduce costs for what would happen if things went really wrong ((pause)).”</i> LA4EP</p> <p><i>“In terms of my case work, I don’t even really know and and that needs to be ((laughs)) addressed because, erm, I’ll just get something through saying this case has been allocated to you and it can be something that’s like an hour’s meeting for me to go to and just listen and put my point of view, or it can be a case where it takes two days to read all the paperwork in preparation and, you know, it’s it’s like a five day work, sort of, you know, lots of meetings, lots of, you know, writing a really substantial report, so it’s a little bit unsure at the minute of when I switch my computer on, what’s going to be there and what I’m gonna be doing, which isn’t ideal you know, yeah?”</i> LA4EP</p>

5.1.2.2 Supporting Others.

Information is presented in Table 13.

Table 13

“Supporting Others” Illustrative Quotes

<p>Participants often embodied facilitator roles within the MAT to support colleagues and stakeholders. A strong focus was placed on supporting the skill development of others through supervision and promoting the application of psychology. Due to the highly emotive nature of work, wellbeing was viewed as a necessary priority for MAT members.</p>	
Subtheme	Illustrative Quotes
<p><u>Wellbeing</u> The work that CEC MATs do is highly emotive and emotionally challenging in nature. Therefore, it was important that MAT members were provided with opportunities to maintain their own wellbeing. EPs valued the support that CEC MATs provided and also contributed towards the support of their colleagues. It is important to note that this was given higher priority by EPs working in co-located teams. However, as this was not asked explicitly during interview, it is possible that EPs in specialist roles may have received wellbeing support from their EPS teams of origin.</p>	<p><i>“I wasn’t prepared as a Psychologist not working in Children’s Services, or with Social Workers(.) What you read in the books doesn’t give you what it’s like actually for them(.)” LA1EP</i></p> <p><i>“I think it is a good ((pause)), a good team for looking out for other people and looking out for ourselves.” LA4EP</i></p> <p><i>“this is far more set up, erm, to support your emotional wellbeing, definitely(.)” LA4EP</i></p>
<p><u>Supervising Others</u> Providing supervision to colleagues in MATs was a central function of the EP role, to support the development of others’ practice. Supervision enabled EPs to provide support to the MAT system which participants reported as a method of upskilling colleagues. Participants raised the management of others within the MAT as a key function of their role.</p>	<p><i>“I was employed initially to help the Social Workers use the systemic skills to get the best that they can for their families.” LA1EP</i></p> <p><i>“I actually supervise their caseload and I have monthly supervision meetings with them to talk about their ((pause)), their cases(.)” LA4EP</i></p> <p><i>“a reflective space to think about the child, behaviour, or what needs to happen and so forth, so if a child’s in school, I would see the school as being the people who need to go to those meetings ‘cause they need that</i></p>

	<i>containment and that support from those kind of teams (.)” LA5EP</i>
<p><u>Promoting Psychological Thinking and Reflection</u></p> <p>EPs reported how they offered opportunities for colleagues to reflect upon situations, often giving the physical space and time to slow down a process that appeared to have taken on a life of its own. There were discrepancies between how participants viewed the psychological thinking of their colleagues, with some reporting that they were still working on this whereas others felt that this was a developed skill.</p>	<p><i>“Most Social Workers, I think, have been very welcoming and, kind of, wanted to have that psychological reflection going on and feel that it has made a difference to their casework(.)” LA2EP</i></p> <p><i>“I think they find that really quite valuable 'cause they can think about it in a different way(.) And also having that space – that quality time to really unpick a case and talk about their, kind of, feelings in dealing with the case 'cause it is hugely challenging work(.)”LA2EP</i></p> <p><i>“but you know they are wonderful, but I think they sometimes forget what are the real pressures of (.) they’ll constantly be saying ”this child should be in a mainstream placement” without really thinking about what would the social demands on that child be, what are the emotional demands?” LA5EP</i></p>

5.1.2.3 Helpers and Hinderers.

Information is presented in Table 14.

Table 14

“Helpers and Hinderers” Illustrative Quotes

A range of mediating factors were identified as having important implications for effective working. Some of these factors were explicitly positive and others explicitly negative, whereas other factors could provide both help and hindrance.	
Subtheme	Illustrative Quotes

<p><u>Helps</u> Participants identified factors related to the EP role and wider MAT that supported the optimal functioning of the team.</p> <p>Relationships were fundamental to the functioning of the EP role; however, participants often felt that they received this support through their own personal working relationships rather than as a formal arrangement. Specifically, relationships or access to other EPs in similar positions were viewed as advantageous.</p> <p>Supervision was discussed as a supportive factor for the EP role; however, participants felt that this usually took the format of individual case discussions rather than a reflection upon the strategic and systemic contribution of EPs in MATs.</p> <p>In terms of the wider MAT, EPs identified how taking person-centred approaches supported their work. Participants offered carefully tailored intervention that accounted for the child’s needs holistically; however, working in this way was difficult at times as it made EPs feel like they were offering unpopular suggestions.</p>	<p><i>“what supports the work is acting as this (.) having the access to both teams and feeling equally at home in both.” LA2EP</i></p> <p><i>“Having another EP in the team that we can kind of, you know. Yeah, because we’re ((pause)), because we have that same sort of training experience and mindset that we can then liaise and kind of figure it out.” LA3EP</i></p> <p><i>“What supports my work? Erm, so I’m supervised by an EP in the EP team and I also have line managers in the [Welsh Government Funded Family Project] team so, you know, having those kind of support supervision, sort of management structures, that’s good(.)” LA3EP</i></p> <p><i>“Sometimes it’s adoption. is It’s very process led and people are following a process(.) And sometimes you gotta be quite brave and say, “we gotta keep the child at the centre of this” [---]it’s it’s that sort of having to stick your neck out sometimes when people are not meaning to do things in in a unsafe way, but just on a on a process driven type (.) Erm, so I very much see it as my role as keeping the child at the centre of the decision making.” LA4EP</i></p> <p><i>“It’s trying to ascertain what the child’s needs are and what’s important, you know, so (.) and trying to think about [residential fostering support project] are great at trying to find out what’s important to the child.” LA5EP</i></p>
<p><u>Hinders</u> Three main factors were identified that hindered the work of EPs in this area: the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on working practices, the clarity of professional roles within the team and mindset.</p>	<p><i>“We’re not really doing any of these things, you know, so now I’m just reduced to telephone consultations and it is just kind of checking in with people(.) Yeah, so, erm, so it’s difficult, erm, yeah to try and think about sort of, erm, ((laughs)) what I’m actually doing(.)” LA3EP</i></p> <p><i>“I don’t think things will go back to normal” LA4EP</i></p>

	<p><i>"I think there's a difference between, erm, oh gosh, I can't think of the words, erm (.) like social work mindset and therapy mindset and I think psychology, erm, especially Educational Psychology, is perhaps a little bit more aligned in terms of like workloads and things to the Social Workers, like we're really busy as Educational Psychologists. Social Workers are really busy and I think then the therapy team, erm, are quite protected in their sort of, you know, "we only see so many clients and you know we don't start many at the same time", you know, just like different peoples and that can can set people, you know, if you're incredibly busy as a Social Worker and then you see a therapist's only got three cases and you've got sixty three, do you know what I mean?" LA4EP</i></p> <p><i>"I was just sent along and said, "You're the education person" and you're like "OK, what should I be (.) what should be-? Nobody has ever said right, "the objectives for education are this." LA5EP</i></p>
<p><u>Goes Both Ways</u> Three factors were considered as having both positive and negative consequences upon the EP's work: clarity of problem holder, capacity, and language. Participants reported difficulties in establishing a shared understanding of the EP role due to the novelty of the role and being a scarce commodity.</p>	<p><i>"It's been quite sort of interesting to kind of scope out our role and trying to figure out what is it that we're doing, which has taking taken some time, but I feel like, you know, we're kind of getting there and there's some clarity ((laughs))." LA3EP</i></p> <p><i>"It's, erm, time, as in, there's only one of me, erm, and I don't know whether it's a novelty, but you know, I'm sort of getting asked to join all sorts of meetings, and I think sometimes, erm, you know, I just need to think more carefully about what meetings I'm involved in and what I'm not and, you know, it's sort of like teething troubles with that(.)" LA4EP</i></p> <p><i>"When a child's in EOTAS I often go to those meetings as the kind of education person, but you're left in that situation where I'm not the problem holder ((pause))." LA5EP</i></p>

	<p><i>“Mmm, yes, yeah, and we speak a different language as well, you know, when I talk about placement I talk about schools, when they talk about placement, they’re talking about foster care.”</i> LA5EP</p>
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5.1.2.4 Unique EP Input.

Information is presented in Table 15.

Table 15

“Unique EP Input” Illustrative Quotes

Each MAT offered something unique and distinctly different to one another, and to what was offered otherwise in each LA.	
Subtheme	Illustrative Quotes
<p><u>Flexible Working</u> Having a flexible attitude to work and relationships was paramount for EPs, as ongoing information, developments, and perspectives meant that work often took different and unexpected forms. Participants discussed their ability to take different roles in teams and discussions. This, in turn, supported the process of change, particularly when working with rigid attitudes and systems. EPs demonstrated great flexibility in contributing towards the creation and development of their own role, which was often done in isolation and with little external support or direction. Flexibility and adaptability were understood to be critical for the assimilation of EPs into MATs and to establish effective working practices.</p>	<p><i>“I can’t say I’m not a fully-fledged member, but I am because I’ve been doing it for so long, though I do feel very much part of the teams(.) Yeah, so, my role is as a consultant(.)”</i> LA1EP</p> <p><i>“I think my role is kind of quite creative and very sort of flexible.”</i> LA3EP</p> <p><i>“So being flexible, I suppose, isn’t it?”</i> LA4EP</p> <p><i>“Yes, and to carve it without really having, other than going to the team, it’s not an awful lot of time.”</i> LA5EP</p> <p><i>“Did anybody get told this was the role and it was very defined or are we all in these weird positions where we kind of have to (.) muddle through? It’s interesting.”</i> LA5EP</p>
<p><u>A Distinct Contribution</u> This subtheme considers the EP’s views of their contribution, as well as their views of</p>	<p><i>“Most Social Workers, I think, have been very welcoming and, kind of, wanted to have that psychological reflection going</i></p>

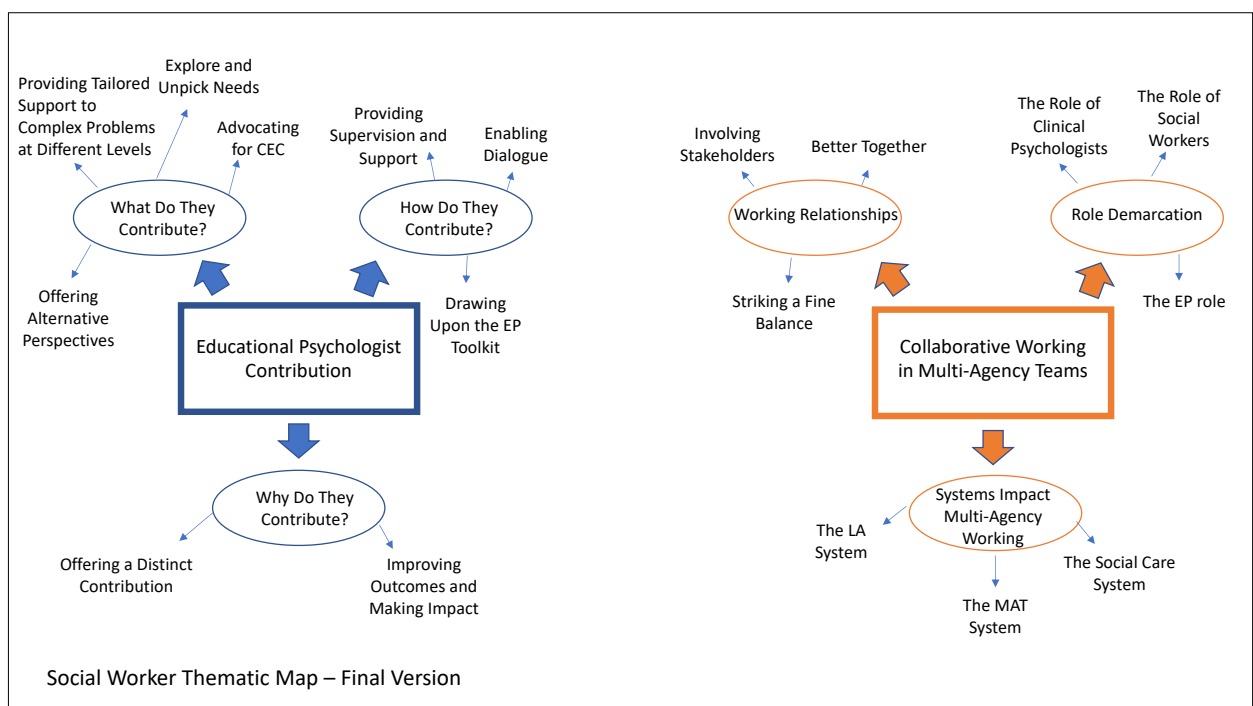
<p>others. Some EPs felt that role insecurity prevailed despite positive feedback.</p>	<p><i>on and feel that it has made a difference to their casework(.)” LA2EP</i></p> <p><i>“It feels like, you know, trying to make a distinctive sort of contribution to the team, but also I’m trying to make sure that’s distinctive to the EP role in Education.” LA3EP</i></p> <p><i>“I missed a couple of meetings (.) mainly because they kept moving where the meetings were and I wasn’t on the right mailing list and so I missed two [residential fostering support project] meetings. It became a bit of a standing joke ((laughs)) but interestingly they did come and seek me out.” LA5EP</i></p>
<p><u>Impact</u> This subtheme encapsulates the participants’ views regarding the impact that their work has for MATs and for CEC. EPs reported how their input had supported the development of psychological thinking in others and facilitated positive change for families. Tensions were felt between the ability of EPs working in this way and the wider profession, due to their perceived capacity to enable “real” change, rather than provide surface-level advice.</p>	<p><i>“It’s not drawing on me as much as it used to but that’s great, that’s what should be happening(.) So, maybe I’ve done my job a bit, that’s the plan(.)” LA1EP</i></p> <p><i>“Whereas now I feel like I can go in and say, “You just don’t get it. This is what it’s like” and probably be a lot more demonstrative and challenging and real(.) I felt ((pause)) what it was when I was working as the school Ed Psych, it felt superficial to me and this feels real(.) And if I’m any good at it or not, I dunno, but I know that I’m being true to myself and I’m not pontificating(.) And I think we do, as Psychologists, can do too much pontificating(.)” LA1EP</i></p> <p><i>“I’m not sure whether I have a massive impact now(.) But what I do know is that I started to make the Social Workers think differently.” LA1EP</i></p>

5.2 Thematic Analysis of Social Worker Interviews

The analysis of SW interview data is presented as a thematic map below (Figure 34).

Figure 34

Social Worker Thematic Map



5.2.1 Educational Psychologist Contribution.

The analysis identified the critical role of EPs working within the MAT. SWs considered the purpose, method and aims of the EP role as being distinctly different to that of other professionals within the team.

5.2.1.1 What Do They Contribute?

Information is presented in Table 16.

Table 16

“What Do They Contribute?” Illustrative Quotes

<p>EPs were able to draw upon a wide-ranging skillset to unpick complex issues, advocate for the needs of CEC and offer tailored solutions to problems. SWs valued the new and often different perspective of EPs who were able to use psychology to better understand issues.</p>	
Subtheme	Illustrative Quotes
<p><u>Advocating for CEC</u> The voice of the EP was identified as being used to advocate for the rights, needs and education for CEC, as well as to clarify and share information and perspectives with colleagues.</p>	<p><i>“What we know about a lot of our looked after children is their educational outcomes are much poorer and we do have a number of meetings to try and try and build on that and she's a very good advocate and support during those multi-agency meetings(.)”</i> LA1SW</p> <p><i>“We find the EP very useful because, and we don't always understand, maybe, the education system then(.) For example, the statementing process or the admissions(.) Very much practical things with schools.”</i> LA1SW</p> <p><i>“She's a representative from education, erm, and and probably has the most to say really in respect of all (.) erm, you know, the most contribution 'cause she's the sole person from, you know, who just has that information to share.”</i> LA5SW</p>
<p><u>Explore and Unpick Needs</u> There was an understanding that EPs can offer skills in exploring, unpicking and identifying underlying needs and possible causes (e.g. behavioural and neurodevelopmental needs). EPs are also able to offer suggestions as to how to best meet these needs.</p>	<p><i>“She also helps us with a lot of our children who are extremely complex and have high emotional and behavioural concerns(.)”</i> LA1SW</p> <p><i>“Some of the strategies the school were coming up with, and then also ourselves, the Social Workers, have helped the Educational Psychologist say, “Hang on a minute(.) If you do that, the child's gonna do this”(.) And it makes everyone sort of think, “Oh yes, that does make sense”(.) For example, I dunno, sending a child home every time he misbehaves, well, you know, that's the one thing he wants to do(.) So,</i></p>

	<p><i>what's he gonna do? He's gonna misbehave(.) That's very simple terms(.)” LA2SW</i></p> <p><i>“They actually get under the bones of whether there, you know, there is an attachment issue and if so what sort of attachment issue is it? And then the ((pause)) the work can get tailored a different way(.)” LA3SW</i></p> <p><i>“The EP involvement that I have pulled in has been around [neurodevelopmental pathway] (.) It's been around, actually, are they ((pause)), are the school or looking in the right direction at this child 'cause sometimes what I find is they go, “So this is very, very environmental”, especially if they if they see that there's a trauma so they sometimes they won't look any further than the trauma.” LA3SW</i></p>
<p><u>Providing Tailored Support to Complex Problems at Different Levels</u> SWs described how EPs offered a role that was flexible and adaptable to ongoing changes and therefore not concrete, enabling them to work at a variety of different levels (e.g. individual, group, managerial and systemic).</p>	<p><i>“My understanding of the role of Psychologist within our team is kind of lots of layers to it, and I think it's still being worked on and it's still being defined.” LA4SW</i></p> <p><i>“She often speaks about, you know, ways that we can improve processes and very much thinks about, erm((.)), it being an approach that we work with others and, erm, that we don't do to others that we work together, we don't alienate people, and I think a strong message around how we work with others is really important, so she kind of sets the tone as well(.)” LA4SW</i></p> <p><i>“the Psychologists work at different tiers.” LA5SW</i></p>
<p><u>Offering Alternative Perspectives</u> EPs were reported to offer new, alternative perspectives into multi-agency discussions, which often came from taking a “meta” perspective of problems and contexts through working in ways that school EPs are not able to (e.g. home visits).</p>	<p><i>“They've done a lot of mediation between schools and family when the relationship is broken down because they can talk their speak, if you like, actually say, you know, “Actually from an EP point of view, this is what I'm seeing”(.)“ LA3SW</i></p> <p><i>“Our EPs will go into the family home over a series of weeks so that they have a very much more in-depth view of inside school and outside school and bring the picture together(.)” LA3SW</i></p> <p><i>“I just think, you know, she's given some, like, recommendations about how we can improve and build upon what we've already got, so I see that again, her role is kind of more overarching and looking at back on our team.” LA4SW</i></p>

5.2.1.2 How Do They Contribute?

Information is presented in Table 17.

Table 17

“How Do They Contribute?” Illustrative Quotes

<p>SWs constructed a variety of ways in which EPs contributed towards multi-agency practice. Use of a specific toolkit was a fundamental contribution of EPs; however, this was often used in combination with supporting the upskilling of colleagues, and promoting collaborative working practice. Enabling dialogue between professionals promoted self-efficacy and independence in devising solutions and promoting positive change with service users.</p>	
Subtheme	Illustrative Quotes
<p>Drawing Upon the EP Toolkit This subtheme considers the modus operandi of EPs in making first order change. EPs were identified as utilising both tangible techniques (e.g. for assessment) and covert discursive skills (e.g. exploratory conversational style). In addition to specialist psychological tools, the toolkit also comprises knowledge and information about the education system.</p>	<p><i>“I forgot to mention my ((laughs)) ((pause)), yeah, she also does like ((pause)), helps us with therapeutic work with children(.) So, for example, some Social Workers are jointly doing life journey work with her.” LA1SW</i></p> <p><i>“Sometimes, you know, the EP will ask questions which are completely out of the box and there’s reasons for that.” LA1SW</i></p> <p><i>“From an educational point of view, right, we find the EP very useful because and we don’t always understand, maybe, the education system.” LA1SW</i></p> <p><i>“I know as well that my colleagues also kind of, you know, use [LA4EP] for case consultation.” LA4SW</i></p> <p><i>“She’s, you know, a huge link with schools and she’s got a wealth of experience in, erm, in kind of teaching and ‘cause you she would have had to have been a teacher to be an Educational Psychologist, so she’s got all that kind of thinking, and she’s got links within the school service.” LA4SW</i></p>

	<p><i>“She comes with (.), so in terms of skill, she comes with a lot of knowledge.” LA5SW</i></p>
<p><u>Providing Supervision and Support</u> This subtheme considers the role of EPs in making second order change. It refers to the ways in which EPs were reported to support CEC indirectly, through providing support to key stakeholders (e.g. through training sessions, supervision and supporting the systemic development of the MAT).</p>	<p><i>“On the sixth week we have all three pods come together and we have a bit of a learning session(.) It’s led by the EP and she does training with us on those days(.)” LA1SW</i></p> <p><i>“She has alternatives(.) She gives us ideas in terms of direct work(.)” LA1SW</i></p> <p><i>“A lot of the time, the input from her will make the parents be able to continue with the placement, which otherwise might have broken down(.)” LA2SW</i></p> <p><i>“A Psychologist’s role within our team would be to (.) and what I see [LA4EP] doing (.) is again to help us as a team think about how we can structure our processes and structure our policies, internal policies, to work better and more cohesively as a team, and how we can bring the best out in each other(.)” LA4SW</i></p>
<p><u>Enabling Dialogue</u> Participants identified the fundamental role of EPs in engaging with and facilitating collaborative work with CEC, families, other professionals and within the MAT itself. Collaboration was seen to be a crucial element of effective multi-agency working. Moreover, collaborative work with families can impact their trajectory.</p>	<p><i>“I think the EP is very focused on involving families, and by involving families, actually, we can keep children safer and within their families(.)” LA1SW</i></p> <p><i>“[LA4EP]’s trying to help us as a team which will work more cohesively amongst our functions(.) And there’s a huge role to play there because we’re a new emerging team((pause)).” LA4SW</i></p> <p><i>“I think that’s a huge task for somebody to undertake to look at how we can, you know, work more collectively together, but [LA4EP]’s doing that ‘cause she’s done the Appreciative Inquiry and you can see the green shoots coming through.” LA4SW</i></p>

5.1.2.3 Why Do They Contribute?

Information is presented in Table 18.

Table 18

“Why Do They Contribute?” Illustrative Quotes

<p>SWs identified that the involvement of EPs in MAT work was valuable as it enabled better outcomes and had a positive impact upon the necessary change that practitioners were trying to effect for families. The role of the EP in the team was viewed as being distinctly different to that of others in the team, as well as being different to the school-based EP role.</p>	
Subtheme	Illustrative Quotes
<p><u>Improving Outcomes and Making Impact</u> EPs were viewed as having a crucial role in improving the outcomes of CEC, and that the impact of their work in this area was highly valued by SW colleagues.</p>	<p><i>“It does really, really support you as a Social Worker(.) You don't feel so isolated and so you don't feel so much pressure with you being the main decision-maker on a case(.) You've got other people, sort of, it's just it's a shared responsibility(.) That's what it's about and that EP is part of a shared responsibility to a case(.)” LA1SW</i></p> <p><i>“Ultimately, I'm guessing for a child to be settled and safe in their environment, both in the foster placement or whether that might be at home(.) Oh, and obviously in school as well.” LA2SW</i></p> <p><i>“she sets, like, good standards, really.” LA4SW</i></p> <p><i>“The main aim of having psychology in the team is to improve outcomes for adopted children, who've experienced earlier trauma, and their parents(.)” LA4SW</i></p>
<p><u>Offering a Distinct Contribution</u> Participants referred to the contribution of the EP in MATs as being different to the stereotypical “school EP” role. Additionally, EPs were seen as offering something distinctly different to the team due to the flexible nature of their role and the skillset that they brought. EPs were seen to be acting as a bridge between stakeholders and therefore in an opportune position to offer effective mediation.</p>	<p><i>“Although she's part of the pod she also does attend some other multi-agency meetings with us, mostly educational or interviews with ((pause)), with parents or maybe family network meetings where we're trying to get or trying to repair family relationships and trying to get families on board to be part of a safety network.” LA1SW</i></p> <p><i>“They'll go into the classrooms, they'll do home observations, which is something the school EPs don't do(.) So, school EPs tend to be very, very classroom based.” LA3SW</i></p> <p><i>Sso you can, so sometimes, erm, I think the assessments [School] Education Psychologists do, erm (.), aren't always accepted, so if you've got kind of like, I don't I don't mean (.) What I mean is that they can be challenged.” LA5SW</i></p>

5.2.2 Collaborative Working in Multi-Agency Teams.

Participants identified collaboration as a fundamental element of multi-agency working. Several factors contributed to effective joint working, such as developing relationships and clear role demarcation. SWs referred to the impact that systems placed upon successful MAT working, both within the team itself and in the wider context of the LA.

5.2.2.1 Working Relationships.

Information is presented in Table 19.

Table 19

“Working Relationships” Illustrative Quotes

<p>Developing professional relationships is fundamental to multi-agency working; however, who to involve varied between LAs. Participants felt that collaboration enabled professionals to work more effectively as problems were shared and therefore the team took a joint responsibility for potential risk, which increased feelings of practitioner competency. Nevertheless, collaboration between professionals from different disciplines was fraught with issues due to tensions with the communication and power dynamics within the team.</p>	
Subtheme	Illustrative Quotes
<p><u>Involving Stakeholders</u> This subtheme considers the range of professionals with whom EPs work (e.g. families, health, social care, education, police etc.). Engaging with stakeholders is reported as a fundamental element of the EP role, both with the range of professionals working within the MAT itself and more</p>	<p><i>“She works with us as Social Workers, obviously, in the pod, our team manager and if other professionals attend the pod, for example, the fostering team, youth offending team, drugs workers and the IFST service – so, the Integrated Family Support Team – so, there’s a range of professionals that she would work with.”</i> LA1SW</p> <p><i>“Other professionals who are working with the family(.) So that might be the school, parents directly, Foster Carers(.)”</i> LA2SW</p>

<p>widely. Understanding and awareness of the range of stakeholders that EPs engage with varied across the participant sample.</p>	<p><i>“She links in with other Local Authority Heads of Education so, and maybe, I guess ((.)), yeah, (.) I, (.)yeah, I don't know the full extent of who she links in with ((.)”</i> LA2SW</p> <p><i>“We work across the board so we can work for anything from pre(.)birth, so your midwives and you're on your team ((pause)), team midwives(.) We do drug and alcohol, and we do Women's Aid, Hafan Cymru, housing or the housing associations, YOS.”</i> LA3SW</p> <p><i>“If I'm doing a team meeting we're doing here((pause)), there could be one participant because that's the only person that needs to be involved or there can be twenty one participants(.”</i> LA3SW</p>
<p><u>Better Together</u> This subtheme considers the power in collaboration, as espoused by SW participants. Participants reported that collaboration promoted engagement, collective responsibility and collective problem solving.</p>	<p><i>“It's it's it's multi agency so we have different perspectives(.) It means that there's not so much focus on on the Social Worker working in isolation, but there's ((pause)), there's a sort of group-think to it and that challenges people's biases, and, you know, helps to ((pause)), to plan and understand the case better then(.”</i> LA1SW</p> <p><i>“Sometimes that we're not even aware that we're “doing to” and that we need to kind of think about more collaborative ways and how we can open up engagement.”</i> LA4SW</p> <p><i>“I'm really lucky that I've had such good outcomes, whenever I've worked in a multi (.) agency way and I've been so, erm, you know, it's made a huge difference to the outcomes that I've had with children and young people, and having a Psychologist helps me feel safer((pause)).”</i> LA4SW</p>
<p><u>Striking a Fine Balance</u> Participants noted a range of factors mediating effective collaborative working, such as communication and power dynamics, which must be addressed when considering best practice. Tensions in professional relationships was suggested to have a knock-on effect on stakeholders further down in the chain (e.g. tensions between professionals affect working relationships with adoptive and</p>	<p><i>“I think there is a slight power dynamic in that sort of group where a little bit of “what the EP says goes”, and that's not because of the EP's approach and her ways, but I think as a newly qualified it can be easier to go with someone else's decision as opposed to ((pause))... its sometimes can prevent newly qualifieds from developing their own professional judgment(.”</i> LA1SW</p> <p><i>“So I think there ((pause)), that what we were doing prior to March is very different now to what we're doing post March.”</i> LA3SW</p> <p><i>“I think ultimately, though, what the shame of that is, is that it's the parents and the child that pick up on</i></p>

<p>foster families etc.). Additional difficulties were noted due to restricted, virtual working practices enforced resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic.</p>	<p><i>that, because if they're having the same frustrations and yet they've gotta deal with all these separate organisations, and yet I think it would be so much nicer for them if they knew that actually we're talking together, and if we were all, kind of, working collectively together."</i> LA4SW</p> <p><i>"There can still be a defensiveness about professions, and about, you know, "I'm a Social Worker", or you know, "this is (.).I've done this for years, I know what I'm doing and I don't need anybody else's advice on this", you know, I don't know, nobody's expressed that but I'm just thinking back to maybe previous teams that I've worked in."</i> LA4SW</p>
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5.2.2.2 Role Demarcation.

Information is presented in Table 20.

Table 20

"Role Demarcation" Illustrative Quotes

<p>Participants considered the portrayal of professional roles within the MAT. Some overlaps were identified with the SW within the team, and this was more clearly understood.</p>	
Subtheme	Illustrative Quotes
<p><u>The Role of the Educational Psychologist</u> This subtheme considers participant responses regarding the role of the EP they work with, how they understand it and whether this is valued. There was an apparent lack of clarity around the EP role and boundaries of this, which was confusing</p>	<p><i>"I don't know the technique that she would use or the model or the theory that she's using, no, I don't know(.) But obviously talking to them about, "How are things? What are the worries you have? What's going well? Or what are you worried about" – again, sort of 'Signs of Safety' I'm assuming that she's following(.)"</i> LA2SW</p> <p><i>"[LA4EP], as I understand it, is currently working on defining her role, and so I don't know, I'll be interested to see what that looks like when she does that, but I see her sitting within ours but I know that she's (.) also was thinking wider."</i> LA4SW</p>

<p>to SWs who were eager to have this clarified.</p>	<p><i>"I think my it might be not knowing about what her role is."</i> LA4SW</p> <p><i>"I've just been (.), I just feel like I'm really lucky to work with them really(.) [---] You know, so ((.)), we want more(.)"</i> LA4SW</p> <p><i>"I know that some of the support that they have provided is that they provided some support to schools around kinda, like, erm, you know, therapeutic, erm, you know, support and, erm, I'm trying to, erm (.), can they have input into the Thrive programme?"</i> LA5SW</p>
<p><u>The Role of the Clinical Psychologist</u> The role of Clinical Psychologists was discussed by two SW participants, who referred to the current and previous involvement of professionals delivering direct work (e.g. therapeutic work) and as members of MATs. One participant reflected upon the similarities and differences they had experienced in working with Clinical Psychologists as opposed to EPs. Clinical Psychologists were viewed positively for their links to CAMHS, particularly when SWs found difficulty in accessing this service.</p>	<p><i>"Other Clinical Psychologists ((.)), we'd talk, you know, and she kind of again was very similar to [LA4EP] and the others, very kind of held and very good at thinking of strategies that would help and things that we would never even think of, really helping the relationships between school and home as well."</i> LA4SW</p> <p><i>"Although they were different, they each have their own (.), like you said, different disciplines and background, Clinical Psychologist Educational Psychologist (.) They all actually were very similar, kind of, you know, collaborative working, thinking outside the box, turning things around, bringing out the best in people, strength-based approach, strategies, you know, outcomes, all those type of things ((.)), so I think they are all quite similar, actually."</i> LA4SW</p> <p><i>"What we started off with is that she will have a Social Worker book in for consultation with her [! : yeah,] and so when they have a consultation where they're about, erm, (.) some of the support needs of a child or young person, some of that might be around the child already getting a service from CAMHS and we need [Clinical Psychologist 1] to link in with CAMHS 'cause we're not getting a response to find out what's going on."</i> LA5SW</p> <p><i>"So she is a new Clinical Psy – sorry, I can't say it – Clinical Psychologist, and her role is to help professionals around how best to understand and support the mental health and emotional wellbeing of children."</i> LA5SW</p>
<p><u>The Role of the Social Worker</u> All participants referred to the role of the SW in supporting CEC (e.g. regarding their ultimate responsibility for cases, involvement and direct work with CEC and</p>	<p><i>"We're quite lucky in our team that, you know, the Social Workers do buy into the model and they do appreciate what an EP brings to the pod(.)"</i> LA1SW</p> <p><i>"Other constraints would be, erm, how open people are to her suggestions, and you know, individual workers, and especially when you know [LA4EP]'s trying to help us as a team which will work more cohesively amongst our</i></p>

<p>families). Participants also reflected on their personal experience of working with EPs and some of the tensions of bringing multiple disciplines together.</p>	<p><i>functions(.) And there's a huge role to play there because we're a new emerging team((pause)).” LA4SW</i></p> <p><i>“It's all because of the welfare aspect and the welfare aspect then falls down to the Social Worker.” LA5SW</i></p>
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5.2.2.3 Systems Impact Multi-Agency Working.

Information is presented in Table 21.

Table 21

“Systems Impact Multi-Agency Working” Illustrative Quotes

<p>The analysis constructed three systems to be at play for multi-agency working: the MAT system, the Social Care system, and the LA system. All three systems had explicit and implicit implications for how the team were able to support CEC and the capacity of professionals within the team.</p>	
Subtheme	Illustrative Quotes
<p><u>The Local Authority (LA) System</u> Participants identified the impact and influence of LA management, structures and processes on the work that they were doing as a MAT. Participants also identified how the positioning of EPs working with MATs was different to that of generic school-focused EPs and, therefore, LA structure dictated how these two professional groups were accessed.</p>	<p><i>“I normally go into the generic EP because there seems to be a bit of a protocol in as much as they want us to do that first(.) It's only when those are sort of exhausted that they will say “Oh yeah, yeah, we're happy for you to use your [CEC MAT] EP.”” LA3SW</i></p> <p><i>“I remember finding that extremely daunting actually trying to, erm, get some psychology advice [in a previous role] and knowing that, actually, we really needed it, you know, but not the ((.)), their kind of strategic, erm, thinking and agreements couldn't be worked out, you know, so we knew about that as a team and I think they just ((.)), they just couldn't, I think, they were just fighting each other, really, at that level.” LA4SW</i></p> <p><i>“Do you think-- ‘cause in [LA5], erm ((pause)), education and social services ((pause)) are under</i></p>

	<p><i>different managed management routes as well.”</i> LA5SW</p>
<p><u>The Social Care System</u> This subtheme comprises factors related to the impact of the care system on CEC, processes and working practices relevant to EPs and SWs in MATs. The care system is reported to work within parameters and therefore potential work with families must meet certain criteria or thresholds for professionals to engage.</p>	<p><i>“It's vital support to those families who otherwise might give up on the placement(.) So I think that's quite important, actually.”</i> LA2SW</p> <p><i>“You do get your nonsense referrals which clog the system(.) So it could be that actually this ((pause)), this family just needs signposting to housing or somewhere else, but once it comes within the social care team you've got to really justify why you're not taking it(.)”</i> LA3SW</p> <p><i>“Five years ago, you wouldn't have been talking about or about this whole therapeutic parenting attachment, and all of this sort of stuff, and like now, you know, that's kind of like quite common language for us to use, and you know, and all that sort of stuff, so I think in terms of this, in terms of the psychology world, having that impact on day-to-day working, and I think that's certainly starting to take effect now.”</i> LA5SW</p>
<p><u>The Multi-Agency Team (MAT) System</u> This subtheme comprises the set up and functioning of the MAT, logistical factors and working practices. MATs were reported to use a variety of frameworks and offer different functions to stakeholders. The influx of work to the team was reported to be largely on a referral and allocation basis, with SWs having little say in the cases that they had been allocated. EPs were allocated to or referred cases; however, they also volunteered their services during meetings and through use of the consultation framework. A move towards preventative work was viewed positively, to provide early intervention to family challenges. Additionally, these MATs supporting CEC were identified as offering something different to what was considered the generic SW role and,</p>	<p><i>“There are some Social Workers who are very invested then in the ‘Signs of Safety’ approach which then comes into conflict with the EP, who's more systemic.”</i> LA1SW</p> <p><i>“You haven't sometimes always got the time for six weekly meetings and getting everyone involved and arranging them and writing up the minutes(.) But, actually, if you could find the time, it is valuable(.) And I wish I had more time. I feel quite overwhelmed with cases at the moment and those sorts of things seem to slip a little bit and that's regretful, really, 'cause I know it works and I know it's helpful for everyone involved(.) And so, for support for [LA2EP] that would be helpful(.) This is helpful that that would happen(.)”</i> LA2SW</p> <p><i>“We all share one thing in common: it's actually to stop the families getting into crisis(.) So that they don't become the social care cases of tomorrow(.)”</i> LA3SW</p> <p><i>“The [Welsh Government Funded Family Project] role is very much voluntary and I had to sort of learn the new spiel, if you like, that this is voluntary, you know, at any point you can opt out, you know, this is actually all about cooperation and communication, but I've still got my child protection role and if I think</i></p>

therefore, some participants had different legal frameworks and practices than those associated with statutory SWs.

anything is wrong, I need to tell them etc etc(.)”

LA3SW

It aims to achieve better outcomes for children and young people and their adoptive parents in terms of helping the professionals who are working with them to consider their, erm (.), step back and consider their approaches and to consider, erm, how we can best work to get engagement from the family(.)”

LA4SW

5.3 Summary

AT was applied to the TA data to explore the EP (Figure 35) and SW (Figure 36) findings. This application of AT was applied to the entire interview data set, including relevant participant quotes that have not been displayed as illustrative quotes.

Figure 35

Educational Psychologist Thematic Analysis Applied to Activity Theory

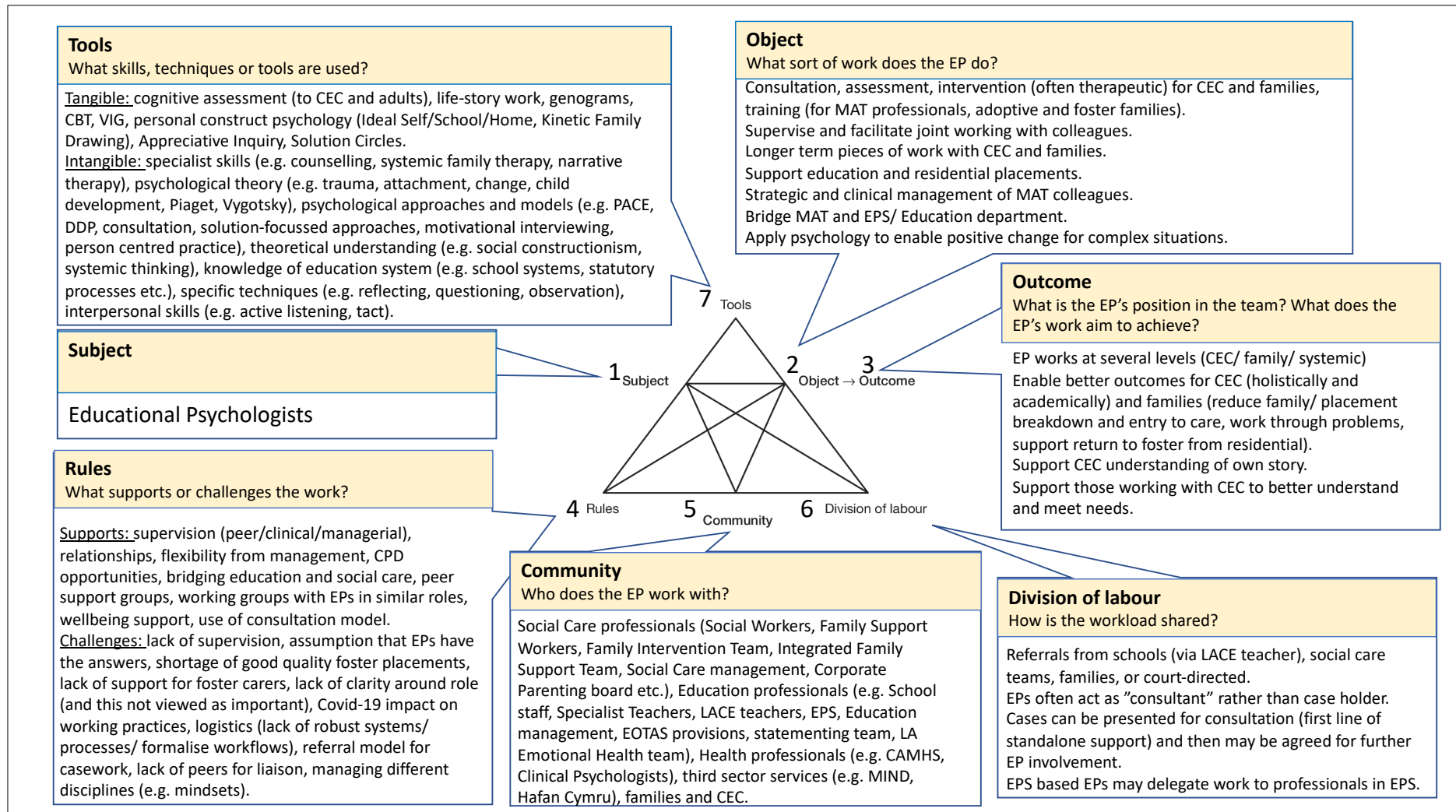
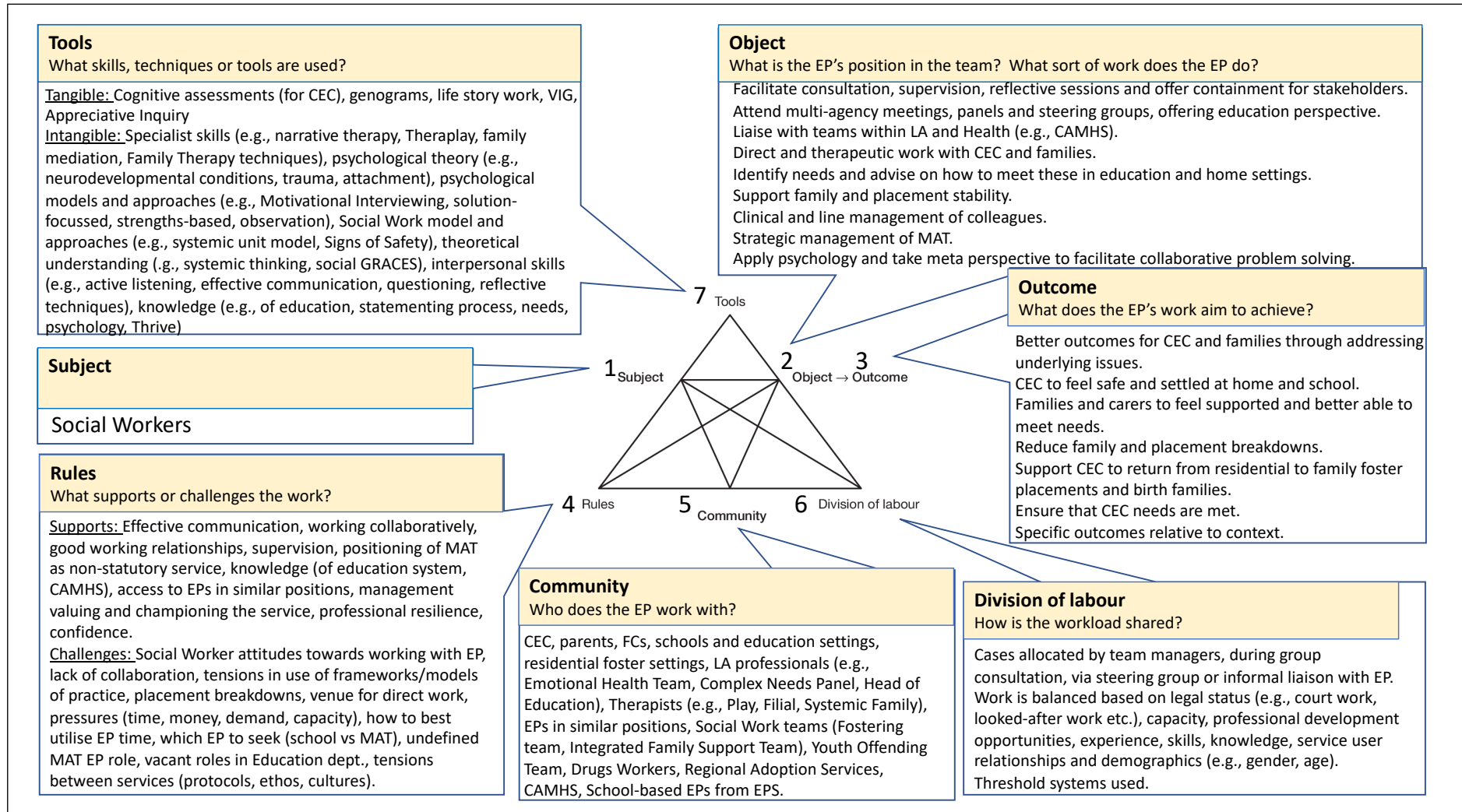


Figure 36

Social Worker Thematic Analysis Applied to Activity Theory



In summary, this research explored EP and SW views of the role of the EP in MATs supporting CEC. Participants shared their views, experiences and constructions of the role of the EP and the MAT in supporting CEC. The research questions sought to explore the views of EPs and SWs, tensions and contradictions in the views of EPs and SWs, as well as what the findings suggest for best practice. The four research questions are discussed below, with reference to findings from the current study.

6 Discussion

6.1 Research Questions

This research project explored the role of the EP, working in MATs from the perspectives of EPs and SW colleagues using AT. This section discusses findings from themes constructed in the analysis with reference to current literature and theory. The results will be discussed in relation to the research questions.

6.1.1 RQ1: How do Educational Psychologists working in multi-agency social care teams view their work?

The TA highlighted the diverse and wide-ranging role of the EP, which is responsive to demand, need and context. There is a lot of information which could be drawn upon; however, this section will focus on some elements the role of the EP at the individual and systemic levels, as identified in the analysis.

Within Social Care practice, EPs facilitate change throughout the whole cycle of involvement with stakeholders, from intake to discharge using a threshold system. The notion of practitioners as agents of change (Dunsmuir & Kratochwill, 2013) views EPs as offering opportunities to transfer psychological knowledge which contributes to the change process, which is “*complex, dynamic, often disturbing and not always rational*” (Stobie, 2002, pg. 204). EP participants felt that they could facilitate change through both subthemes of *Core Functions* and *Bespoke Functions*. Interestingly, of the five core functions proposed by Currie (Scottish Executive, 2002), four remained appropriate to the role of EPs working in this way: consultation,

assessment, intervention, and training, which is consistent with the literature (e.g. German et al., 2000; Woods et al., 2011; Cunningham & Lauchlan, 2010).

EP participants supported the upskilling of stakeholders through *Training*; however, practice varied between LAs, as reported in Norwich et al. (2010). This was viewed as an effective use of the limited capacity of EPs. Time allocation significantly impacted EPs' ability to engage in this type of work, like previous findings (Bradbury, 2006). Incidental and informal joint-working observational and mediation techniques provided further learning opportunities. EPs shared knowledge and skills by applying social psychological theories with stakeholders to develop their understanding through acting as a more knowledgeable peer supporting colleagues' professional development (Vygotsky, 1978). Additionally, working collaboratively (e.g. with life story work) supported reflection in action, a core theoretical perspective in social work practice (Ferguson, 2018). EP participants were *Supporting Others* by offering SWs valuable reflection time and *Supervising Others*, as well as supporting informed decision-making through *Applying Psychology* on an individual level. Findings echo previous research arguing that effective team leadership includes strategic planning to allow reflection conducive to effective problem solving (Hymans, 2006).

EPs did not express concern about the transient landscape of practice in this area, which could suggest that this is accepted as an expected (Stobie, 2002) element of the work. This links to the *Flexible Working* approach of EPs in their *Unique EP Input*. Fallon et al. (2010) profess that “*professional flexibility and adaptability in the application of psychology are now essential skills, rather than a valuable addition*” (pg.14). This understanding fits with contemporary use of psychological models and

frameworks for practice in educational psychology which promote the application of psychology to facilitate change (Kelly et al., 2017). The use of frameworks for practice may draw out underpinning theoretical understandings supporting the enmeshment of macro and micro level issues present in multi-agency working, such as through the lenses of social constructionism and interactionism (Fallon et al., 2010).

The analysis identified the view that EPs add value to the MAT through bringing a unique and wide-ranging skillset to the team. At the individual level this included the *Core Functions* and *Bespoke Functions* of the EP role, as well as *Balancing Expertise* when offering advice and support to stakeholders. At the systemic level, EPs offered a *Unique EP Input* as well as *Operational Management* to the MAT and *Supporting Others*. Osborne et al. (2009) pointed out the essential communication skills required for the role, which participants acknowledged through their role in providing expertise, sharing knowledge, offering alternative perspectives, and *Bridging Education and Social Care* systems with psychology, similar to EPs in child protection work (German et al., 2000). EP participants in the current study viewed themselves as bridging services within the LA (e.g. social care and education, MAT and CAMHS etc.) which differs from previous research findings that SWs viewed themselves as the bridge (Curtin, 2020).

Current findings suggest that EPs recognise their specialist knowledge about children in care (e.g. understanding trauma and attachment needs), and can offer something that is additional and different to the MAT through their application of psychology by *Balancing Expertise*. Despite this, EP participants conveyed some

feelings of uncertainty about how their input was received by SW colleagues and other professionals within the team when *Bridging Social Care and Education*. Cooley's (1902) "looking glass self" would explain these feelings to be related to how EPs interpreted the perspectives of others as an assessment of their worth, values and behaviour, which subsequently influences their own sense of self. Some cognitive dissonance was present in the views of EPs regarding the *Impact* of their contribution.

There was a dominance of therapeutic practice in the work that EPs were conducting. Views bridged the *Core Functions* and *Bespoke Functions* depending on whether EPs were delivering therapeutically informed interventions or specific programmes which required additional specialist training (e.g. CBT, VIG, Systemic Family Therapy, DDP). It was not within the scope of the project to explore the use and value of those skills; however, further appraisal could offer insight for LA and MAT managers looking to provide EPs with appropriate opportunities for continued professional development. This evidence supports Woods et al.'s (2011) suggestion that EPs are utilising skills traditionally associated with clinical psychology (e.g. therapeutic practices). It has also been argued that designing and delivering therapeutic interventions is a core element of EP training (Hammond & Palmer, 2021) and that it is commonplace for EPs to seek additional training in specific therapeutic modalities post-qualification (Atkinson et al., 2014).

The development of specialisms and specialist roles supporting CEC has come a long way since previous research that suggested this type of work had not yet been fully established (Norwich et al., 2010) as the "*drift*" (Allen & Bond, 2020, pg.11) of

EPs into specialist roles was ongoing. This has led to tensions in *Balancing Expertise* and was a factor that *Hindered* the systemic contribution of the EP. Participants shared how they were often the first professional to adopt the role and therefore navigating and establishing professional role and role boundaries was ongoing, which had implications for their *Distinct Contribution*. Most EPs working in MATs were doing so as part of LA and regional working initiatives. For the participant working exclusively for adoption services, this differed slightly in that the involvement of psychologists was a move that was taking place across the country. Advertisements for these roles sought “Practitioner Psychologists”, and therefore perhaps educational psychology trained professionals did not necessarily assume that this applied to them.

The ability to take a meta perspective and view the work systemically was evident at both levels of the EP role. On the individual level, EPs were *Applying Psychology* to explore systemic family and school issues to promote positive change whereas on the systemic level this approach to problem solving was applied to the *Operational Management* of the MAT. However, the degree to which EPs had managerial or strategic oversight of MATs varies greatly between LAs, as did the support that was provided for EPs to do this effectively. LA5EP desired greater strategic supervision regarding MAT functions and processes, sharing that in their experience, the purpose, roles and functions of MAT professionals had not been agreed and made explicit and therefore their role had gained traction before it had been fully understood. Previous findings revealed that effective MAT working is underpinned by shared goals and understanding of professional roles (Barclay & Kerr, 2006). However, as MATs appear to be evolving entities, it could be concluded that there is

no ideal time frame for agreeing roles and goals as these will likely need re-establishing as MATs develop.

Despite previous concerns (Farrell et al., 2006), the analysis identified how EPs can bring specialist skills, knowledge, and application of psychology to multi-agency working to support CEC in Wales. EPs reported working at multiple levels (*Functions of the EP Role (Individual Level)* and *Functions of the EP role (Systemic Level)*), which previous research identified as being a valuable contribution of the EP (Bradbury, 2006). The role of EPs in supporting the needs of CEC holistically was raised, with participants referring to issues within the education and social care system having mutual influence upon one another. This can be understood through the application of ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), which contends that interactions and interconnections between environmental contexts within the meso-system impacts a child or young person who is central to the interconnecting structures. This theory can also explain how participants stressed the critical role of involving and supporting families and residential placements to provide holistic support to CEC. Perspectives that supporting families to work through problems reduces placement breakdowns and entry to the care system was consistent with previous research suggesting that consistency of school and placement was associated with positive outcomes for children and young people (Sebba et al., 2015).

6.1.2 RQ2: How do Social Workers working in multi-agency social care teams view the work of Educational Psychologists in their team?

SW participants reported the fundamental involvement of EPs in delivering therapeutic work. EP input was viewed as two-fold in their direct delivery of therapeutic practices with CEC and families by *Drawing on the EP Toolkit*, as well as providing clinical and line management to practitioners within the team who provided therapeutic work by *Providing Supervision and Support*. This supports previous research findings that EPs can contribute strategic planning and operational management skills to the team (Woods et al., 2011).

Like EP participants, SWs constructed the EP role as a bridge between systems as part of their *Distinct Contribution*. However, SWs also identified how EPs, who sit on multiple MATs (e.g. Emotional Needs MATs), can also act as a bridge between MATs. These echoed previous findings that highlighted EPs' skills in promoting cohesion and reducing tensions in multi-agency working (Bradbury, 2006). However, more recent research (Curtin, 2020) found that SWs self-identified as bridging systems for purposes of negotiation, problem solving and working in a person-centred way. Curtin (2020) argued that, whilst previous research highlighted the leadership role of EPs (Farrell et al., 2006), this was not applicable in the Irish context where SWs bridged services. Findings from the current research study indicate that whilst EPs were able to provide clinical and managerial support to SWs and the MAT, as well as contribute to individual casework, this was as a "consultant" rather than a "case holder", which impacts the *MAT System*. It could be argued that this position is largely due to the legal and procedural frameworks which dictate statutory social work practice emanating from the wider *LA Systems and Social Care*

Systems. However, participants working for Welsh Government Funded Family Project were in a different position as this was separately funded (non-statutory service) and not bound by the same thresholds and frameworks as statutory social care services. Nevertheless, these participants were also responsible for adhering to child protection frameworks.

EPs were *Offering Alternative Perspectives* to MAT working, through *Exploring and Unpicking Needs, to Provide Tailored Support to Complex Problems at Different Levels.* EPs were expected to work within social care frameworks and models of practice to achieve the MAT aims. Participants identified two specific frameworks of SW practice to which EPs contributed. A systemic unit model was adopted by LA1, which utilised psychologist time through allocation to several systemic units or “pods” where EPs joined small teams of practitioners in a consultant role. A summary of the systemic unit model is presented below (Figure 37).

Figure 37

Background Information: What is the Systemic Unit Model of Social Work?

Background information: What is the systemic unit model of social work?

- The systemic unit model, also known as the “Hackney model” or “Reclaiming Social Work” (Forrester et al., 2013), comprises small teams of Social Care practitioners who engage in joint working with families.
- “*Reclaiming Social Work is a programme developed in the London Borough of Hackney aimed at improving services for children and families. The model stems from a recognition that social work is an especially challenging profession requiring a range of complex skills, a sound grounding in professional knowledge and an understanding of its evidence base. The programme has also emerged from a sense that the professional skill and autonomy of social workers has become degraded by managerial structures designed to improve accountability and risk management, but which have materially changed the way social workers interact with service users*” (Cross et al., 2010, pg. 1).
- Units are reported to usually comprise (see Cross et al., 2010; Forrester, et al., 2013) of a:
 - Consultant Social Worker, who manages the team and receives case allocations
 - Social Worker
 - Child Practitioner
 - Unit Coordinator
 - Clinical Therapist
- The model is purported to “*adopt a systemic and social learning model for practice*” (Forrester et al., 2013, pg. 12), using specific methods of assessment and intervention with families.

SW participants reported how EPs contributed to joint working by attending the “pods” and engaging in discussions to *Explore and Unpick Needs*. Risk management decisions were identified collaboratively and therefore professionals felt that they worked *Better Together*. Therapeutic support was offered to CEC and families and attitudes towards intervention focused on *Involving Stakeholders*. Six-weekly training sessions were offered to “pod” members for continued professional development in addition to informal skill development (e.g. supporting use of narrative therapy

approaches in casework). Here, the EP role was unique in that no other “pod” member was able to offer support in this same way and therefore psychologists offered a *Distinct Contribution*. LA1EP’s highly specialist input was clearly a valued contribution and one that LA1SW felt supported the skill development of members of the “pod”. This finding is consistent with research that reports how SWs view the acknowledgement of professional expertise and diversity within teams as necessary for effective MAT working (Hymans, 2006).

LA2 utilised the “Signs of Safety” framework to social work practice, an approach to child protection casework. There was an expectation that the EP worked within this framework as part of their practice. A summary of the “Signs of Safety” framework is detailed below (Figure 38).

Figure 38

Background Information: What is the “Signs of Safety” Framework?

Background information: What is the “Signs of Safety” framework?

- This framework was developed in the 1990s by Turnell & Edwards due to difficulties applying theory to social work practice when working with Aboriginal communities in Western Australia (Government of Western Australia Department for Child Protection, 2011). This practice-based evidence framework is a “*strengths-based, safety-organised approach to collaborative child protection casework*” (Sheehan et al., 2018). This framework is underpinned by three core principles:
 1. “*Working relationships*” (Turnell & Murphy, 2017, pg. 5)
 2. “*Munro’s Maxim: Thinking Critically, Fostering a Stance of Inquiry*” (Turnell & Murphy, 2017, pg.6)
 3. “*Landing Grand Aspirations in Everyday Practice*” (Turnell & Murphy, 2017, pg. 7).
- Reflection is recognised as a key tenet of the model, from which enables professionals to learn (Turnell & Murphy, 2017). It professes to be a model of change for practice and for organisations to work most effectively to support child protection and manage risk (Turnell & Murphy, 2017).

LA1SW and LA2SW discussed how the “Signs of Safety” was adopted as a service-wide framework for child intervention work. EPs were reported to support SW implementation of the model through structuring their input using the “Signs of Safety” terminology (e.g. “What’s working?” and “What’s not working?”), as well as using it to support intervention work with CEC. However, this was not always viewed positively as LA1SW reported that the systemic approach favoured by LA1EP clashed with the “Signs of Safety” intervention approach. LA1EP reported tensions when SWs in the MAT who were invested in the “Signs of Safety” framework were presented with alternative suggestions and perspectives by the MAT EP. Therefore, it was fundamental that EPs were able to *Strike a Fine Balance* when negotiating

work with SWs. Frameworks for practice are discussed in further detail in relation to research question four.

Both the systemic unit model and the “Signs of Safety” framework are underpinned by psychological thinking, such as solution-focussed approaches, personal construct psychology, person-centred and positive psychology approaches and therefore EPs are well suited to work within these frameworks. Thus, EPs were able to offer a *Distinct Contribution* when working in *Systems that Impact Multi-Agency Working*. EPs worked across the individual, group and systemic/strategic levels of involvement, as presented in Table 22.

Table 22

Responsibilities of the EP Working in CEC MATs

Individual	Group	Strategic/Systemic
Assessment	Running wellbeing groups for MAT colleagues	Reviewing MAT processes and systems
Supporting educational and holistic needs of CEC	Contributing to panels, forums, and steering groups	Line management of MAT colleagues
Consultation		
Intervention		
Training		
Supervision (individual, group, peer, informal etc.)		
Reviewing outcomes		
Supporting application of psychology		
Supporting development of skills		
Supporting reflective practice		

Finally, there was an implicit level of proficiency when considering the role of the EP. Perhaps linked to constructions of “expertise”, SWs did not seem to view any lack of understanding of the EP role negatively regarding EPs’ ability to conduct their role. It could be argued that this is due to a level of trust present in working with Social Care, or perhaps a lack of opportunity to explore professional roles due to the fast-paced and outwardly process driven work of child protection. Previous findings argue that SWs can identify EP competency in child protection work (e.g. delivering therapeutic interventions, skilful use of communication, assessment, intervention, and expertise on behavioural and emotional issues resulting from abuse) (German et al., 2000). However, research also contends that effective MAT working is underpinned by shared understanding of theoretical stances (Barclay & Kerr, 2006) and therefore the degree to which SWs must understand the underpinning psychological and theoretical contribution of EPs to enable effective MAT working is unclear.

6.1.3 RQ3: Are there tensions and contradictions in MAT activity systems?

Contradictions are a fundamental principle of AT and are “*historically accumulating structural tensions within and between activity systems*” (Engeström, 2001, pg. 137). Sannino & Engeström (2018) suggested that tensions take place at four levels (Table 23).

Table 23

Levels of Tensions and Contradictions with Activity Systems

Level	Tensions and Contradictions
Primary	Within individual nodes of an activity system.
Secondary	Between two or more nodes of an activity system.
Tertiary	When the activity system changes and develops (e.g. with the introduction of new “rules”) which creates tension between the current and previous methods of practice.
Quaternary	Between two or more activity systems.

Some of the primary and secondary tensions from the current project are considered below (see Table 24 and Table 25). As participant interviews reflected a “snapshot” in time of MAT practices, the tertiary and quaternary levels of contradiction are not considered.

Table 24*Primary Tensions and Contradictions*

Node	Tensions and Contradictions
Subject	Attitudes to collaboration (with EPs and other services e.g. CAMHS) impacts both Social Workers and service user engagement.
Object	Whilst EP involvement aimed to support the practice of others, their role was redundant when colleagues were able to apply psychology and unpick problems in the way that EPs would. There are discrepancies in constructions of possible and actual strategic contribution of the EP role in both participant groups.
Outcome	There was ambiguity about how “outcomes” of the EP and MAT married up. Whilst contributions to supporting the holistic needs of CEC and families were possible, EP “outcomes” were on occasion reduced to educational needs.
Rules	Limited time, capacity and resources meant that professionals had to use EP input carefully. However, this was not always done in a planned way.
Community	The collaboration between EPs and other professionals and services varied greatly by LA. Social Workers identified how their practice could be considered as “doing to” rather than “doing with”, and therefore sought to be more mindful about working in partnership with service users, which was encouraged by EPs.
Division of Labour	Cases are commonly allocated to Social Workers. Teams often use a threshold system and therefore cases that are on the cusp can be discharged from the services and re-allocated based on risk. EPs are rarely case holders and do not work on a threshold system and, therefore, are not subject to the same requirements.
Tools	Supporting others’ use and appropriate implementation of tools was viewed as a core responsibility of the EP; however, this could contradict Social Workers’ current application of Social Work frameworks (e.g. Signs of Safety tools).

Table 25*Secondary Tensions and Contradictions*

Node	Tensions and Contradictions
Object vs Outcome	It was felt that EPs were better able to explore needs and facilitate lasting change by unpicking issues holistically. There were tensions present when considering whether the work of EPs contributed towards the overall “outcome” of the MAT, often due to a lack of feedback or communication from team members, and impact measures.
Division of Labour vs Object	EPs are directed tasks by other professionals, rather than in agreement or consultation. This impacts the capacity of the EP to deliver their unique contribution in the most effective way.
Division of Labour vs Tools	Team members originated from different disciplines and utilised different frameworks for practice yet were expected to work together to achieve a common goal.
Tools vs Object	When considering the tools used in their practice, EPs referred to those of the wider profession. However, the application of these tools differed, as participants felt they were better able to explore and support underlying needs. EPs in MATS have not previously had the capacity to do this as school-based EPs (e.g. home visits, home observations, supporting carers and residential placements). Participants reflected upon this positively as they felt that the CEC MAT role enabled them to facilitate greater positive change for service users.
Rules vs Object	Support for team member wellbeing was viewed positively, particularly in teams that offered support proactively (e.g. wellbeing groups). Reflective practice enabled Social Workers to consider issues more deeply and ensure that practice was informed and reasoned. However, time and capacity pressures impacted attitudes towards attending reflective sessions facilitated by EPs.
Rules vs Outcome	Supervision was constructed as being instrumental in the effective practice of all professionals so that the team could meet its aims. However, the availability of supervision and what it offered (e.g. professional, strategic) varied greatly between MATs.

Through this analysis it appears that greater primary tensions were felt within the nodes of “object” and “outcome” and between the nodes of “rules”, “division of labour”, “object” and “outcome”. Due to the scope of the current project, it is not possible to discuss all the tensions and contradictions in detail. However, some of

the more salient points related to the EP role are discussed below in answering research question four.

6.1.4 RQ4: What do the findings offer when considering best practice for Educational Psychologists to achieve the most positive outcomes?

Findings from the current study offer a breadth of implications when considering best practice for EPs. However, due to the limited scope of the current project, several key elements relevant to the EP role have been highlighted for greater discussion.

6.1.4.1 Clarity of Purpose, Role and Responsibilities.

Engeström (2001) reported that one of the primary contradictions in activity systems is the adoption of new commodities; this was evident when participants were discussing the role of the EP in the team, from both the perspectives of practitioners themselves and SWs. Tensions appeared when considering how the role was understood by team members, especially when EP participants were involved in the conception and formation of the role as this did not appear to be well-defined. This led to a lack of understanding of the purpose of the EP role as well as what practitioners could offer, and occasionally resulted in the EP being asked to engage in work that under-used their specialist skills. This initial confusion for all parties can be understood using a model of small group development as developed by Tuckman (1965) and Tuckman & Jensen (1977). Applying findings from the analysis to this model would suggest that many of the MATs were in the “storming” stage of group development due to the ambiguity over roles and contribution. SW participants often reported a lack of understanding of the EP role and required further clarification.

However, EPs felt that they were either unsure of the role themselves which had not

yet been clarified, or that the role had gained traction before clarification had been achieved, leaving them to also feel uncertain about their contribution. Therefore, time should be allocated by MAT managers for clarifying tasks, roles, and aims at the conception of MAT working, periodically as the MAT develops over time and when new professionals and practices are incorporated into the team.

Rice (1963) considered the primary task of organisations, where survival of the organisation is based on completion of this task. This model could also be used to explore tensions and contradictions within the “object” and “outcomes” nodes of an activity system (see Table 26).

Table 26*Types of Primary Task (Rice, 1963)*

Type of Primary Task	Explanation	Application to the EP role in CEC MATs, using Activity Theory
Normative	The formal task which aligns with the overall aims of the team. Usually defined by those with managerial oversight.	The “outcome” of the MAT, as agreed by the MAT manager, which is likely to be influenced by decisions and higher-level considerations within a LA.
Existential	How individuals interpret and make sense of their role. This is what individuals believe that they are doing.	Individual constructions appear when MAT “outcomes” are not explicit, which influences constructions of the EP “object”.
Phenomenal	How others view the work that an individual is carrying out, by observing their behaviour.	Individuals (or “subjects”) view the work of others based on observable behaviours (e.g. the EP “object” conducted using “mediating tools and artefacts”).

Zagier Roberts (1994) suggested that, though analysis of primary tasks using the above categories can help to address tensions in how tasks contribute towards the overall aims of an organisation or applied to AT, what matters is how the “object” leads to the “outcome”. Therefore, it would be helpful for teams to co-construct the “outcome” of the MAT, as this influences the understanding of professional roles and responsibilities. This method of top-down clarification would still be applicable for teams whose “outcomes” are dictated by socio-political influences outside of the MAT. Moreover, models of AT can be mapped upon one another, using Engeström’s (1999b) third generation model of AT. This model can be used to understand perspectives and interrelations between activity systems (Greenhouse, 2013) when

they become enmeshed. Engeström (1999a) also highlighted the importance of tensions and contradictions within integrated activity systems. The third generation AT framework provides the required negotiation between systems (Leadbetter, 2017). Whilst not the focus on the current study, future research could utilise this model to offer a novel way of exploring constructions of the “object” within CEC MATs and how this leads to the “outcome”. This could also be utilised by CEC MAT managers as a tool to support the “norming” of the MAT during the initial phases of team development.

6.1.4.2 Integrating Frameworks for Practice.

Participants reported tensions present when professionals drew upon different frameworks to assess and unpick cases (e.g. Signs of Safety, systemic unit model and systemic thinking etc.). There is potential for conflict when the “tools” that are used appear to clash, yet team members are expected to work towards the same “outcome”. Psychologists are trained in the application of frameworks, to provide structure and clarity in the application of theory to practice. Frameworks for practice enable “*a long overdue clarification and articulation of the profession’s complex theory, methodology and objectives*” (Kelly, 2017, pg. 12). Frameworks for practice can allow the integration of multiple perspectives, as part of the change process. Explicit discussion of possible frameworks for practice and the benefits of integration could support team cohesion, particularly for those struggling with such issues during Tuckman & Jensen’s (1977) “storming” phase of group development.

One model supporting the integration of perspectives is the Constructionist Model of Informed and Reasoned Action (COMOIRA, Gameson et al., 2003). AT could

provide a framework for practice that draws directly from cognitive, learning, and socio-cultural theories to form a constructionist framework exploring organisational change (Kelly, 2017). It is not considered to be an executive framework in the same way as COMOIRA, as it is more specific about the psychological theory that can be applied within it (Sedgwick, 2019). The integration of psychology in COMOIRA is represented within the core principles of social constructionism and informed reasoned action. It regards flexibility as essential to the process and therefore could provide a helpful solution to the issue of integration. This could equally be applied to Woolfson et al.'s (2003) Integrated Framework. Both models incorporate systemic thinking at their core, focus on collaboration and recognise the differing perspectives of stakeholders. They can be visually represented and thus are arguably more accessible to service users, other professionals, and EPs themselves which echoes previous arguments for making psychology more visible (Stringer et al., 2006). Piaget (1947) would argue that the use of imagery supports concrete operational learning.

Farrell et al.'s (2006) review of the contributions and functions recommended that psychologists evidence their contributions more clearly both in practice and in documentation. A framework for practice, which enables the integration of social work models and theories, could be used explicitly and subsequently evidence during individual and group supervision, with service users and in communicating practice and outcomes to stakeholders.

6.1.4.3 The “E” in Educational Psychologist.

Participants discussed how EPs were able to contribute specific knowledge and skills, and that this was an element of their unique contribution to the MAT. EP contributions were considered in terms of “*Balancing Expertise*” as they were able to contribute from both the “E” of “Educational Psychology” in providing knowledge and advice around educational needs, as well as the “P” in skilfully “*Applying Psychology*”. EPs offered expertise around education and schools, a significant element of a young person’s life. This should not be overlooked, due to the mutually influential impact that changes in the school or home context can have upon one another, as is asserted in the notion of equifinality (Dowling & Osborne, 2003) and Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) meso-system. As a result of this, EPs were well-trained and well-placed to act as key connections between systems by “*Bridging Education and Social Care*” which reflects the current understanding of the role in the research (see Cunningham & Lauchlan, 2010; Osborne et al., 2009). This supports the arguments of Stobie (2002) and Norwich (2000) that the EP is positioned between interconnecting systems.

EPs are unique in being the only Practitioner Psychologists explicitly trained to work with children and young people, and the school system. As previously discussed, the application of frameworks for practice enables EPs to systematically problem solve and apply theory and research to practice (Cameron, 2006) and appropriately use transferable skills to support the needs of CEC. In their consideration of the role of the EP in Children’s Services, Fallon et al. (2010, pg. 14) summarise that

EPs are fundamentally scientist-practitioners who utilise, for the benefit of children and young people (CYP), psychological skills, knowledge and understanding

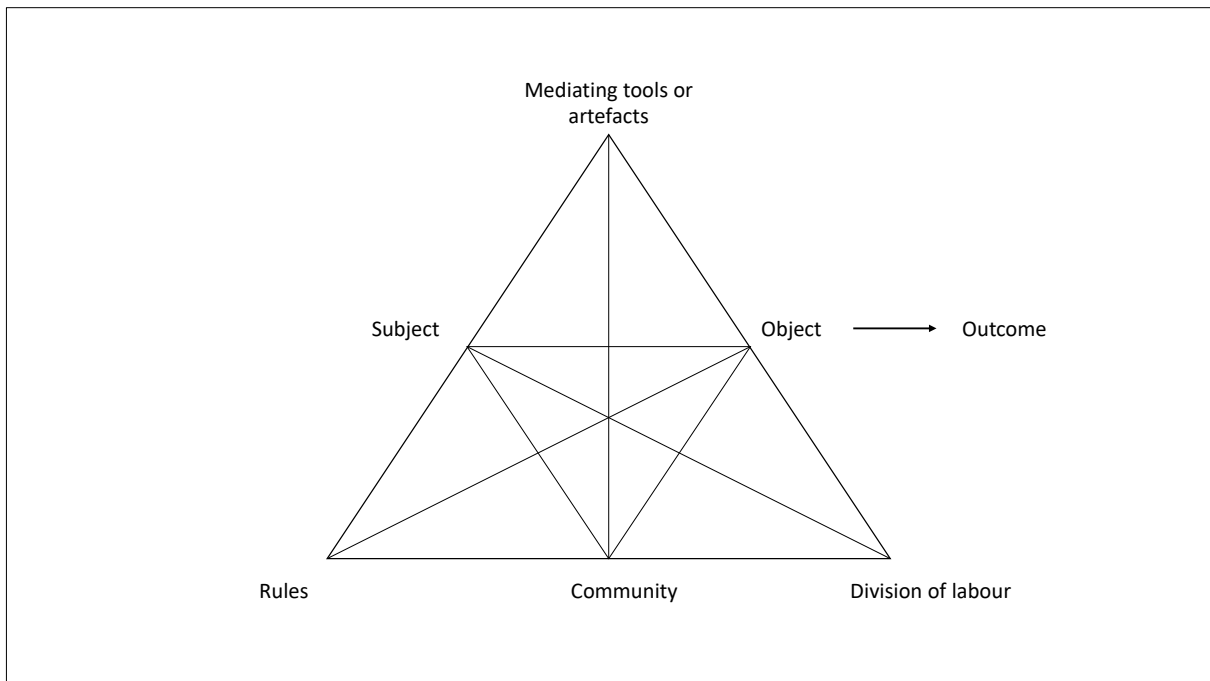
through the functions of consultation, assessment, intervention, research and training, at organisational, group or individual level across educational, community and care settings, with a variety of role partners.

6.1.4.4 Using Activity Theory to Promote Best Practice.

The application of AT to MATs supporting CEC has been demonstrated in the current research project to support the understanding of the role of the EP. Explicit use of this model could support to the planning and effective management of MATs, which would also make the psychology used more visible to service users, MAT professionals and other stakeholders. The flexibility of the model to be used at a variety of levels means that it can be applied in numerous ways, using second and third generation AT models (see Figure 39 and 40).

Figure 39

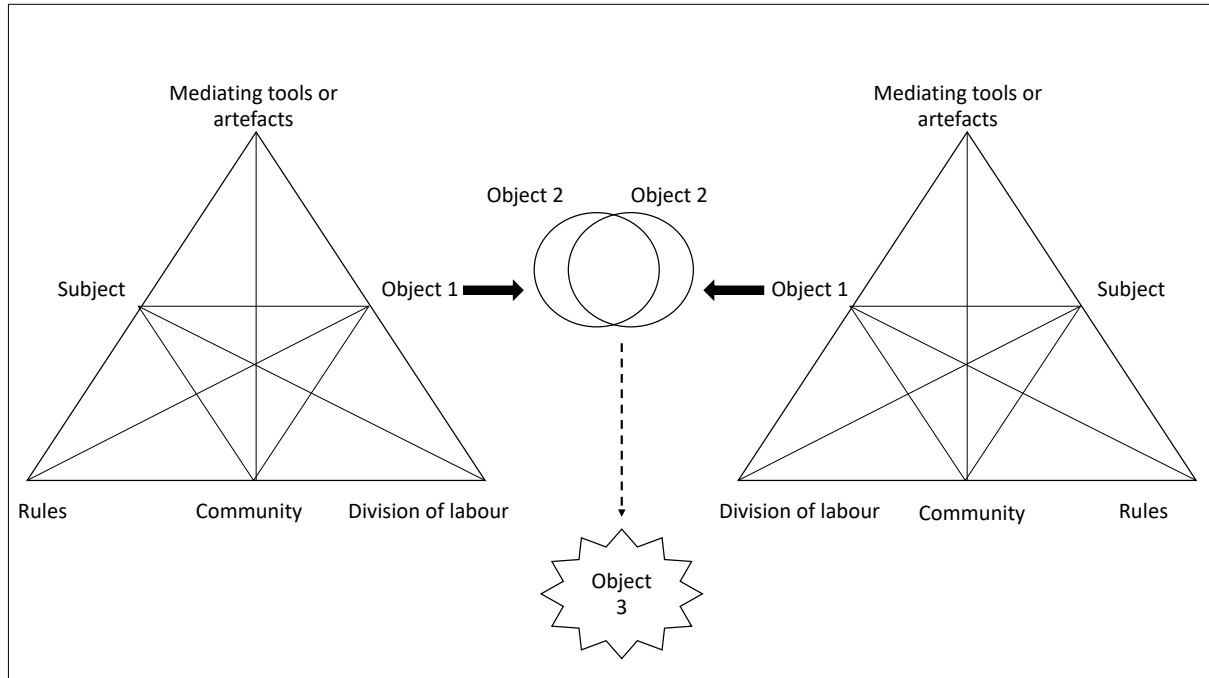
Second Generation Activity Theory



Note. Information taken from Engeström (1987, pg. 78).

Figure 40

Third Generation Activity Theory



Note. Information taken from Engeström (1999b, pg. 4).

Some of the ways that these models could offer support MAT functioning are listed below (Table 27), with reference to some examples of how these could work in practice.

Table 27*How can Activity Theory Promote Best Practice?*

What can Activity Theory offer?	When would this be helpful?
Second generation Activity Theory framework could be used to identify how individuals within the MAT contribute to the overall MAT functioning.	Planning new MAT Reviewing functioning of MAT (e.g. if responsibilities have gained traction before roles and aims have been clarified)
Second generation Activity Theory could be used to plan and understand the allocation of tasks, or “division of labour”, within the MAT and how this contributes to the “object” and “outcome”.	Planning new MAT Reviewing MAT functions Reviewing targets and performance
Second generation Activity Theory could be used with professionals to identify key performance indicators in their role.	Reviewing targets and performance.
Second generation Activity Theory could be utilised by the team manager or EP to explore the strategic functioning of the MAT.	Planning new MAT Reviewing MAT functions Reviewing targets and performance
Second generation Activity Theory could be used with CEC and families to inform service delivery (e.g. which professionals will be involved, how different professionals work, how MAT professionals are working towards co-constructed “outcomes”).	Initiation of cases. To review performance and “outcomes” following intervention
Third generation Activity Theory could be used to support the planning and monitoring of discipline integration in MATs (e.g. colleagues from social care, health, education etc.).	Planning new MAT Reviewing MAT functioning (e.g. roles, responsibilities) When incorporating new commodities (e.g. new professionals, change of roles, new procedures etc.)
Third generation Activity Theory could be used to support the joint working of multiple agencies (e.g. MAT and CAMHS).	When starting to work with new agencies When new professionals acquire roles To monitor and review effective working practice with other agencies

There are myriad ways in which AT can support the work of MATs directly with service users, with MAT professionals or with the planning of new MAT creation. It is important for MATs to carefully consider how frameworks for practice will be integrated to ensure a cohesive model of service delivery which can be clearly articulated with service users and other stakeholders.

6.2 Implications

6.2.1 Implications for Practice.

Findings from the current research project offer implications for professionals looking to establish CEC MATs (e.g. Principal EPs, LA Managers etc.), EPs working in CEC MATs and EPs seeking roles in CEC MATs. Implications are considered in relation to the above three contexts; however, some of the below suggestions could apply in all contexts. Implications are presented in bullet points to increase the accessibility for readers who are seeking to understand how this research project could inform their practice (Figure 41).

Figure 41

Implications for Practice

Implications for the Establishment of MATs Supporting CEC

- Management should consider how professional disciplines will manage the integration of differing and often competing frameworks and models of practice.
- The earlier agreement of roles, boundaries and functions will alleviate later issues for EPs. Findings from the current study offer a starting point for the identification of what the contribution of the EP could look like. The communication of roles should also be prioritised as ambiguity can leave Social Workers feeling unsure about the potential of the EP's role.
- Opportunities for strategic supervision are highly valued by EPs, particularly for those with a managerial role within the MAT.
- Similarly, access to EPs in a similar position for peer supervision is also considered beneficial particularly as professionals are often the only representative from their discipline within the MAT.
- Co-located, "live" teams are preferred, as this offers a better environment for developing effective working relationships, accessibility to others and opportunities for informal discussions. Previous findings (Home Office, 2014) indicate that whilst virtual models were also considered effective, this view is not widely shared and co-located teams were regarded as necessary for safeguarding. Nevertheless, in the context of rural areas, such as Wales, virtual practices can complement co-location of teams (Home Office, 2014).
- Activity Theory can be utilised as an appropriate and effective framework for the planning and delivery of MAT services, embedded within a wider service delivery framework that enables the complementary integration of multiple models of working from different disciplines.

Implications for the EP Working in MATs Supporting CEC

- Recognise that roles and responsibilities within the team are formed as both a top-down and bottom-up process and support this.
- Make psychology more visible with the use of models, such as Activity Theory, that enable explicit application of psychology using imagery.
- Support the bridging of systems through sharing expertise, knowledge and signposting to appropriate professionals and services.
- Consider how else social care staff could be supported with EP input, such as Support Workers, Family Intervention Workers, Supervised Contact Workers and Therapists.
- Consider the potential that the incoming ALNET Bill (Welsh Government, 2018b) would allow for supporting care leavers and CEC over the age of 16 years and supporting the transition of CEC from Children's Services to Adult Services.

Implications for the EPs Seeking Roles in MATs Supporting CEC

- Consider the skillset required to conduct the role effectively, with reference to findings from the current study regarding the contribution of EPs to MATs.
- Consider the personal qualities that would support the role such as flexibility, willingness to adapt, the ability to manage change and proactivity in problem solving.

6.2.2 Implications for Research.

Suggestions for future research to build on and develop the current findings are reported (Figure 42).

Figure 42

Implications for Research

Future research could employ a case study design to explore *the “multi-voicedness”* (Engeström, 2001, pg. 136) of activity systems through exploring the views of all professionals within a MAT, as well as those with strategic and managerial decision-making responsibilities within the LA.

Further exploration of the managerial decisions and Social Work pressures lead to the formation of MATs supporting CEC and the involvement of psychologists may offer better understanding of how MAT professionals can meet the aims of the service. This could be supported through the adoption of a critical theory lens which would account for the power structures present in Local Authority working.

Third generation Activity Theory could offer a useful framework to explore activity in MAT EP and school EP roles and the constructs of what each can offer to support CEC.

Discourse analysis could enable the exploration of professionals' attitudes towards using Activity Theory as a framework to plan and deliver MAT working through examining how meaning is shaped through language.

Further exploration of the knowledge and understanding that SWs seek to gain of the EP role and underpinning psychological/theoretical influences and whether this enables more effective MAT working.

6.3 Strengths and Limitations

Key strengths and limitations of this research are presented below (see Figure 43 and Figure 44).

Figure 43

Key Strengths of the Current Research Project

Strength	Explanation
Novel piece of research	This research project gave a voice to EPs and Social Workers working in MATs supporting CEC in Wales using an Activity Theory framework and is therefore the only current piece of research offering this perspective.
Use of semi-structured interviews	The semi-structured interview design enabled the researcher to pursue lines of enquiry that rose from the loose structure of the dialogue. In this way, the researcher could ask for elaboration on topics of interest, which it was felt gave greater strength to the choice to analyse using an inductive framework. Therefore, views and experiences that the participant may have felt were irrelevant or tentatively linked to the subject matter could be brought into the discussion. This is a key strength as it enriched the data gathered.
Offers new method of structuring and reviewing MAT work supporting CEC	Suggested applications of Activity Theory to the planning, monitoring and review of MAT working for both professionals and service users offers a creative and flexible structure for services to apply psychology in a visible and overt manner.

Figure 44*Key Limitations of the Current Research Project*

Limitation	Explanation
Sample	The project had a small sample size ($N = 10$) consisting of EP and Social Worker pairs from MATs supporting CEC in Wales and therefore has limited generalisability to the wider population.
Participants	The inclusion and exclusion criteria meant that several psychologists working in interesting ways to support CEC were not interviewed, as well as the role of psychologists with strategic responsibilities within the LA (e.g. Principal EPs). Additionally, the voice of CEC, families, educational and residential settings are absent. These perspectives could have provided valuable insight into how both the role of EPs and MATs are constructed by stakeholders, and whether they are considered to meet the “outcomes” of the MAT.
Research design	The semi-structured interview design did not allow for deeper exploration of specific issues in each of the MATs, for which a case study design would have allowed, such as whether EP and MAT input impacts placement breakdowns or reduces the number of children and young people entering or leaving the care system.
Scope of research	Due to the scope of the research and limitations due to the word count of the thesis, it was not possible to explore all the generated themes, constructed through the analysis. For example, research was not considered a core function of the role of the EP working in MATs supporting CEC, which may be due to research in this area being seen to be the role of a different professional (e.g. Trainee EP, Assistant EP, EP Research Assistant or undergraduate placement student). Unfortunately, there was not scope to explore this further.

7 Conclusion

This research explored the role of the EP, from the perspective of EPs and SWs working in MATs supporting CEC in Wales, through the lens of AT. Four research questions were chosen to explore perspectives of the role of Educational Psychologists, emergent tensions and contradictions in perspectives as well as what the findings suggest about best practice for EPs. TA of EP interviews highlighted their core and bespoke contributions to multi-agency working, the unique EP input, as well as their skills in working at a variety of levels through direct working with CEC, families, other stakeholders, and the MAT. Analysis of SW interviews highlighted the unique contributions of the EP as well as their essential role in supporting the collaboration of the MAT. It is hoped that findings from this research project will support the work of EPs currently in MATs supporting CEC, as well as for LAs seeking to develop this way of working.

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The Role of the Educational Psychologist in a Multi-Agency Team Supporting Children Who Have Experienced Care: An Activity Theory Framework

Part 3: Critical Appraisal

Word Count: 6020 words

1 Introduction

This paper is a critical appraisal of the research content and process. It provides the researcher with an opportunity to demonstrate the reflective and reflexive qualities necessary for research and as a Practitioner Psychologist (e.g. BPS, 2017a; HCPC, 2015). It has been claimed that due to the researcher's integral role in the shaping of research, objectivity is not present and therefore, the researcher themselves can be viewed as an instrument (Dodgson, 2019). Ratner (2002) argued against the idea that objectivity trumps subjectivity and suggested that the two are interrelated. The researcher's biases and subjective processes are crucial in understanding and interpreting the research. Moreover, researcher subjectivity can be less of a threat and more of a resource to the research (Braun & Clarke, 2019). This fits with the researcher's critical realist stance which understands the world to be constructed of both objective and subjective reality. Therefore, this paper is written in the first person, to reflect the researcher's active participation (Pellegrini, 2009).

The critical appraisal comprises three elements:

- The first section describes the rationale for the thesis. It considers the process of how an idea was developed into a research topic. The review of current literature is discussed and a gap in the research is identified. Finally, I consider the development of the research questions.
- In the second section, I provide a critical account of the research practitioner through discussing the process from methodological decisions to data collection.
- In the third section, I discuss what the current study offers as a

contribution to the knowledge base. I consider methods of dissemination, and what potential future research could offer to this area.

2 Rationale for Thesis

2.1 Inception of Research Topic

My interest in this area came from a variety of my own experiences. Firstly, a role in Family Intervention services within Social Care developed my interest in how professionals engaged with families, children and young people who were living in difficult and complex circumstances. I came to recognise that the issue of appropriate, stable and supportive placements for children and young people were critical in changing their life trajectories.

Secondly, I was intrigued by how locum Clinical Psychologists were brought in to assess and intervene with complex family situations, despite there being a functioning Educational Psychology Service (EPS) and Senior Educational Psychologist (EP) for Looked After Children within the Local Authority (LA). Speaking with Social Care colleagues, I became aware of the ambiguity around the EP role and the potential it could offer to both families and staff.

My first-year Trainee EP placement was within the Education department in the same LA that I had previously worked. I took this opportunity to ask obvious and awkward questions, as I was curious about how I might view the potential and

current role for EPs working with children who are care experienced, being on the other side of the fence metaphorically. I became increasingly aware of how the same children, young people and families were receiving support from the EPS, particularly through the specialist role for Looked After Children. I wondered about the unique contribution of the EP and whether there was one at all.

I recognised that, as an EP, there could be the opportunity for me to work in collaboration with Social Workers (SWs), to support children who are care experienced (CEC) and therefore enable me to combine my interests. I reflected upon these experiences and wondered about the relationship between EPs and SWs who worked together. As an area that I am interested in potentially following in the future, I wanted to know more about how practitioners were working in this way currently and what contributions that both they and others felt they were able to offer. This led me to consider how the available literature could provide more information about the landscape of this area.

2.2 Academic and Professional Rationale

An initial scoping search of the literature revealed that there had been developments for the role of the EP working in this way, particularly the ongoing relocation of psychologists and movement towards working directly within Social Care (Fallon et al., 2010). In response to changes in legislative and socio-political influences, EPs had become more involved in multi-agency working with colleagues from health and care backgrounds.

The statutory regulation of Practitioner Psychologists, established in 2009 (BPS, 2021), requires registration with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) regulatory board to confer chartered Psychologist status in the UK and to use the protected “Psychologist” titles. Current HCPC Standards of Practice detail that Practitioner Psychologists must (Figure 45):

Figure 45

HCPC Requirements for Practitioner Psychologists Regarding Multi-Agency Working

HCPC Requirements for Practitioner Psychologists Regarding Multi-Agency Working

- *“be able to contribute effectively to work undertaken as part of a multidisciplinary team” (HCPC, 2015, pp. 11).*
- *“understand the need to build and sustain professional relationships as both an independent practitioner and collaboratively as a member of a team” (2015, pp.11).*

Therefore, multi-agency working is considered a fundamental element of the EP role.

Exploration of the literature indicated that there was no current research exploring the role of the EP working in multi-agency teams (MATs) with SWs supporting CEC that is relevant to the legislative and socio-political context of Wales, a devolved

nation. Consequently, a gap in the literature had been identified, to which the current research aims to contribute.

2.3 Constructing the Literature Review

Due to the variety in working practices of EPs across the UK, I decided to explore the literature base in two ways, as justified in Part 1; a narrative review of the literature considering how EPs came to be working in this way and a systematic review of the literature detailing how EPs are currently working.

2.3.1 Narrative Literature Review.

Narrative literature reviews are reported to offer a fitting opportunity to explore historical developments relevant to a particular topic (Green et al., 2006). The current review aimed to provide a brief overview of the breadth of work in this area, in terms of the socio-political influences present in the changing and re-positioning of the EP role, as well as providing some more information about why strategic work for CEC is important.

I found conducting the narrative literature review an enjoyable process which made the write up a pleasurable task, as it enabled me to better understand what I had been researching. However, my interest made it difficult to try and rein in my curiosity which often resulted in falling down “rabbit holes” as I was eager to know more about “how” and “why” things came to be. What I found to be incredibly helpful

when these situations occurred was to return to my original draft literature review structure and reflect upon the relevance of some of the tangents that I found myself following. On reflection, I believe that the review met its aims as I felt that it gave me a sound understanding of the history and development of the involvement of EPs in MATs involving CEC, and therefore I hope it will also work in this way for readers.

2.3.2 Systematic Literature Review.

I opted to complete a systematic literature review to consider the landscape of current EP practice. To ascertain the landscape, I felt that keeping the search broad was necessary to explore the practice of EPs, or their equivalents, across the world. Despite the broad inclusion criteria for geographical location, only one study (Stone & Charles, 2018) came from a country outside of the UK. The remaining studies were from England and one from Scotland (Cunningham & Lauchlan, 2010), therefore the studies identified were not necessarily relevant to Wales due to the variation in underpinning legislative influences.

As I had not previously conducted a systematic literature review, I was quite daunted at the prospect of trying to learn a new skill whilst also having to use it. I spent a lot of time researching common ways of conducting and structuring systematic literature reviews. I was unsure whether taking the traditional positivist-leaning process would fit with my study and with my personal axiology, which is influenced by my own values in working in a collective, relational, person-centred, and strengths-based way. I hoped that adopting a thematic approach to my systematic literature review,

building on that of Woods et al. (2011a), would enable me to reflect more deeply upon what the current literature base offers to this field. The aims of the systematic literature review were met as I was able to capture the landscape of current practice, which included a wide variety of settings within which MATs operated.

With hindsight, I believe that using the combination of the narrative and systematic literature review frameworks enabled me to gauge an appropriate measure of the breadth and depth of the subject matter, within the scope of the current study.

2.4 Development of Research Questions

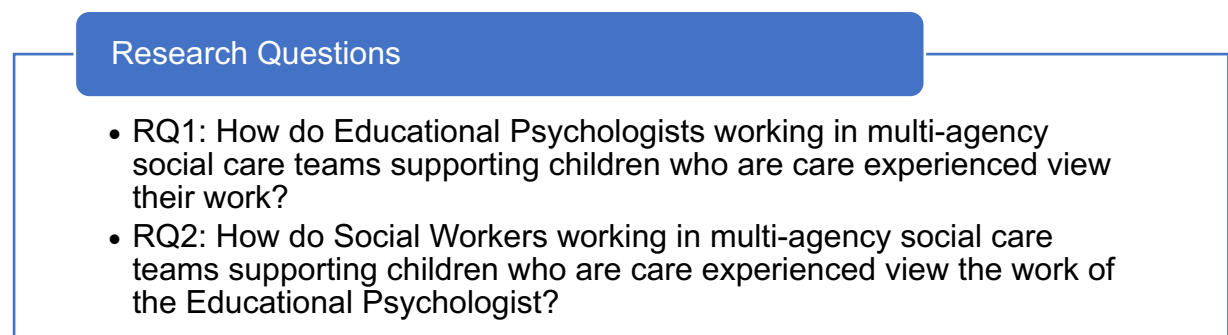
The research questions developed through my curiosity into the area (Janesick, 2000) and were refined through the process of conducting and writing the thesis. Creswell (2007) identified how qualitative research questions evolve from tentative ideas, developing through exploration of the subject matter. Agee (2009) asserted that theory and research questions are inextricably linked, and therefore the research questions I started with initially developed alongside my own understanding of the subject matter, such as when I reviewed the current body of research and as my knowledge of the area developed through interviewing the participants.

Questions were refined using a reflexive and iterative process which included reviewing whether the questions were answerable (Agee, 2009) based on a variety of factors such as the chosen methodology, data collected, scope, capacity, and generalisability of findings. Three research questions were identified initially (Figure

46). The first two questions stemmed from both the literature and my original interest in the topic.

Figure 46

Initial Research Questions



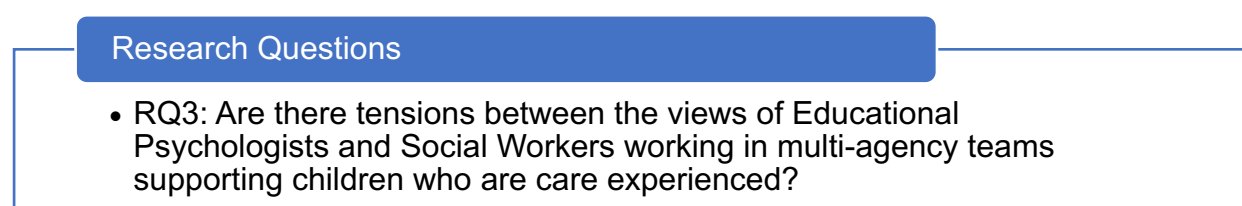
Research Questions

- RQ1: How do Educational Psychologists working in multi-agency social care teams supporting children who are care experienced view their work?
- RQ2: How do Social Workers working in multi-agency social care teams supporting children who are care experienced view the work of the Educational Psychologist?

The third research question was chosen as it seemed appropriate to draw upon the nature of contradiction as an element that is identified through the lens of Activity Theory (AT) (Figure 47).

Figure 47

Additional Research Question (Research Question 3)



Research Questions

- RQ3: Are there tensions between the views of Educational Psychologists and Social Workers working in multi-agency teams supporting children who are care experienced?

During the write up of the research project, a fourth and final research question was identified. I was wondering about what my thesis could offer to the current literature base and practicing EPs. I decided that a fourth research question would strengthen the “so what?” implications of my research project (Figure 48).

Figure 48

Additional Research Question (Research Question 4)

Research Questions

- RQ4: What do the findings offer when considering best practice for Educational Psychologists to achieve the most positive outcomes?

The research questions were presented at the end of Part 1, the beginning of Part 2 and in the discussion section in accordance with advice regarding clarity and coherence in lengthy texts (Agee, 2009).

3 Critical Account of the Development of the Research Practitioner

3.1 *Development of Methodology*

3.1.1 Activity Theory.

The adoption of an AT lens to the research was taken for several reasons. Primarily,

this was due to how AT enabled the exploration of working practice of multi-agency professionals that accounts for the context within which they are working and the evolution of each team. As discussed in the narrative literature review in Part 1, AT has frequently been used to explore multi-agency working, and more widely within Educational Psychology, as it enables the researcher to explore the cultural, historical, social and political underpinnings. Secondly, I recognise that my own values as a developing Psychologist come from social psychology, systemic thinking and the interconnection between personal construct theory and social constructionism. All of these underpin the adopted lens.

I remember participating in a lively discussion about the application of AT to Educational Psychology practice during the first year of the DEdPsy. The discussion considered how and when this could be used systemically as a practitioner. I was intrigued by making psychology more visible to stakeholders and how AT could offer that. Throughout all my placements I have sought opportunities to engage in systemic work, where I could potentially use AT to make psychology more visible; however, an appropriate opportunity did not present itself. This led me to wonder whether I could utilise this framework as part of my research. I find myself frequently drawn to Vygotskian thinking in my practice and find taking a socio-cultural perspective particularly helpful in exploring and supporting needs. Ultimately, I decided upon AT as a lens as it fits with my own values and stance as a practitioner regarding the importance of mediation in learning and collaboration, as well as offering a creative and tangible way to apply psychology to real life.

In hindsight, I found the use of the framework particularly helpful in guiding and facilitating discussions, particularly in the complex area of MAT working. Whilst this lens offered a helpful framework to guide my exploration of MATs, I felt constrained somewhat by the interview method of data collection and wonder whether AT would be better utilised “live” such as through Developmental Work Research, which uses AT as a model for exploration and reflection of practice using an ethnographic approach (Leadbetter, 2017).

As a research tool, AT does not clearly accept a specific methodological and procedural framework (Murphy & Rodriguez-Manzanares, 2008) and therefore, it was important to me that I carefully considered my philosophical position.

3.1.2 Ontology and Epistemology.

The current research study was underpinned by critical realist ontology and social constructionist epistemology, due to my belief that knowledge is made up of objective and subjective lenses which evolve through social interactions.

Taking a critical realist stance reflected my understanding of the notion that reality can be viewed as both objective and subjective phenomena, and that interpretation is subjective to the beholder. In this way, I view professionals’ understanding of their role as subjective both in despite of and influenced by their own experiences.

Therefore, critical realism felt like a natural and logical position for this research.

Conversely, adopting a social constructionist epistemology took greater consideration, due to the inter-related nature of personal and social constructs, and therefore a constructivist epistemology could account for this. Constructivism recognises and incorporates subjectivity as a fundamental element of the research process. Although this position is arguably paradoxical, constructivism could have been adopted on the understanding that personal constructs will have been acquired, developed, and sustained through social processes (Burr, 2015). Therefore, a constructivist stance could be used as a lens through which to view knowledge that has been acquired through participants' experience of being in a MAT. Despite this, it was felt that due to the social nature of the research and the AT framework adopted, social constructionism would enable the mutual influence of personal and social constructs upon my understanding of how knowledge is acquired, shared, and used. Schwandt (1994) explained how constructionist thinking is not objectively discoverable but subjectively constructed by people. My epistemological stance recognises not only how participants will have developed their knowledge through a combination of personal and social constructs but also through the course of their interview with me.

Nevertheless, critical theories pose an alternative perspective when considering MATs due to the innate power structures present in LAs. This could offer a different perspective of the AT lens adopted, which accounts for underpinning social, cultural, historical and political influences. LAs differ in structure, power, team dynamics and interaction between and across teams, disadvantage, and systems. Therefore, the

discourse between researcher and interviewee could be examined in terms of ideological and power differentials. However, I felt that this digressed from the original aims of the research. Nevertheless, this could be an interesting position for future research.

3.2 Development of Research Design

The ontological and epistemological stances chosen, along with the research questions, led me to choose a qualitative methodology for my research, in the form of qualitative semi-structured interviews.

3.2.1 Interviews.

As I was interested in exploring the constructs around the role of the EP, individual interviews felt the most appropriate way to gather rich and detailed information. The semi-structured interview format was chosen as it allowed me to explore the topic with pre-defined interview questions whilst being sufficiently flexible to enable me to delve deeper into areas of interest during the dialogue. It also provided participants the space to share stories, reflections and experiences that were meaningful to them.

As a Trainee Educational Psychologist, I am well-versed in utilising my interpersonal skills to promote better communication in my practice. I am also skilled in employing active listening skills to ensure that people feel heard, such as during consultation.

Active listening can be categorised into three components: non-verbal involvement, verbal paraphrasing and asking questions to encourage the speaker to elaborate on their responses (Weger Jr. et al., 2014). The semi-structured approach to the interviews enabled me to ask questions necessary to further explore points raised by interviewees. This felt natural to me, however, in terms of reflexivity I was increasingly aware of how my own interests, biases and judgements were shaping the deeper exploration of topics within the dialogue thus making me an active participant in my own research.

Moreover, I was conscious of my influence upon the participants when paraphrasing their responses. I found this to be quite uncomfortable as I was aware of introducing new terminology and phrases into the dialogue, which was subsequently repeated by participants during the discussion. I found difficulty in acknowledging and accepting this influence and the potentially leading nature of my input as an active researcher, as it was important to me that participant responses were authentic and as bias-free as possible. Issues with non-verbal communication are discussed below in relation to virtual interviews.

3.2.1.1 Virtual interviews.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent impact on working practices, I was unable to conduct my interviews in person as I had hoped. Instead, I offered participants the opportunity to interview via video-conferencing software as an

alternative. In line with current British Psychological Society (2020) guidance, this process meant that I was required to return to the University Ethics Committee to obtain ethical approval for offering participants this alternative method of data collection. This method of data collection was chosen as it allowed for the highest level of control and scientific integrity when compared to other methods of internet-mediated research (BPS, 2017b).

Despite the high regard of face-to-face interview, the impact of the pandemic required creativity when considering data collection. Research suggests that virtual interviews are a viable choice rather than just a backup option (e.g. Deakin & Wakefield, 2013; Nehls et al., 2015). I was unsure about how well this modality would fit with gathering rich data for the TA. I was reassured by the views of Dr Victoria Clarke who indicated that no modality of data collection is superior and that virtual interviews are not necessarily less rich, stating that those who believe so ought to *“get in the bin, you methodological dinosaurs!”* (2020).

On a practical level, virtual interviews offered greater flexibility in terms of schedule and location. This was of course true for me, as well as alleviating the time and financial pressures that travel and accommodation can place on researchers conducting face-to-face interviews. As the recording equipment was inbuilt into the computer programme, it was potentially less intimidating than the physical presence of video or audio recording equipment which could have impeded their comfort in participating (Brown, 2018). This method is potentially less intrusive (Brown, 2018) than in-person interviews as the participant can choose their location and digitally

alter their background for their comfort and privacy.

Despite this, the method of data collection is subject to scrutiny as conducting the interviews via video conferencing software could have compromised the researcher's ability to build rapport. However, although non-verbal communication may have been impeded by the virtual nature of the interview, it is hoped that the use of video cameras may have buffered this. I was increasingly aware of the difficulty of showing my active listening skills through non-verbal cues such as non-verbal utterances and nodding and therefore feel I over-compensated somewhat to try and mitigate the impact of this. When listening back to the interviews, the dialogues appeared to flow naturally and therefore my repeated "yep" and "mmms" were perhaps exaggerated from my perspective due to the frustration of having to repeatedly type these utterances during transcription.

Due to the nature of working at home, I was aware that there may not have been the same physical or non-verbal cues signalling that the participant desired to finish the interview. Having personally experienced the effects of "Zoom fatigue", I ensured that I checked in with participants when interviews were due to run over their allotted time slot so that they could consent to continue the conversation.

Some difficulties were experienced in conducting virtual interviews such as the reliance upon a steady internet connection and issues with clarity of speech. I had not accounted for the presence and involvement of family members during the

interviews. These unscheduled times of disruption added a comedic element to the interview for both myself and the interviewees, which I felt strengthened our rapport. Moreover, this evoked feelings of empathy in me towards the difficult situation professionals were facing trying to conduct their role as a SW or EP amid family through-traffic and the difficult juggle of home and work life during the pandemic. Participants frequently talked about how their practice had changed and therefore their current role was not typical “normal life” and this was often reflected upon as being dissatisfactory and frustrating.

Braun and Clarke (2013) argue the following advantages and disadvantages of virtual interviews (Table 28):

Table 28

Advantages and Disadvantages of Virtual Interviews (Braun and Clarke, 2013)

Virtual Interviews	
<u>Advantages</u> (Braun and Clarke, 2013, pg. 98–99).	<u>Disadvantages</u> (Braun and Clarke, 2013, pg. 100–101).
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>“Convenient and empowering for participants”</i>• <i>“Accessible and (more) anonymous”</i>• <i>“Potentially ideal for sensitive topics”</i>• <i>“Relatively resource-lite”</i>• <i>“Potentially allow more engagement with data during data collection”</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>“Less accessible to some groups”</i>• <i>“Less convenient for participants”</i>• <i>“The researcher has less control over the interview”</i>• <i>“Some forms of information (and data) are lost”</i>• <i>“The researcher’s ability to respond to participants is limited”</i>• <i>“Risk to security of data”</i>

It is important to note that the above appraisal of the virtual interview technique includes considerations for email and spoken virtual interviews and therefore do not all necessarily apply to the current study.

In my experience, I found participants to welcome the virtual platform particularly as this was becoming a common way of working. Additionally, I think that conducting

interviews virtually made the interviews more accessible and flexible for participants who were able to liaise with me regarding timings most suitable for them. Yet, the virtual platform impacted my ability build rapport and accurately identify non-verbal communication, as discussed previously.

As a Trainee EP, I wondered about the impact of my presence and influence upon the interviews. I considered how this might shape the information shared by participants as well as how my interpretation of their views was likely to influence the data analysis and subsequent findings. Should the interviews have been conducted by a Trainee SW or even a different Trainee EP, the information gathered and analysed would likely be subject to different interpretations as is the nature of qualitative research. Nevertheless, I felt that this enabled me to use my subjectivity as a researcher as a tool to support my research (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

3.3. Inclusion and Exclusion of Participants

The typical “main grade” school-based EP is likely to encounter CEC and SWs through the course of their role. Therefore, it was important that I considered the inclusion and exclusion criteria for EPs working in a MAT as this differs from the typical role that EPs take.

Initially I decided upon the following criteria (Figure 49):

Figure 49

Participant Inclusion Criteria

Participant Inclusion Criteria

- Must be a qualified Social Worker or Educational Psychologist. The study will allow professionals who hold the title of “Practitioner Psychologist” to take part as long as they are qualified Educational Psychologists by background.
- Must be actively working in a multi-agency social care team with Social Workers and Practitioner Psychologists/ Educational Psychologists.
- Must have been in current post for at least six months.

A requirement that participants had been in their role for at least six months was put in place to ensure that potential interviewees were relatively established in their role and therefore had adequate depth of experience to answer the research questions.

I had not anticipated the difficulties I would face due to the variety in physical and logistical location of EPs working in this way, and I received several queries about this. Due to this ambiguity in my inclusion criteria, I added an additional criterion, to attempt to provide further clarification to potential interviewees (Figure 50).

Figure 50

Revised Participant Inclusion Criteria

Revised Participant Inclusion Criteria

- Educational Psychologists can be based in either the Education or Children's Services department within a Local Authority but must engage in work with a multi-agency team (which includes at least one Social Worker), where the focus of the team is on social care e.g. LAC/CLA, fostering, adoption etc.

I felt disappointed when declining interest from EPs who did not fulfil the criteria yet were engaging in interesting and thought-provoking work. However, upon review of my inclusion criteria, I felt secure that my decisions ensured that the scope of the project remained feasible.

Some examples of interested parties who did not meet the inclusion criteria are listed below (Figure 51):

Figure 51

Examples of Excluded Participants

Examples of Excluded Participants

- Educational Psychologists in Wales who encounter Social Workers and children who are care experienced as part of a main-grade role.
- Educational Psychologists in Wales working in a specialist role for Looked After Children but do not have contact with Social Workers.
- Educational Psychologists in England working with Virtual School multi-agency team.
- Assistant Educational Psychologists working in England as part of a multi-agency Virtual School teams.

As discussed in Part 2, I could have advertised for alternative participants such as Principal EPs, MAT managers, or higher-level LA managers responsible for the strategic oversight of the team. These professionals may have been able to provide more detail around the conception and purported aims of the MAT. This could have offered an alternative and potentially conflicting viewpoint, particularly when compared with MAT members who lack clarity over the roles and functions of teams and professionals.

Nevertheless, having completed this project I am pleased that I stuck with the inclusion criteria for the current study as the responses captured a suitably rich, diverse and complex understanding of current practice.

3.4 Recruitment

I was unsure about how recruitment for my study would go. This was due to the variety in location of EPs working in this way making the gatekeeper role indistinct. Therefore, I decided to recruit in a series of recruitment waves, by contacting different professionals whom I hoped could either provide consent or direct me to the appropriate contact. Three waves of recruitment harvested enough participants to satisfy the requirements of this project, as detailed below (Table 29).

Table 29

Waves of Participant Recruitment

Wave	Contact	Participants Recruited
1	Director/ Manager of Children's Services in every LA in Wales	2 pairs
2	Principal Educational Psychologists in every LA in Wales	2 pairs
3	Professional contact using snowball sampling	1 pair

3.5 Ethical Issues

The ethical issues related to the current study were relatively low risk to participants, as the topic and interview questions did not intend to ask about sensitive issues. No ethical issues were raised by participants before, during or after the interviews in relation to the project or subject matter and therefore I feel that this part of the project had been well-planned and conducted. Although participants did not raise it as an issue, I reflected upon the use of virtual interviews often conducted in spaces that were not private (e.g. kitchen, dining room etc. where other family members could access) and the potential impact this could have on confidentiality. Therefore, there is limited control over the possibility of others overhearing the conversation that is taking place. As participants could choose their physical location for the interview it was felt that this would address this issue as the onus was on participants to select a location that they felt was most appropriate. Nevertheless, the competing demands of childcare and lack of options for location due to lockdown restrictions may have impacted the information that participants were willing and able to share.

3.6 Data Analysis

TA was chosen as the most appropriate method of data analysis as I was looking for themes in the data, to understand how the EP role was constructed from the two perspectives of EP and SW. I used the Braun and Clarke (2006; 2020) six-step process, which is now known as Reflexive TA (Braun & Clarke, 2019) due to the recognition of the role that the researcher plays in the data analysis.

Alternatively, I considered whether discourse analysis could offer a better way in which to analyse the data. This approach could have enabled me to unpick tensions and contradictions in the discourse used by participants. Moreover, this fits with the social constructionist epistemological stance that understands how language creates meaning (Burr, 2015). However, I decided against this as it did not account for themes arising from the data in relation to the content of dialogue and therefore it did not offer a better way of answering my research questions.

Data was analysed using a combination of manual and computer-aided methods. The current study used Nvivo (Version 12), a Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS), to support the coding stage of the TA. The decision to use Nvivo for only one element of the analysis was for several reasons including time efficiency, organisation and to ensure that I was still immersed in the data when generating themes. This was a difficult decision to make as I wanted to strike a careful balance between technology helping the process and becoming a hindrance. In an ideal research environment, I would have conducted the coding of the data manually as a more active process; however, due to the nature of the project being an assessed course requirement, I was thus working to a deadline and felt that this combination of manual and technological analysis enabled me to work in the most effective and immersive way within the scope of the project and my capacity as a researcher.

I felt tension in the responsibility to accurately represent the views of my participants during the analysis and subsequent discussion of findings. I was aware that the

qualitative methodology characterised my constructions and interpretations of the data, and therefore I found myself repeatedly revisiting my ontological and epistemological positions to reassure myself of the advantages of subjectivity and the impact of this on the trustworthiness of data. With hindsight, this has become a more comfortable position for me to take as I felt that revisiting the theoretical assumptions enabled me to develop my confidence as a researcher.

4 Contribution to Knowledge

4.1 Contribution to Existing Knowledge

The major literature review (Part 1) provided a rationale for the empirical study, suggesting a weakness in the understanding of EP practice supporting CEC through MAT working. It is hoped that this study will address this and so become a helpful point of reference for MATs who are looking to develop practice.

The study, discussed in Part 2, constructed two overarching themes for EPs: working at the individual and systemic levels in CEC MATs. It also constructed two overarching themes for SWs: the EP contribution and collaborative working in MATs. Many of the study's findings reflected previous research findings, such as the EP role encompassing Currie's (Scottish Executive, 2002) five core functions (e.g. German et al., 2000; Woods et al., 2011b; Cunningham & Lauchlan, 2010), as well as findings that EPs provided specialist "*Bespoke*" functions (e.g. Norwich et al., 2010). Where the present study differed was in exploring practice specific to the Welsh context and using an AT lens. EP participants reported a lack of understanding of the landscape of practice and therefore this work hopes to offer a

point of reference and specific implications for EPs practicing in this area.

Additionally, the present study offers justification of the EP role in CEC MATs, and for professionals looking to develop this way of working. Moreover, the research hopes to offer an understanding for professionals working in MATs wanting to further develop their work.

Despite taking an inductive approach to the TA and not using the AT lens to determine the themes, nodes of the activity systems still came through in the analysis. For example, the barriers and facilitators of MAT related to the “*Rules*” node was constructed in the EP analysis (“*Helps*”, “*Hinders*”, “*Goes Both Ways*”) and the materials used in the “*Tools*” node in the SW analysis (“*Drawing Upon the EP Toolkit*”). Although I was initially hesitant about the implications for this, with hindsight I believe that this reflects the value of subjectivity in the analysis as I did not deny patterns observed in the data.

Although the generalisability of the present study could be contested due to having a relatively small sample size, the parallels identified with previous research would argue that the findings are robust.

4.2 Contribution to Future Research

As previously discussed in Part 2, there is scope for further exploration of this area of research. Additional research to develop and extend the current study should be considered, such as a case study design. This type of design could focus on a MAT from one LA and could enable greater exploration of the “*multi-voicedness*” (Engeström, 2001, pg. 136) through wider examination of the constructs from

professionals at different levels within a LA. This would allow for a deeper level of understanding of the complex and inter-linking systems which impact upon the role of the MAT and the MAT EP, such as their relationship to the EPS, working relationships with the Social Care system and other MATs within the authority (e.g. Emotional Health Team). Future research into the practice of EPs in Wales specifically would support a better understanding of demand and need relevant to the geographical, social, political and legislative context, which differs from England.

4.3 Dissemination

As the current study has implications for EPs and SWs, dissemination should account for both professions. As a Trainee EP, it is important that I recognise my bias and assumptions when disseminating the findings of this study. More specifically, whilst I may be able to present the findings as an academic article or conference paper, accessibility is impacted by the respective target audiences. Dissemination to non-scientists is best presented in a way that evokes emotion, attention and is explicit about relevance to practice (Brownson et al., 2018).

I am passionate about research being valuable to practice and therefore hope that this research could be published in a scientific journal accessible to EPs and SWs, to promote this way of working and the opportunities it offers. I believe that there would be interest in this, as many of the gatekeepers and interested parties requested that my findings be shared with them. Perhaps more importantly, my participants frequently requested that the findings of my research be shared with them as they were really interested to hear about the ways in which other EPs were working. It seemed to me that EPs working in this way were often doing so without reference to

colleagues in similar positions and therefore there was a sense of ambiguity around what is happening across the country.

However, I think that this research could also be of interest to professionals outside of the Educational Psychology sphere, such as SWs and LA managers who engage with psychologists in this way or manage multi-disciplinary teams who do. SW participants were equally intrigued about what the findings suggested for their practice. I reflected upon a sense of disconnect that I felt participants experienced when considering the managerial decisions made about the conception, delivery and objectives of MATs supporting CEC, and the reality of practice “on the ground”. I hope that this research could offer a starting point for discussions about building upon the strengths of the team and how collaboration could be further developed. Research suggests that dissemination and the uptake of knowledge is well-facilitated by “linkage agents” who bridge the researcher and knowledge user and could therefore provide direct communication (Becheikh et al., 2010). LA based Looked After Children in Education (LACE) Coordinators are well-situated between the Education and Social Care systems and would be a convenient and knowledgeable link to identify how to best share knowledge with relevant Social Care professionals.

4.4 Relevance to Educational Psychology Practice

As stated in Part 2, the current research offers implications for EPs seeking MAT roles, those currently in MAT roles, and Principal EPs or LA management responsible for overseeing MATs or looking to develop this way of working.

When I become a qualified EP, I intend to use this knowledge in my practice in several ways. Firstly, through sharing the implications of the project when working with colleagues from Social Care to support CEC.

The study identified implications that are pertinent to EPs working with professionals from different backgrounds more generally (e.g. issues with ascertaining roles and responsibilities, working with colleagues from different professional discipline as well as integrating models of practice).

Through this project, I have developed my understanding of the role of SWs and EPs working together. This will be particularly helpful to me in my own practice when I become a newly qualified EP working in Wales, where CEC numbers are high and rising. Therefore, I am likely to encounter CEC and working with SWs in my practice and understanding the potential barriers and facilitators in collaborative work with SW colleagues will support my work in this area.

5 Closing Reflections

This critical appraisal aimed to address the choices I made as a research practitioner in the process of conducting my research project. It has offered me a useful opportunity to reflect critically upon the distance I have travelled as a researcher and practitioner.

This research has been both a blessing and a curse at times, and I am thankful that it has been there to give me purpose and something to stay curious about during these infamously unprecedented times.

I look forward to further disseminating this research when I become a qualified EP and continue to learn in my journey through psychology.

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Appendices

Appendix	Title
A	Systematic Literature Review Search Strategy
B	Systematic Literature Review: Excluded Articles with Reasons
C	Quantitative Weight of Evidence (WoE) A
D	Qualitative Weight of Evidence (WoE) A
E	Weight of Evidence (WoE) C
F	Gatekeeper Letter
G	Team Manager Letter
H	Participant Information Sheet
I	Participant Consent Form
J	Participant Debrief Letter
K	Transcription Notation System
L	Sample Transcripts
M	Thematic Analysis: Code Generation Audit Trail
N	Thematic Analysis: Theme Generation Audit Trail
O	Thematic Analysis: Thematic Map Development Audit Trail
P	Research Project Ethical Approval
Q	Ethical Considerations and Actions Taken
R	Establishing Trustworthiness in Thematic Analysis

Appendix A – Systematic Literature Review Search Strategy

Database	Search Terms	Articles found
Scopus	Multi disciplinary OR multidisciplinary OR multi agency OR multiagency OR inter professional OR interprofessional AND social services OR social care OR social work* OR “children’s services” AND psycholog* AND child* OR education OR school	567
Ovid/Psycinfo	Multi disciplinary OR multidisciplinary OR multi agency OR multiagency OR inter professional OR interprofessional AND social services OR social care OR social work* OR “children’s services” AND psycholog* AND child* OR education OR school	391
ASSIA	Multi disciplinary OR multidisciplinary OR multi agency OR multiagency OR inter professional OR interprofessional AND social services OR social care OR social work* OR “children’s services” AND psycholog* AND child* OR education OR school	149
BEI	Multi disciplinary OR multidisciplinary OR multi agency OR multiagency OR inter professional OR interprofessional AND social services OR social care OR social work* OR “children’s services” AND psycholog* AND child* OR education OR school	57
ERIC	Multi disciplinary OR multidisciplinary OR multi agency OR multiagency OR inter professional OR interprofessional AND social services OR social care OR social work* OR “children’s services” AND psycholog* AND child* OR education OR school	99
TOTAL		1,263

Appendix B – Systematic Literature Review: Excluded Articles with Reasons

Inclusion criteria:

- Explores current practice of Educational Psychologists (EPs) and Social Workers (SWs) in multi-agency teams, focussing on how they support children who are care experienced.
- Is an empirical study (uses a robust method of data collection i.e. is replicable and trustworthy research).
- Published after 2000.
- English language.

Exclusion criteria:

- Position papers that do not include empirical research.
- Non-peer reviewed.

Reference	Reason for Exclusion
Anderson, L., Vostanis, P. & Window, S. (2004). A multi-agency service for child behavioural problems. <i>Community Practitioner</i> , 77(5), 180–184.	Did not meet inclusion criteria: Explores current practice of Educational Psychologists and Social Workers in multi-agency teams, focussing on how they support children who are care experienced. Detail: Article looks at establishing new multi-agency service covering interface between primary care practitioners and specialist child mental health services - professionals include EPs, family support workers and primary mental health workers. Article does not discuss how EPs work with SWs.
Apter, B. (2014). Foucauldian Iterative Learning Conversations - an example of organisational change: developing conjoint-work between EPs and Social Workers. <i>Educational Psychology in Practice</i> , 30(4), 331–346. https://doi.org/10.1080/02667363.2014.939144	Did not meet inclusion criteria: Explores current practice of Educational Psychologists and Social Workers in multi-agency teams, focussing on how they support children who are care experienced. Detail: Article focuses on power differentials between MAT members, not the work that they do.
Avant, D. W. & Swerdlik, M. E. (2016). A Collaborative Endeavor:	Did not meet inclusion criteria: Explores current practice of Educational Psychologists

<p>The Roles and Functions of School Social Workers and School Psychologists in Implementing Multi-Tiered System of Supports/Response to Intervention. <i>School Social Work Journal</i>, 4, 56–72.</p>	<p>and Social Workers in multi-agency teams, focussing on how they support children who are care experienced.</p> <p>Detail: Discusses how school social workers and school psychologists in America work together to implement multi-tiered systems of support/ response to intervention but does not state the purpose of this is to support children in in care - no mention of children who are care experienced.</p>
<p>Baginsky, M., Driscoll, J., Manthorpe, J. & Purcell, C. (2019) Perspectives on safeguarding and child protection in English schools: the new educational landscape explored. <i>Educational Research</i>, 61(4), 469–481. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131881.2019.1677167</p>	<p>Did not meet inclusion criteria: Explores current practice of Educational Psychologists and Social Workers in multi-agency teams, focussing on how they support children who are care experienced.</p> <p>Detail: Focuses on Education and Social Care departments, not professionals within. No mention of Psychologists (of any type) and does not identify who the participants are.</p>
<p>Barclay, G., & Kerr, C. (2006). Collaborative working across children’s services. <i>Educational and Child Psychology</i>, 23(4), 35–46.</p>	<p>Did not meet inclusion criteria: Explores current practice of Educational Psychologists and Social Workers in multi-agency teams, focussing on how they support children who are care experienced.</p> <p>Detail: Article focuses on collaborative working practices between mental health and psychological services in Edinburgh, Scotland. Does not explore how EPs and SWs work together to support children who are care experienced.</p>
<p>Burrow, A. & Foster, I. (2010). Special educational needs staff's perceptions of clinical psychologists: What are the implications for merged children's services? <i>Clinical Psychology Forum</i>, 206, 7–12.</p>	<p>Did not meet inclusion criteria: Explores current practice of Educational Psychologists and Social Workers in multi-agency teams, focussing on how they support children who are care experienced.</p> <p>Detail: Article focuses on perceptions of Clinical Psychologists working in specialist education settings through questionnaires sent to teachers and teaching assistant. Does not explore EP or SW role to support children who are care experienced.</p>
<p>Carter, B., Cummings, J., & Cooper, L. (2007). An exploration of best practice in multi-agency working and</p>	<p>Did not meet inclusion criteria: Explores current practice of Educational Psychologists and Social Workers in multi-agency teams,</p>

<p>the experiences of families of children with complex health needs. What works well and what needs to be done to improve practice in the future? <i>Journal of Clinical Nursing</i>, 16(3), 527–539. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2702.2006.01554.x</p>	<p>focussing on how they support children who are care experienced.</p> <p>Detail: Article focuses on parents' views of best practice in multi-agency working. Participants included 3 SWs and 2 Psychologists (discipline unspecified). Article does not focus on their work to support children who are care experienced.</p>
<p>Cooper, A. (2009). Interprofessional Working: Choice or Destiny? <i>Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry</i>, 14(4), 531-536. https://doi.org.10.1177/1359104509339326</p>	<p>Met exclusion criteria: position paper.</p> <p>Detail: Article is a personal discussion paper reflecting on the author's thoughts and feelings based on personal and professional experiences.</p>
<p>Cottrell, D., Lucey, D., Porter, I. & Walker, D. (2000). Joint working between child and adolescent mental health services and the department of social services: the Leeds model. <i>Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry</i>, 5(4), 481–489. https://doi.org/10.1177/135910450005004003</p>	<p>Did not meet inclusion criteria: Explores current practice of Educational Psychologists and Social Workers in multi-agency teams, focussing on how they support children who are care experienced.</p> <p>Detail: Article focuses on inter-agency working between health (Clinical Psychologists) and social care professionals. Looks at development of multi-agency panel to discuss referral for CAMHS therapeutic support. No mention of EPs.</p>
<p>Coulling, N. (2000). Definitions of successful education for the 'looked after' child: A multi-agency perspective. <i>Support for Learning</i>, 1, 30–35. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9604.00139</p>	<p>Did not meet inclusion criteria: Explores current practice of Educational Psychologists and Social Workers in multi-agency teams, focussing on how they support children who are care experienced.</p> <p>Detail: Article discusses interviews of twenty-five individuals, comprising five discrete groups/disciplines: teachers, SWs, home-finding officers, foster carers and children in foster care. Researchers asked participants about their constructs of educational success for fostered children using personal construct psychology. Article does not mention of Psychologists (any discipline) or multi-agency working between EPs and SWs.</p>
<p>Crockatt, G. (2009). The child psychotherapist in the multi-disciplinary team. In M. Lanyado & A. Horne (Eds.), <i>The child psychotherapist in the multi-disciplinary team</i> (pp. 101–113). Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.</p>	<p>Did not meet inclusion criteria: Explores current practice of Educational Psychologists and Social Workers in multi-agency teams, focussing on how they support children who are care experienced.</p>

	Detail: Chapter looks at the role of Psychotherapist - not Psychologist (of any discipline).
Dearden, J. & Miller, A. (2006). Effective multi-agency working: A grounded theory of 'high profile' casework that resulted in a positive outcome for a young person in public care. <i>Educational & Child Psychology</i> , 23(4), 91–103.	<p>Did not meet inclusion criteria: Explores current practice of Educational Psychologists and Social Workers in multi-agency teams, focussing on how they support children who are care experienced.</p> <p>Detail: Grounded theory study exploring effective multi-agency work between health, education and social care. Participants include SWs and Special Educational Needs Officers. Study does not include EP as participant (participants do discuss EP in their interviews although research does not explicitly explore this).</p>
Desforges, M. & Lindsay, G. (2018). Introduction. <i>Educational & Child Psychology Special Issue</i> , 5–7.	<p>Did not meet inclusion criteria: Explores current practice of Educational Psychologists and Social Workers in multi-agency teams, focussing on how they support children who are care experienced.</p> <p>Detail: Article describes how Sheffield EPS has developed through the years 1937-2000. No specific focus on EPs working in multi-agency ways with Social Workers supporting children in care.</p>
Dovey-Pearce, G., Rapley, T. & McDonagh, J. E. (2020). Delivering developmentally appropriate health care: Roles for psychologists as members of the multi-disciplinary health care team. <i>Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry</i> , 25(3), 579–593. https://doi.org/10.1177/1359104520907147	<p>Did not meet inclusion criteria: Explores current practice of Educational Psychologists and Social Workers in multi-agency teams, focussing on how they support children who are care experienced.</p> <p>Detail: Article focuses on Clinical Psychologists working in health care.</p>
Dublin, S., Abramovitz, R., Layne, C. M., & Katz, L. (2019). Building a Trauma Informed National Mental Health Workforce: Learning Outcomes From Use of the Core Curriculum on Childhood Trauma in Multidisciplinary Practice Settings. <i>Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy</i> . Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1037/tra0000540	<p>Did not meet inclusion criteria: Explores current practice of Educational Psychologists and Social Workers in multi-agency teams, focussing on how they support children who are care experienced.</p> <p>Detail: Study participants include Psychologists (discipline unknown) and SWs and focuses on developing trauma informed mental health workforce in health. Does not explicitly explore social care or care experienced children.</p>

<p>Gaskell, S., & Leadbetter, J. (2009). Educational psychologists and multi-agency working: Exploring professional identity. <i>Educational Psychology in Practice</i>, 25(2), 97–111. https://doi.org/10.1080/02667360902905031</p>	<p>Did not meet inclusion criteria: Explores current practice of Educational Psychologists and Social Workers in multi-agency teams, focussing on how they support children who are care experienced.</p> <p>Detail: Article focuses on EPs working in MATs (none working in social care explicitly) and explore wider community - which includes social care. Study does not explore how EPs work with SWs to support children who are care experienced.</p>
<p>Golding, K. S. (2010). Multi-agency and specialist working to meet the mental health needs of children in care and adopted. <i>Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry</i>, 15(4), 573–587. https://doi.org/10.1177/1359104510375933</p>	<p>Did not meet inclusion criteria: Explores current practice of Educational Psychologists and Social Workers in multi-agency teams, focussing on how they support children who are care experienced.</p> <p>Detail: Focuses on the work of Clinical Psychologists, not EPs.</p>
<p>Harris, R. & Ayo, Y. (2011). The role of a child & adolescent mental health service with looked-after children in an educational context. In R. Harris., S. Rendall. & S. Nashat (Eds.), <i>Engaging with Complexity: Child and Adolescent Mental Health and Education</i> (pp. 151–166). Routledge.</p>	<p>Did not meet inclusion criteria: Explores current practice of Educational Psychologists and Social Workers in multi-agency teams, focussing on how they support children who are care experienced.</p> <p>Detail: Authors explore their roles as Psychotherapist/Clinical Psychologist in supporting looked after children’s mental health.</p>
<p>Hood, R., Price, J., Sartori, D., Maisey, D., Johnson, J. & Clark, Z. (2017). Collaborating across the threshold: The development of interprofessional expertise in child safeguarding, <i>Journal of Interprofessional Care</i>, 31(6), 705–713. https://doi.org/10.1080/13561820.2017.1329199</p>	<p>Did not meet inclusion criteria: Explores current practice of Educational Psychologists and Social Workers in multi-agency teams, focussing on how they support children who are care experienced.</p> <p>Detail: Article explores collaborative work between SWs, teachers and nurses to safeguard children. Does not explore how EPs work with SWs to support children who are care experienced.</p>
<p>Hughes, M. (2006). Multi-agency teams: Why should working together make everything better? <i>Educational and Child Psychology</i>, 23(4), 60–71.</p>	<p>Did not meet inclusion criteria: Explores current practice of Educational Psychologists and Social Workers in multi-agency teams, focussing on how they support children who are care experienced.</p>

	<p>Detail: Article explores multi-agency working as a concept and how effective it is. Does not explore the work of EPs and SWs explicitly.</p>
<p>Kearney, M., Williams, F. & Doherty, F. (2016). Towards a nurturing city: Promoting positive relations across agencies. <i>Educational & Child Psychology</i>, 33(2), 43–56.</p>	<p>Did not meet inclusion criteria: Explores current practice of Educational Psychologists and Social Workers in multi-agency teams, focussing on how they support children who are care experienced.</p> <p>Detail: Article considers multi-agency working but not EP and SWs explicitly. Article explores an Educational Psychology Service delivery of nurture principles through examining specific interventions and programmes.</p>
<p>McKenzie, K. & Cossar, J. (2013). The Involvement of Clinical Psychologists in Child Protection Work. <i>Child Abuse Review</i>, 22, 367–376. https://doi.org/10.1002/car.2205</p>	<p>Did not meet inclusion criteria: Explores current practice of Educational Psychologists and Social Workers in multi-agency teams, focussing on how they support children who are care experienced.</p> <p>Detail: Article discusses Scottish study of Clinical Psychologists' views of advantages/disadvantages of contributing to child protection work, what can CPs offer, facilitators, barriers etc. Does not explore how EPs work with SWs to support children who are care experienced.</p>
<p>Midgen, T. (2011). Enhancing outcomes for adopted children: The role of educational psychology. <i>Educational and Child Psychology</i>, 28(3), 20–30.</p>	<p>Did not meet inclusion criteria: Is an empirical study (uses a robust method of data collection i.e. is replicable and trustworthy research).</p> <p>Detail: Narrative literature review structure. Description of search strategy and method lacks adequate detail to enable replication and establish trustworthiness.</p>
<p>Morrow, G., Malin, N. & Jennings, T. (2005) Interprofessional teamworking for child and family referral in a Sure Start local programme. <i>Journal of Interprofessional Care</i>, 19(2), 93–101. 10.1080/13561820400024258</p>	<p>Did not meet inclusion criteria: Explores current practice of Educational Psychologists and Social Workers in multi-agency teams, focussing on how they support children who are care experienced.</p> <p>Detail: Articles explores multi-agency working between professionals (including Clinical Psychologists, social care, health and education) as part of Sure Start programme which aims to close the gap in outcomes between children under 4 years living in</p>

	<p>poverty with those of the general population. Does not explore work of EPs and SWs working collaboratively to support children who are care experienced.</p>
<p>Norwich, B. & Eaton, A. (2015) The new special educational needs (SEN) legislation in England and implications for services for children and young people with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. <i>Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties</i>, 20(2), 117–132. https://doi.org/10.1080/13632752.2014.989056</p>	<p>Met exclusion criteria: position paper.</p> <p>Detail: Article discusses the changes to SEN legislation and discusses possible implication of planned and future changes upon service delivery. Does not explore work of EPs and SWs working collaboratively to support children who are care experienced.</p>
<p>Peake, A. (2011). The needs of looked after children: A rapid response when school placement may be in jeopardy. <i>Educational and Child Psychology</i>, 28(3), 73–80.</p>	<p>Met exclusion criteria: position paper.</p> <p>Detail: Article discusses the systemic response of an Educational Psychology Service during risk of educational placement breakdown. Does not discuss the use of robust research methods (no identified method of data collection, analysis etc.) and therefore is classed as a position paper.</p>
<p>Serres, S. A. & Simpson, C. (2013). Serving educational pie: A multidisciplinary approach to collaborating with families. <i>Children & Schools</i>, 35(3), 189–191. https://doi.org/10.1093/cs/cdt012</p>	<p>Did not meet inclusion criteria: Explores current practice of Educational Psychologists and Social Workers in multi-agency teams, focussing on how they support children who are care experienced.</p> <p>Detail: Article focuses on promoting parental engagement from perspective of a SW. Does not explore work of EPs and SWs working collaboratively to support children who are care experienced.</p>
<p>Sosa, L. V., & McGrath, B. (2013). Collaboration from the ground up: Creating effective teams. <i>School Social Work Journal</i>, 38(1), 34–48.</p>	<p>Did not meet inclusion criteria: Explores current practice of Educational Psychologists and Social Workers in multi-agency teams, focussing on how they support children who are care experienced.</p> <p>Detail: Article considers School Psychologists and SWs supporting mental health in schools in America. Does not explore work of EPs and SWs working collaboratively to support children who are care experienced.</p>
<p>Swann, R. C., & York, A. (2011). THINKSPACE – The creation of a multi-agency consultation group for looked after children. <i>Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry</i>, 16, 65–</p>	<p>Did not meet inclusion criteria: Explores current practice of Educational Psychologists and Social Workers in multi-agency teams, focussing on how they support children who are care experienced.</p>

<p>71. https://doi.org/10.1177/1359104509355018</p>	<p>Detail: Article discusses use of consultation group using reflective teams model to support looked after children for professionals (including “education” professionals) but does not explicitly discuss role of EPs.</p>
<p>Warmington, P. (2011). Divisions of labour: activity theory, multi-professional working and intervention research. <i>Journal of Vocational Education and Training</i>, 63(2), 143–157. https://doi.org/10.1080/13636820.2011.561930</p>	<p>Did not meet inclusion criteria: Explores current practice of Educational Psychologists and Social Workers in multi-agency teams, focussing on how they support children who are care experienced.</p> <p>Detail: Explore two cases studies where Activity Theory had been used as part of Developmental Work Research technique to explore how multi-professional groups had attempted to establish new working practices. Participants included SWS but not EPs. Does not explore work of EPs and SWs working collaboratively to support children who are care experienced.</p>
<p>Watson, H. (2006). Facilitating effective working in multi-agency co-located teams. <i>Educational and Child Psychology</i>, 23(4), 8–22.</p>	<p>Did not meet inclusion criteria: Explores current practice of Educational Psychologists and Social Workers in multi-agency teams, focussing on how they support children who are care experienced.</p> <p>Detail: Study explore professionals views of most important factors involved in multi-agency working. Participants included SWs and EPs but did not explore current practice and how they worked.</p>
<p>Wilson, V. & Pirrie, A. (2000). <i>Multidisciplinary Team working Indicators of Good Practice</i>. The Scottish Council for Research in Education. http://www.moderntimesworkplace.com/good_reading/GRWhole/Multi-Disciplinary.Teamwork.pdf</p>	<p>Did not meet inclusion criteria: Explores current practice of Educational Psychologists and Social Workers in multi-agency teams, focussing on how they support children who are care experienced.</p> <p>Detail: Article explores factors supporting and inhibiting multi-disciplinary working practices based on information gathered through previous literature review and research commissioned by UK Department of Health. Does not explore work of EPs and SWs working collaboratively to support children who are care experienced.</p>

Appendix C – Quantitative Weight of Evidence (WoE) A

Quantitative WoE A Review Criteria and Scoring							
	Randomised design	Specific and well-defined problem	Comparison/control group	Use of manuals and procedures for fidelity	Sample large enough to detect effect	Outcome measures demonstrate reliability and validity (1 point if used, 2 points if more than one used).	Overall judgement 0-2 Low 3-4 Med 5-6 High
Norwich et al. (2010)	0	1	0	1	Cannot assess	0	2 (Low)
Osborne et al. (2009)	1	1	0	0	Cannot assess	0	2 (Low)
Woods et al (2011)	1	1	0	0	Cannot assess	0	2 (Low)
Hymans (2006)	1	1	0	1	Cannot assess	0	3 (Medium)
Hymans (2008)	0	1	1	1	Cannot assess	1	4 (Medium)

Appendix D – Qualitative Weight of Evidence (WoE) A

Qualitative WoE A Review Criteria and Scoring													
	Research Design	Sample rationale	Data collection	Analysis	Theory	Reflexivity	Documentation	Negative case analysis	Reporting	Negotiation	Conclusions	Ethics	Overall judgement 0-4 Low 5-8 Med 9-12 High
Allen & Bond (2020)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	10 (High)
Bradbury (2006)	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	10 (High)
Cunningham & Lauchlan (2010)	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	11 (High)
Daniels (2011)	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	7 (Medium)
German et al. (2000)	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	10 (High)
Hymans (2006)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	11 (High)
Hymans (2008)	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	9 (High)
Leadbetter (2006)	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	8 (Medium)
Norwich et al. (2010)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	12 (High)
Osborne et al. (2009)	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	7 (Medium)
Stone & Charles (2018)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	10 (High)
Sturgess & Selwyn (2007)	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	6 (Medium)
Woods et al. (2011)	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	9 (High)

Appendix E – Weight of Evidence (WoE) C

WoE C Criteria and Scoring Framework (all studies)									
	Perspective (1-3points)			Focus of work (1-3 points)			Implications (1-2 points)		Overall judgement 0-2 Low 3-5 Med 6-8 High
	Clinical Psych	Educational Psych	Social Worker	Multi-agency work	Role of the Educational Psychologist	Supporting CEC	For Psychologists	For research	
Allen & Bond (2020)	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	5 (Medium)
Bradbury (2006)	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	6 (High)
Cunningham & Lauchlan (2010)	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7 (High)
Daniels (2011)	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	2 (Low)
German et al. (2000)	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	5 (Medium)
Hymans (2006)	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	6 (High)
Hymans (2008)	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	7 (High)
Leadbetter (2006)	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	3 (Medium)
Norwich et al. (2010)	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	5 (Medium)
Osborne et al. (2009)	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	5 (Medium)
Stone & Charles (2018)	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	4 (Medium)
Sturgess & Selwyn (2007)	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	3 (Medium)
Woods et al. (2011)	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	5 (Medium)

Appendix F – Gatekeeper Letter



School of Psychology
Ysgol Seicoleg

Dear Children's Services Manager/ Principal Educational Psychologist,

I am writing to you as a Trainee Educational Psychologist from Cardiff University. I would like to request your permission to conduct a study to explore the role of the Educational Psychologist working with social care teams. This is an area of practice that is greatly underrepresented within the research literature.

This study aims to conduct two individual semi-structured interviews with staff members of the same social care team; from the perspective of one Educational or Practitioner Psychologist (who is a qualified Educational Psychologist by background) and the perspective of one qualified Social Worker, both of whom have been in their role within the social care team for at least 6 months. The semi-structured interview aims to explore the work of these professionals, using questions informed by Activity Theory (Engestrom, 1987, 1999) to explore historical, cultural, social and contextual factors which guides their work.

The interviews can be held at a time and location of the participants' convenience or via Skype. It is expected that the interviews would last between 30-60 minutes each and participant responses would be recorded on an audio recording device. The data collected would be kept securely and confidentially before being transcribed and made fully anonymous. The anonymous data would be stored indefinitely by Cardiff University.

Should you be happy to provide permission for this project to go ahead, I ask you kindly whether it would be possible for you to distribute the following letters (attached) to the relevant Team Managers:

- Team Manager Information Letter
- Participant Information Letter (For the Team Manager to distribute to one qualified Social Worker and one Educational/Practitioner Psychologist in the same team).
- Participant Consent Form
- Participant Debrief Letter

The Team Manager would be required to identify one Social Worker and one Educational Psychologist working within the same team to invite to interview. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and participants will be required to complete a consent form prior to their participation. Participants have the right to withdraw their information until four weeks after their participation, when their data will be transcribed, fully anonymised and any audio recording will be permanently deleted. Therefore, no individual Local Authority, Social Care Team, or individual will be identifiable or named within any write up. This study has been reviewed and ethically approved by School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee. If you have any questions or concerns, contacts are listed below. I hope that you are interested in supporting me with this research project.

Yours sincerely,

Rhiannon Warwick, Researcher and Trainee Educational Psychologist
(DEdPsy Cardiff University)

WarwickR@cardiff.ac.uk

Andrea Higgins, Research Tutor, Cardiff University

HigginsA2@cardiff.ac.uk

School of Psychology Ethics Committee, Cardiff University

psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk

Appendix G – Team Manager Letter



School of Psychology
Ysgol Seicoleg

Dear Manager,

I am writing to you as a Trainee Educational Psychologist from Cardiff University, to share some information about my thesis research project, which explores the role of the Educational Psychologist working with multi-disciplinary social care teams.

This study aims to conduct two individual semi-structured interviews with staff members of the same social care team; from the perspective of one Educational or Practitioner Psychologist (who is a qualified Educational Psychologist by background) and the perspective of one qualified Social Worker, both of whom have been in post for at least 6 months. The semi-structured interview aims to explore the work of these professionals, using questions informed by Activity Theory (Engestrom, 1987, 1999) to explore historical, cultural, social and contextual factors that guide their work.

The interviews can be held at a time and location of the participants' convenience or via video-conferencing software. It is expected that the interviews would last between 30-60 minutes each and participant responses would be recorded on an audio recording device. The data collected would be kept securely and confidentially before being transcribed and made fully anonymous. The anonymised data would be stored indefinitely by Cardiff University.

Should you be happy to provide permission for this project to go ahead, I ask you kindly whether it would be possible for you to distribute the following letters (attached) to the relevant professionals:

- Participant Information Letter (For the Team Manager to distribute to one qualified Social Worker and one Educational/Practitioner Psychologist in the same team).
- Participant Consent Form

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and participants will be required to complete a consent form prior to their participation. Participants have the right to withdraw their information until four weeks after their participation, when their data will be transcribed, fully anonymised and any audio recording will be permanently deleted. Therefore, no individual Local Authority, Social Care Team, or individual will be identifiable or named within any subsequent write up.

This study has been reviewed and ethically approved by School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee. If you have any questions or concerns, contacts are listed below. I hope that you are interested in supporting me with this research project.

Yours sincerely,

Rhiannon Warwick, Researcher and Trainee Educational Psychologist
(DEdPsy Cardiff University)
WarwickR@cardiff.ac.uk

Andrea Higgins, Research Tutor, Cardiff University

HigginsA2@cardiff.ac.uk

School of Psychology Ethics Committee, Cardiff University

psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk

Appendix H – Participant Information Sheet



School of Psychology
Ysgol Seicoleg

Dear Educational Psychologist/ Social Worker,

I am writing to you as a Trainee Educational Psychologist from Cardiff University. I would like to invite you to take part in a study to explore the role of the Educational Psychologist working within social care teams.

This study aims to conduct two individual semi-structured interviews with staff members of the same social care team;

Interview 1: Educational/Practitioner Psychologist (who is a qualified Educational Psychologist by background)

Interview 2: Social Worker (qualified)

All participants must have been in post for at least 6 months. The semi-structured interview aims to explore the work of these professionals, using questions informed by Activity Theory (Engestrom, 1987, 1999) to explore historical, cultural, social and contextual factors which guide their work.

The interviews can be held at a time and location your convenience or via Skype. It is expected that the interviews would last between 30-60 minutes each and participant responses would be recorded on an audio recording device. The data collected would be kept securely and confidentially before being transcribed and made fully anonymous. The anonymous data would be stored indefinitely by Cardiff University.

Should you be happy to take part and feel that you meet the criteria, I ask you kindly whether you would email the researcher to express your desire to take part on the following email address:

WarwickR@cardiff.ac.uk

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Participants will be required to complete a consent form prior to their participation. Participants have the right to withdraw their information until four weeks after their participation, when their data will be transcribed, fully anonymised and any audio recording will be permanently deleted. Therefore, no individual Local Authority, Social Care Team, or individual will be identifiable or named in any subsequent write up.

This study has been reviewed and ethically approved by School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee. If you have any questions or concerns, contacts are listed below. I hope that you are interested in supporting me with this research project.

Yours sincerely,

Rhiannon Warwick, Researcher and Trainee Educational Psychologist
(DEdPsy Cardiff University)

WarwickR@cardiff.ac.uk

Andrea Higgins, Research Tutor, Cardiff University

HigginsA2@cardiff.ac.uk

School of Psychology Ethics Committee, Cardiff University

psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk

Appendix I – Participant Consent Form



School of Psychology
Ysgol Seicoleg

Please tick the boxes to confirm you have read and agree to following statements:

- I understand that taking part in this study will involve completing an individual semi-structured interview with the researcher. I understand that I will be asked a number of questions using an Activity Theory framework. This will require up to one hour of my time.
- I understand that taking part in the semi-structured interview is entirely voluntary and that I can withdraw from the semi-structure interview at any time without giving a reason.
- I understand that I will be audio or video recorded and that upon transcription, this file will be permanently deleted.
- I also understand that I can withdraw my data from the study up until the point the data is made anonymous (four weeks after participation). I can do this by contacting the researcher, [Rhiannon Warwick].
- I understand that I am free to ask any questions at any time. I am free to withdraw or discuss my concerns with the researcher, [Rhiannon Warwick] or the research supervisor, [Andrea Higgins].
- I understand that my responses will be fully anonymised after 4 weeks and therefore any information that I share will remain confidential.
- I understand that personal data will be processed in accordance with GDPR regulations (see privacy statement below).
- I understand that at the end of the study I will be provided with additional information about the study.

I, _____(NAME) consent to take part in the study conducted by [Rhiannon Warwick] School of Psychology, Cardiff University under the supervision of [Andrea Higgins].

Signed: _____

Date:

Privacy Notice:

The information provided will be held in compliance with GDPR regulations. Cardiff University is the data controller and Matt Cooper is the data protection officer (inforequest@cardiff.ac.uk). The lawful basis for processing this information is public interest. This information is being collected by Rhiannon Warwick.

The information on the consent form will be held securely and separately from the research information. Only the researcher will have access to this form, and it will be destroyed after 7 years.

The research information you provide will be used for the purposes of research only and will be stored securely. Only the researcher will have access to this information. After 4 weeks, the data will be anonymised (any identifying elements removed) and this anonymous information may be kept indefinitely or published.

Yours sincerely,

Rhiannon Warwick, Researcher and Trainee Educational Psychologist
(DEdPsy Cardiff University)
WarwickR@cardiff.ac.uk

Andrea Higgins, Research Tutor, Cardiff University
HigginsA2@cardiff.ac.uk

School of Psychology Ethics Committee, Cardiff University
psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk

Appendix J – Participant Debrief Letter



School of Psychology
Ysgol Seicoleg

Thank you for taking part in the individual semi-structured interview for the research project. The aim of the project is to explore the role of the Educational Psychologist working in social care teams. The study aimed to use an Activity Theory (Engestrom, 1987, 1999) framework to create a deeper understanding of the work of the Educational Psychologist from a variety of perspectives. The findings will be written up and submitted to Cardiff University as partial fulfilment of the DEdPsy Doctorate in Educational Psychology course. The research project may be discussed with other professionals, used in presentations and published in academic journals. Please be assured that any information you have shared will remain completely anonymous and no individual Local Authority, Children’s Service or professional will be identifiable. If you would like a summary of the findings please request this via email to the researcher. You have the right to withdraw your data, without explanation, for 4 weeks following the date of interview. The researcher will notify you of this date. Should you wish to withdraw your data, please send this request via email to the researcher. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher or research supervisor (contact details below). The personal data will be processed in accordance with GDPR regulations (see privacy statement below).

Privacy Notice:

The information provided will be held in compliance with GDPR regulations. Cardiff University is the data controller and Matt Cooper is the data protection officer (inforequest@cardiff.ac.uk). The lawful basis for processing this information is public interest. This information is being collected by Rhiannon Warwick.

The information on the consent form will be held securely and separately from the research information. Only the researcher will have access to this form and it will be destroyed after 7 years.

The research information you provide will be used for the purposes of research only and will be stored securely. Only the researcher will have access to this information. After 4 weeks, the data will be anonymised (any identifying elements removed) and this anonymous information may be kept indefinitely or published.

Yours sincerely,

Rhiannon Warwick, Researcher and Trainee Educational Psychologist
(DEdPsy Cardiff University)
WarwickR@cardiff.ac.uk

Andrea Higgins, Research Tutor, Cardiff University
HigginsA2@cardiff.ac.uk

Appendix K – Transcription Notation System

In order to create a quality orthographical transcript, a notation system was used to record all speech utterances (Braun and Clarke, 2013¹). The researcher used a notation system adapted from Braun and Clarke (2013) and Jefferson (2004²).

Symbol	Meaning
Interviewer/ I or LA?EP/SW:	Denotes speaker
((pause))	Denotes a long pause (more than two seconds)
(.)	Denotes a short pause (less than two seconds)
((laughs))	Denotes speaker laughing during speech
Erm/Mmm	Denotes non-verbal utterances
((inaudible))	Denotes speech that is completely inaudible
?	Included to aid readability
,	Included to aid readability

¹ Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2013). *Successful Qualitative Research: a practical guide for beginners*. SAGE Publications Ltd.

² Jefferson, G. (2004). Glossary of transcript symbols with an introduction. In G. H. Lerner (ed.), *Conversation Analysis: Studies from the First Generation* (pp.13–31). John Benjamins Publishing Company. <https://doi.org/10.1075/pbns.125>

Appendix L – Sample Transcripts

Date: 21.7.2020

LA3EP Interview Transcript

--- START OF RECORDING ---

Interviewer: OK, so do you know much about activity theory? Or do you want me to give you a quick run through of activity theory?

LA3EP: Yeah you could give me a run through

I: So just in a nutshell basically, activity theory was kind of developed to consider and have a little kind of attempt to explain some of the links between like social and contextual and kind of wider cultural factors erm, centred around people working together(.) So I think it was originally developed to look at kind of learning and development, but I've tailored my questions to go and explore the role of EP within a multidisciplinary team, so I've kind of played with that a little bit(.) So, this project will be using activity theory or activity theory informed questions to explore the role of the EP working in a multidisciplinary team, and that is from the perspective of a social worker and an EP(.) So, coming from both sides to see you know, kind of, what are((pause)) where are the similarities and where are the differences and what does that mean?

LA3EP: Mmm

I: Erm and from interviews I've done already, it's been really, really interesting(.) Erm, so if you're happy to, would you be able to give me a bit of information about the team that you're working in and kind of? You know what professionals are in it and where does it sit within the local authority and things like that?

LA3EP: Yeah, so erm it has evolved so I((pause)) I've been with the team from the start which would be erm ohh gosh probably around two thousand and twelve so, goodness me, is that eight years? I have had three maternity leaves though so since then though ((laughs))((pause))

I: ((laughs))

LA3EP: ((pause)) erm so we started off originally it was more of a multi-agency team and it was in education and so we had erm we had a Careers Advisor, we had a Youth Worker, we had a Basic Skills Teacher and we had a Family Support Worker and Educational Psychologist(.) I think that's it that what we started off with erm it was just a small team really and we had some Learning Coaches as well((pause))

I: OK

LA3EP: ((pause)) and it was aimed ((pause)) age ((pause)) at ((pause)) aimed at
erm key stage four to prevent NEET(.) Anyway, there's been some changes since
then and it's been moved to social care, so now it sits under social care(.) And,
erm, and the age range is now gone down to key stage three, and we, I mean
generally, I mean [Welsh Government Funded Family Project] is a big organisation
that covers lots of things that are ((pause)) the team I'm in is one of the erm, one
of the branches and it's at the key stage three programme which is the Family
Achievement Programme and now the team is now erm is actually that team is
also expanded erm ((laughs))((pause))

I: ((laughs))

LA3EP: ((pause)) erm the Family Achievement Programme then there's also the
Family erm uhh what do they call the other team? Uhh the Intensive ((pause))
Family Intensive Interaction Team I think it is and they ((pause)) they're both
managed by Social Workers and the rest of the teams are Family Support Workers
with various different backgrounds erm so, and then there's two Educational
Psychologists(.) There's two because we job share((pause))

I: OK

LA3EP: ((pause)) probably less than one post 'cause I work one and a half days
and my colleague works three days so yeah, it's a little bit less than a full post(.)
Erm((pause))

I: Brilliant(.)

LA3EP: What do we? What else would you like to know?

I: Erm what have I asked you? Does this ((pause))so the team that you are in
((pause)) what is their sort of specific focus?

LA3EP: So our focus is erm uhh it's really, kind of, preventing sort of family
breakdown and just providing family support(.) It's a prevent-preventative service,
so we offer, sort of, a step up to social care and step down to erm from social
care(.) And it originally sort of started off with, you know, our original aim was
preventing NEETS, but it's more sort of wider than that it's about, sort of, just the
((pause)) generally tackling poverty and underprivileged, sort of, families(.) The
crit- there's not really any sort of criteria because families can self-refer so if they
feel that there is a need or any other agency feel there is a need about their work
with the family((pause)) the only the only remit really is that there needs to be sort
of more than one need so, 'cause it's a multi-agency approach and a multi-agency
team and even though we're sort of in a Social Worker and Family Support Worker
side but erm say if it was just a single service, they would go to a single service, so
it's so it's managed by erm we have the team around the family coordinators so
they, sort of, erm they ((pause)) the referrals go in to them first and they do, sort
of, checks around erm with key agencies like education and social care just to, sort
of, see what information we've got(.) Then it gets ((pause)) goes to a panel and
that panel then we'll kind of allocate to an appropriate team and worker((pause))

I: Yeah

LA3EP: ((pause)) so actually yeah, we could also have a core assessment team(.) I keep forgetting how much we've expanded ((laughs))

I: ((laughs)) It sounds like a huge team(.)

LA3EP: Yeah, we have the ((pause)) an assessment team as well so they((pause)) they can, kind of, go out and do the assessments for us the ((pause))the team around the family assessments so they work short term and then erm, you know, there's a plan in place and those that need to be allocated can then be allocated to either the Family Achievement Programme team or the Intensive team and the idea is to work short terms so, kind of, you know up to three to six months with a family erm we have, sort of, we((pause)) we use all of the, kind of, team around the family paperwork approaches so it's once we got a ((pause)) erm ((pause)) a referral, we've got the information and consent to erm, you know, do the assessment, the assessment takes place with the family and erm and it's all very much based around, you know, what the family wants, what their needs are and they identify their own goals with the support of professionals

I: Yeah

LA3EP: Then very, very quickly a team and family meeting is called and so that would usually almost always involve a school and any other sort of professionals who's working with the family or anyone else that isn't working with the family that we feel we could invite in at this stage because we could see that that's a need that's come up in the assessment that we think actually, let's get them around the table(.) We then have that initial meeting, erm we could plan from there ((pause)) and that plan would then be reviewed and we have another sort of team around the family review erm and then sort of, you know, often make another plan from that or you step up or step down or close the case(.)

I: Brilliant thank you and **can you tell me a bit about your position in the team?**

LA3EP: Yeah, so erm((pause)) so I'm an Educational Psychologists so erm, but I think the thing that we've had to sort of clarify is that we're working for the families(.) I also work as an Educational Psychologist for Education, so it can be a little bit confusing in a small authority like we are because erm people see me as the Educational Psychologist, which I am, but when I'm working for Education, I'm working for the schools and when I'm working for [Welsh Government Funded Family Project], I'm working for the family(.) And that's slightly different because it's all about the family's needs, what the family wants(.) So it's a lot more therapeutic intervention based around what the family wants, so it's usually around preventing breakdown and kind of, you know, it could be parenting skills and often it's family mediation and it could be more therapeutic work that's you, know something difficult has happened in the family, something traumatic, some you know some changes in circumstances that the family just need to process and think through(.) Or there could be some sort of you know problem solving that needs to happen so using a lot of either kind of you know solution focused approaches and also more therapeutic approaches like the, you know, CBT, where

we often have a lot of families where they're are not accessing, you know, other services and so because of issues like anxiety or depression so we're working in the family home, so using kind of CBT or we might be using((pause)) I've also trained in VIG video interaction guidance so I'm using that with the families erm, I've used that in various different ways, sometimes with families around, you know, the particular disabilities you know or autism or something and reflecting on their interaction there or relationships you know, looking at sibling relationships or parenting erm and I've also, sort of, used it with older families so, you know, teenagers and their ((pause)) and their parents as well so I think my role is kind of quite creative and very sort of flexible, so it's about listening to the families and trying to work with them to think about what's going to be most helpful for them(.) And using a sort of range of approaches that sort of you know drawing on my kind of uhh knowledge, you know sort of psychology to kind of bring about change for them and to sort of bring a bit of kind of hope and some next steps and help them to kind of get unstuck from whatever situation they're in((pause))

I: Yeah

LA3EP: ((pause)) so the model that we use in a team tends to be sort of each case is allocated a lead worker, so initially the lead worker ((pause)) I will do a consultation with them about what the issues might be, and then perhaps you know we share some ideas about what things that they can try uhh to do with the family, so it might be give them some ideas around parenting strategies and things that they can discuss, or a particular piece of work they could do erm since they already have the relationship with the family and they're working with them(.) Erm then we'd review that(.) It might be, sort of, that consultation that perhaps we need a little bit more of an in depth assessment that's ((pause)) that would, sort of, more drawn my skill-set perhaps using something more kind of psychological((pause))

I: Yeah

LA3EP: ((pause)) you might agree to do some sort of, you know, some personal construct psychology or some more kind of in-depth assessment really of the child and the family and what's happening(.) Or it might be that you know, once we've sort of done that assessment or the lead worker's done that piece of work with the family that actually, you know, there needs to be a bit more of an in-depth psychological, kind of, intervention that I can do which is, you know, the VIG or CBT or family mediation so((pause)) so it's very much, kind of, like a little bit of a process around, kind of, consulting with the lead workers first, then sort of thinking about further assessment and then sort of more in depth work when necessary(.)

I: Yeah(.) That was such an amazing answer(.) I was looking at my list of questions and I feel like we've covered loads of them already ((laughs)) that was amazing(.) Thank you(.) So the next question - I apologise, I'll ask them anyway in case there's anything else that we haven't covered - is **what sort of work do you do?** So you talked a lot about it then is there((pause)) is there anything else that you haven't covered?

LA3EP: Erm, anything else we haven't covered, so, erm the((pause)) a lot of the work is family mediation, that's a lot of the requests, and we also sort of do a lot of

work around anxiety, that's another sort of one that keeps coming up quite a lot so we're got particularly non-school attenders erm and trying to sort of problem solve and figure out what's happening there(.) Erm and a lot of you know VIG as well, that's the sort of the newest kind of intervention that we're using((pause))

I: Yeah

LA3EP: ((pause)) Erm, so I think we've kind of covered most of it ((pause))

I: Do you give any training? Do you provide training?

LA3EP: Yeah(.) Yeah we do so erm we provide, sort of, supervision erm to the team, but we have done sort of training when we have like team days and things, you know, we've done some sort of training around - particularly around issues that come up quite a lot like anxiety - try to understand what it is and what the lead workers could be doing themselves(.) Erm yeah, that's something that, you know, that ((pause)) yeah, that that we do do, but generally I'd say it's time and being able to fit that in ((laughs)) ((pause))

I: Yeah ((laughs))

LA3EP: ((pause)) Erm so they yeah they ((pause)) I think the other training I did with the solution circles so it was using a solution circles approach(.) You know, how to problem solve with a group of people(.) So yeah, training is something that yeah we have done and that probably we would like to do more of((pause))

I: Yeah

LA3EP: ((pause)) think the idea would be for me((pause)) I'm in the process of doing my advanced VIG certificate which will then enable me to go on to be a supervisor, and so hopefully I'll be able to then supervise the Family Support Workers in our team to use VIG so there is a plan moving forward as well with training(.)

I: Yeah brilliant(.) **And the work that you do, what does it aim to achieve?** What is the aims of the team?

LA3EP: Erm, so the aims of the team are around erm yeah preventing poverty and kind of promoting erm yeah, it's sort of family cohesiveness really, and well being so it's whatever the family, whatever the family wants really ((laughs))((pause))

I: ((laughs)) Yeah

LA3EP: ((pause)) Erm as long as I mean we don't particularly have a criteria we're there as a sort of preventative service in order to prevent things escalating to social care so erm what was your question?

I: What does your work aim to achieve?

LA3EP: So we're ((pause)) so we're aiming really to kind of erm support the families in whatever way they feel they need in order to sort of prevent things from escalating and for them to have a positive kind of family experience and erm to be able to participate and achieve and erm in life, yeah, in education and erm yeah, I think that's it(.)

I: Brilliant, thank you(.) Erm, the next question kind of has two elements to it(.) **So the question is what supports or challenges your work? So if we do supports first ((pause))erm what supports your work?**

LA3EP: What supports my work? Erm so I'm supervised by an EP in the EP team and I also have line managers in the [Welsh Government Funded Family Project] team so, you know, having those kind of support supervision sort of management structures that's good(.) Having another EP in the team that we can kind of, you know, Yeah, because we're ((pause)) because we have that same sort of training experience and mindset that we can then liaise and kind of figure it out 'cause it's ((pause)) it feels like you know, trying to make a distinctive sort of contribution to the team but also I'm trying to make sure that's distinctive to the EP role in Education, because what we did find - this probably ((pause)) probably answers your other question about - was your other question about((pause))?

I: ((pause)) uhh, constrains the work or challenges the work((pause))

LA3EP: ((pause))some of the ((pause)) some of the difficulties that we've experienced are erm schools possibly seeing us as a resource, an additional resource, that they can then kind of access when they're short of EP time(.) And in school they can think, "Oh yeah let's put a referral into [Welsh Government Funded Family Project] EP", so it's being clear that it's not for the school, it is for the family and it's arisen from a family need erm other than a school need so yes, so I think erm((pause)) so having, sort of, we've done a bit of work around that with the EP that supervises me, but also the sort of team manager just trying to clarify what our role is, so that's been useful in terms of supporting us just to clarify, you know, this is what we're here to do(.) We are here particularly for the families to do this sort of work and just to sort of have some boundaries around that really to make sure that we're not then used inappropriately for, kind of, other people's agendas really and to make sure it is for the family(.)

I: Yeah(.) Erm, **who else is or has previously been involved in your work? So what sort of other people do you link in with?**

LA3EP: Erm, other agencies you mean?

I: Yeah, other agencies yeah(.)

LA3EP: Yeah(.) Erm so I think, uh, we work very closely obviously with Social Care(.) We are part of Social Care, but are sort of, you know, Social Work colleagues there's ((pause)) there's a constant flow, I think, of the you know, step up, step down so((pause))((laughs))

I: Yeah ((laughs))

LA3EP: ((pause)) We do work very closely with them and also liaising with them about you know where sometimes you know, “where these families sitting” or you know, “why are they keeping, you know, going up or why are they keeping going down” so ((laughs)) (.) We have, you know, we have various sort of panels so we have a ((inaudible)) wellbeing panel now so single point of access, what's the CE? ((pause)) child? ((laughs)) now you're testing me (.)

I: ((laughs))

LA3EP: ((pause)) Yeah so we have this panel said there's lots of professionals that sit on there from the, you know, Youth Service from Play erm and from CAMHS uhhh, the Youth Offending you know, we ((pause)) it's kind of endless really and there's lots of sort of voluntary organisations (.) I mean, you know, we've worked with kind of Mind and Hafan Cymru, all sorts I think, you know, I get quite overwhelmed sort of whenever I turn on my emails on to see, sort of, you know all these different services and things that we know we could possibly refer to, erm as I'm not the lead worker, usually it's the leader worker who coordinates and signposts the families to these other services so I'm quite relieved I don't have to sort of be kind on the battle with that but I can go to the lead workers who have lots of font of knowledge when it comes to, you know, directing families to appropriate services (.) Erm the team and the family coordinators, you know, they have again ((pause)) they have got that sort of big overview and in terms of kind of who we are linking with liaising with as well so erm so they particularly support our work and act as the kind of buffers as well for our teams, yeah (.)

I: Brilliant thank you (.) And **how, within your team, is the workload shared between you?**

LA3EP: Between who?

I: Between the professionals in the team, how is the workload shared?

LA3EP: So the work is allocated to the Family Support Worker as the lead workers and I think depending on how many hours they work, you know, I guess their allocated cases according to the time they've got but also the complexity of cases because that's why we ended up splitting the teams into two (.) So we have the Family Achievement Programme and then we have the Intensive Team as well because we were finding that we were getting so caught up with some families spending a lot of time working with them and other families then finding it difficult to fit them in as well so we split the team (.) So we have the Intensive Team you could contact them daily, you know, two to three times a week perhaps or daily, but with the Family Achievement Programme you might just sort of contact them once a week or once a fortnight so there's a sort of threshold, slightly different really and erm so it gets allocated to either team depending on the need and then the lead workers will then sort of take those forward and it'll be down to them to involve us as then EPs if they feel they need to consult with us about a particular issue or they feel like need further assessment or in-depth work from us (.)

I: Yep (.) And how who decides on the allocation of work?

LA3EP: Yeah, sorry, the team manager(.) So each team erm the Family Achievement Team and the Intensive Team both have a Social Work manager erm then there's a manager for them as well so ((laughs))((pause))

I: OK(.) There's a lot of layers, then a lot of tiers(.)

LA3EP: Yeah

I: And the next question is about, **are there any particular techniques or skills or tools that you use in your work?** I know at the beginning when the first question I asked you talked a lot about it(.) So we may have covered some of those things already(.)

LA3EP: Yeah, I think, erm(.) Yeah, I think I probably said, sort of, most of it really(.) I mean, I think the thing that I drew on most, I would say it would be a personal construct psychology (.) I really feel that that helps me just to get an understanding of where the individual is coming from(.) Just to((pause)) and that forms the basis of any further intervention, I feel like that's usually my first kind of thing that I do with the family is trying to get their views on, you know, their situation and then from that erm that often needs to further work, and that might be something you know more specific around, you know, CBT or a VIG intervention, erm but I think I would say sort of in a personal construct psychology and, sort of, solution-focussed thinking and perhaps a bit of motivational interviewing as well(.) Those are the sort of, erm ((pause)) it's ((pause))uhh, I think I sort of, you know, you sort of feel your way with the family and erm as we're particularly so you don't really kind of go in with a particular approach, but you know when you're building rapport and that then you kind of get a feel for kind of where they're at(.) And you know what they're sort of ready for, and what you can kind of contribute(.)

I: Yeah(.) And with the personal construct psychology, just out of interest, are there particular tools you use to do that, or is it more conversational style?

LA3EP: Erm sort of, I'd say, sort of more conversational style, so I'd be using, you know, asking them erm about erm sort, the way that they sort of see trying to get an idea of like the way they see the world(.) And I mean, sometimes I use the Ideal Self technique and or, you know, Ideal School or Ideal Home(.) You know, you can kind of adapt that in different ways(.) Erm, lots of the scaling activities((pause)) I use a lot of those(.) Erm and I think((pause)) I think it would be ((pause)) erm Kinetic Family Drawing I think yeah that's usually one of the things that I do, kind of, just to get an idea of the dynamics in the family and trying to get an understanding of, you know, how do they sort of see each other? How do they interact with each other? Who kind of ((pause)) uhh yeah? Trying to get them to sort of elicit their, kind of, erm yeah their views on their relationships really(.)

I: Yeah, and would that be with children and parents? You'd use that?

LA3EP: Yeah, yeah(.) Yeah, children and parents both ((inaudible)) and then often, sort of, doing it with one member of the family but then with their agreement sharing that with the other members of the family and that, sort of, forms the basis

of the work sometimes around family mediation, that's kind of, you know, once they've understood and where you know((pause)) where someone else is coming from, then quite often a lot of the issue seem to, kind of, yeah seem to kind of sort themselves out because they're((pause)) when they sort of stop to see someone else's perspective, it sort of just increases that understanding and kind of elicits a bit more empathy, and you know just helps to kind of yeah repair and build on that relationship so get that common ground again to move forward(.)

I: Yeah, thank you so I've just got one last question for you and that is have I((pause)) **Is there anything I've not asked about about the team or about your role that you'd like to share or anything else that it would be useful for me to know?**

LA3EP: It's difficult, I feel like I'm not in the swing at what I usually do((pause))

I: ((laughs))

LA3EP: ((pause))((laughs)) it feels like it's been four months of strangeness, yeah(.) We're not really doing any of these things, you know, so now I'm just reduced to telephone consultations and it is just kind of checking in with people(.) Yeah so erm so it's difficult erm yeah to try and think about sort of erm ((laughs)) what I'm actually doing(.)

I: ((laughs)) Yeah, no, it is weird(.) It's a weird world at the moment(.)

LA3EP: Yeah, yeah(.)

I: Well, thank you very much(.) That is the end of my questions(.) So, unless you have anything to ask me then I will turn the recordings off(.)

LA3EP: No, I mean I'd be really interested to hear your findings(.)

I: Yeah(.)

LA3EP: Yeah, it's the yeah, particularly kind of interested in hearing what other EP's are doing in relation to this(.) I haven't met any other EPs in [Welsh Government Funded Family Project]

I: No

LA3EP: So it's been quite sort of interesting to kind of scope out our role and trying to figure out what is it that we're doing, which has taking some time, but I feel like, you know, we're kind of get in there and there's some clarity ((laughs))

I: Yeah, Yeah, but I'll be more than happy once I finish to send you the link if you're interested in reading it(.)

LA3EP: Yeah

I: I'll be more than happy to do that(.)

LA3EP: Lovely

I: I'll just turn this recording off(.) Stop ((pause))

--- END OF RECORDING ---

Date: 17.7.2020

LA1SW Interview Transcript

--- START OF RECORDING ---

Interviewer (I): OK, so for this interview I'm looking at the role of the educational psychologist in multi-agency teams in social care(.) So, working with social workers(.) I'm using a particular psychological theory to kind of have a look at the team dynamics and that's called activity theory and activity theory kind of looks at the links between like social and wider sort of cultural and contextual factors to kind of look at how different people function together in multidisciplinary teams(.)

LA1SW: OK

I: So, I just thought I'd give you a quick run through of what that is(.) I've got your consent form already, haven't I?

LA1SW: Yeah(.)

I: Yep(.) Brilliant, OK(.) Thank you(.) If you don't mind, would you be able to kind of start off by telling me a little bit of sort of background information about the team?

LA1SW: Yep

I: The multidisciplinary team that you work in? Kind of thinking about, you know, does it have a specific focus and what range of professionals work in the team and kind of where does it sit within the local authority?

LA1SW: OK yeah, that's fine(.) So erm, I'm a senior practitioner in a long term childcare team and I've been a Social Worker for six years, but I've been in this current team for three years and a senior practitioner for around two years(.) So, I am a pod leader, so I need a pod of different professionals(.) Now, a pod consists of three Social Workers, a pod leader – which is myself - a Family Support Worker(.) And then during our part meetings, which take place once every ((pause)) every week(.) One afternoon, a week then(.) It's like group supervision, it's a pod meeting ((pause))

I: Yeah

LA1SW: ((pause)) we have our Senior Child and Educational Psychologist attend that meeting as well (.) as well as our team manager(.)

I: OK

LA1SW: Depending on the case, we sometimes invite other professionals, for example - within the local authority - Supervising Social Workers from the fostering team, Youth Prevention Workers (.) and sort of any professional really that is working closely with the case that we really need to look at, you know, specific about that issue(.) For example, at fostering placement(.) So, we obviously are in Children's Services within the local authority, and we are a long-term team so(.) we have cases range from unborn up to the age of eighteen and they consist of children who are in need of care and support, and children who are at risk of significant harm so are on the child protection register, and children who are looked after by the local authority(.) So, we have parental responsibility for those children(.) So, we work with a range of issues from substance misuse, domestic violence, sexual abuse, physical abuse, poverty, you know, there's a lot of factors that, erm, you know no, no one case is the same and within every case there's sort of multiple issues that that we have to unpick really(.) So yeah, that's ((pause)) that's the team((.)) We've got three pods in our team, and I (.) I (.) I lead one of those and just (.) just to give you a bit of information, it is in line with the "Reclaiming Social Work Model" the (.) the (.) "Hackney model" and it's sort of about group supervision pod discussions so that we're basically unpicking like deeper issues within a case(.) It's multi agency so we have different perspectives(.) It means that there's not so much focus on on the Social Worker working in isolation, but there's ((pause)) there's a sort of group-think to it and that challenges people's biases, and, you know, helps to ((pause)) to plan and understand the case better then(.)

I: Brilliant, thank you so much and can I just ask so I've got an interview with an EP from (Name of Local Authority) a (Name of Educational Psychologist LA1EP) and is she the EP that works with your team then?

LA1SW: yeah(.)

I: Yeah, OK, yeah, lovely, OK, brilliant thank you(.) So, I will dive straight into the questions then(.) So, first of all, **what could you tell me about the role of the EP in your team?**

LA1SW: OK, so as I explained the ((pause)) the Educational Psychologist attends our weekly group supervisions and her role is to, sort of, help us I guess ((pause)) (.) unpick the case(.) So, she very much takes the lead with looking at the Genogram and works very much in like a systemic social work model where we're not just looking at the, sort of, the surface issues of the case, for example, sort of domestic abuse and substance misuse, but looking more at the whole system and looking at maybe the deeper issues so that we can hopefully achieve more change with families that are sort of, second order change as opposed to just looking on the surface and signposting to other services that maybe doesn't deal with the real issues of of the case(.) She looks at like relationships within the family(.) She ((pause)) she's very much helps us with – hers is very much critical inquiry where there's a lot of like questions and the questions that she asks really helps Social Workers and the whole pod to maybe understand why maybe families are

dysfunctional or or behaving in such a way, you know, whether that's the child or the parent or the grandparent ((pause)) trying to repair those relationships(.) So, the EP helps us sometimes with meeting with parents, having interviews with parents(.) She sometimes does cognitive assessments on parents so to help us, you know, maybe we've been delivering work to a parent on parenting but actually we've been delivering it in the completely wrong way(.) She helps us tailor work to the parent or to the child, for example maybe their IQ is very low or they are visual learners so that helps either the Social Worker or the Family Support Worker to tailor the work to meet their needs(.) And hopefully then the work is more successful

I: Yeah

LA1SW: and there's change in the family(.) She also helps us with a lot of our children are extremely complex and have high emotional and behavioural concerns(.) She helps us with, maybe, what intervention that child needs and whether it's the right time, because I think our Social Worker sometimes are very much, sort of, task focused sometimes, and very much want "Right OK, that child needs therapy" and sort of, we don't think about, you know, what's going on for that child? Is it likely to be successful? And what type of therapy? Is it the right time? And those type of things(.) So, that's helpful with, sort of, therapeutic advice then on ((pause)) on cases(.) Also, from an educational point of view, right, we find the EP very useful because and we don't always understand, maybe, the education system then(.) For example, the statementing process or the admissions(.) Very much practical things with schools(.) Or, maybe, you know who's the best person to go in the school if ((pause)) if a child is struggling with this or struggling with that(.) Or, for example, the erm ((pause)) when when children are excluded, the process behind that and advocating(.) She does attend a lot of educational meetings with us((pause))(.) [Phone rings] – sorry

I: That's ok(.)

LA1SW: ((pause)) transition meetings to help plan with, maybe, a child moving school or a child accessing the right support because what we know about a lot of our looked after children is their educational outcomes are much poorer and we do have a number of meetings to try and try and build on that and she's a very good advocate and support during those multi-agency meetings(.) So, although she's part of the pod she also does attend some other multi-agency meetings with us, mostly educational or interviews with ((pause)) with parents or maybe family network meetings where we're trying to get or trying to repair family relationships and trying to get families on board to be part of a safety network(.)

I: Yeah lovely(.) Thank you so much(.) It sounds like such a big and diverse range of work that you all do as a team(.)

LA1SW: Yes, absolutely yeah(.)

I: So, the next question (.) and I think there may be some repetition from what we've just talked about, because I think there's a lot of overlap here – is, so, **what sort of work does the EP do?** So, the ((pause)) the previous question was about

their role in the team, and this one is more specifically about their work, so I know there will be some overlaps(.)

LA1SW: OK, yeah(.) So like I mentioned, sort of, attending some meetings – multi-agency meetings – particularly education meetings where we need her support and guidance and her expertise(.) She also, maybe, does cognitive assessments on parents so that that can aid the Social Worker with tailoring the work to ((pause)) to meet that parent's needs(.) And, she also attends, maybe, family network meetings to help sort of look at the dynamics of a family(.) You know I spoke about like the systemic

I: Yeah

LA1SW: ((pause)) sort of, approach

I: Yeah

LA1SW: repairing relationships, strengthening relationships and she very much attends family network meetings then, sort of, to observe the dynamics between the families and to help, sort of, repair them(.) Yeah, erm and other work - Oh Sorry, I ((pause)) I ((pause)) I forgot to mention my ((laughs)) ((pause)) yeah, she also does like ((pause)) helps us with therapeutic work with children(.) So, for example, some Social Workers are jointly doing life journey work with her

I: Yeah

LA1SW: and narrative therapy which is very much similar to life journey work but erm, a sort of therapeutic approach to the life journey work so she supports Social Workers to do to do that as well(.)

I: Brilliant, thank you(.) So, the next question is **what does the EP's work aim to achieve?**

LA1SW: Well, very much similar principles to the team in the fact that we want to better outcomes for children and their families(.)

I: Yeah

LA1SW: But I think the EP that we have, in particular, because she has a systemic approach to her work, it's about looking beyond the surface issues of a case and looking at the, sort of, the deeper issues which then, in hand, we've seen some better changes in families because they are, sort of, second order change as opposed to, sort of, families doing what, you know, Social Workers are telling them to do(.) So, I think the ((pause)) the aim of the Educational Psychologist is to try and get the group, so that , - the pod - to understand, maybe, why the issues are there

I: Yeah

LA1SW: and to get the Social Workers to think about the relationships and how that has affected how maybe a parent behaves(.) And, I think the EP is very

focused on involving families and by involving families, actually, we can keep children safer and within their families(.)

I: Yep, yep(.) Lovely, thank you(.) And, **is there anything in particular that ((pause)) kind of, supports or constrains the EP's work in that role?**

LA1SW: [Pause] Supports((pause)) erm(.) Well, I think it's a team effort, isn't it? Like in the pod, you know, everything has something to bring

I: Yep

LA1SW: what supports that EP's role is very much the information that she gets from the Social Worker so, the genogram, the information that Social Worker presents(.) So, every Social Worker presents their own case

I: OK

LA1SW: in pod and there's a slot every six weeks for each case(.) And that Social Worker will present the case and their visits, you know, their observations(.) So, what supports the EP is very much if that Social Worker is invested and is proactive in sharing information, you know(.) I guess a constraint can be if maybe Social Workers are maybe resistant to the approach((pause))

I: Yep

LA1SW: and sometimes, you know, the EP will ask questions which are completely out of the box and there's reasons for that(.) So that critical, sort of, enquiry(.) And I think maybe some Social Workers are there to just sort of update like, "This has happened and that's it"(.). And then you don't have the quality of the conversations needed to be able to really unpick the case(.) But I think, yeah, what supports the EP is very much the other professionals that are involved(.)

I: Yeah

LA1SW: And any information that she has ((pause))

I: Yeah, lovely

LA1SW: And I guess some constraints maybe that Social Worker's attitude towards that approach(.)

I: OK, OK.

LA1SW: We're quite lucky in our team that, you know, the Social Workers do buy into the model and they do appreciate what an EP brings to the pod(.)

I: Brilliant(.) Thank you(.) Erm, and the next question is: **who else is or has been involved in the EP's work?** So, thinking about other professionals they might, sort of, tag in with, or, I don't know, maybe parents?

LA1SW: OK so yeah, the EP will do direct work with parents, with children, with foster carers as well(.) If there's((pause)) sort of (.) we've spoken a lot about relationships and repairing those but sometimes it would involve repairing relationships with children and their foster carers or children and their parents((pause))

I: Yeah

LA1SW: or direct work with children, for example the life journey work that she does(.)

I: Yep

LA1SW: She also((pause)) she works in a team with the local authority's emotional needs team(.) So, she works in a team with two other therapists and one other Educational Psychologist(.)

I: Yep

LA1SW: So, as a team they also have erm((pause)) like weekly team meetings to discuss referrals that come in so, for example, we might talk to our EP in our pod about the need for a child to have a certain intervention(.) We will then do a referral and then she will take it to that panel – the emotional needs panel – to decide, as their team so, separate to us, they still sit within the local authority's Children's Services

I: Yep

LA1SW: but they will decide between themselves what work needs to be done and who does that, it doesn't necessarily mean it'll be our EP although it usually because she knows the case and she has met the parents and the children but it might be, for example, that the child needs Theraplay and then there's a Theraplay therapist within that team of four so she might do that piece of work as opposed to our EP(.)

I: Yeah(.)

LA1SW: Yeah(.) She (.) she works with us as Social Workers, obviously, in the pod, our team manager and if other professionals attend the pod for example fostering team, youth offending team, drugs workers and the IFST service – so, the Integrated Family Support Team – so, there's a range of professionals that she would work with(.)

I: OK, brilliant(.) Thank you(.) And in terms of the team as a whole, **how is the workload shared between people?**

LA1SW: Ok, so, there are three pods, so three seniors that lead a pod and then there's a team manager(.) So, the senior teams – the team manager and the three seniors will have meetings around allocations of new cases 'cause obviously we have cases passed onto us in a planned way because we are a long-term team

I: Yep

LA1SW: and we have cases passed onto us in a mid-way meeting from the assessment team(.) So, we have, sort of, regular meetings about allocations and we look, really, at obviously capacity is a factor looking at each I will bring a list of my Social Workers in my pod's caseload and then the other two seniors will do the same(.) So, capacity is one factor(.) The other factor is that person's level of qualification so, for example, if they are newly qualified, they won't be able to have a case in care proceedings or a case on the child protection register(.)

I: OK

LA1SW: Another factor we look at when allocating is, sort of, the pod as a whole like, for example, they might be one pod who's very heavy on court work or very heavy on looked after children so we look at, sort of, balancing the legal status of cases((pause))

I: OK

LA1SW: and, also, when allocating, I guess, we look at that individual Social Worker's professional development(.) So, for example, in my pod I've got a newly qualified Social Worker who maybe hasn't dealt with the sexual exploitation process so maybe then I would allocate her a case, you know, for her own learning(.) So, very, very careful and we think of allocations very carefully as a senior team but I guess, as for the work within the pod then, erm the pod meeting themselves, the group supervision, is a place where we do look at, sort of, if new actions arise then we would dish things out within those pod meetings so, for example, there may be some direct work to be done with a child and there's a range of people who could do that work(.) That could be the EP, that could be the Social Worker, or it could be the Family Support Worker that we have(.) So, in those instances we look at whose got the better relationship with the child and what's the level of work that needs to be done(.) We do allocate tasks within the pod as well as allocating as a senior team(.)

I: Great, thank you(.) And the last question is about, erm ((pause)) **what is being used to carry out the EP's work?** So, thinking about whether they use perhaps particular tools or instruments to help them complete the work(.)

LA1SW: OK(.) Erm ((pause)) Well, erm ((pause)) I guess, sort of, techniques of, like motivational interviewing and certain questions that they use(.) I don't know what tools that would be, but I guess they have skills as opposed to tools(.) But like, certain questions(.) Erm((pause)) another tool that is heavily used by the EP is the genogram(.) The genogram is very much a tool that starts those conversations and when we have cases presented to us from the assessment team, that Social Workers comes to present it within our pod(.) With a new case, so, very much the starting point would be that genogram so, "Tell me about mum(.) Tell me about dad(.) What about their gran? What about this? And what about that?" ((pause)) the genogram is a tool that the EP would use(.) Other tools are things like, obviously, I've spoken about some of the therapies that they do like

Theraplay and erm((pause)) narrative therapy as well(.) So, that's erm((pause)) sort of an approach that they go to(.) We also have like erm I forgot to mention(.) So, it's a rolling six weeks of pods but on the sixth week we have all three pods come together and we have a bit of a learning session(.) It's led by the EP and she does training with us on those days(.)

I: OK

LA1SW: ((inaudible))

I: Erm

LA1SW: Sorry

I: No, I was going to ask a bit more about the training(.) What sort of training is it?

LA1SW: Yeah so, on those trainings we've got a bit of a rota of what we do, sort of, a ((pause)) every six weeks then(.) Like, for example, the last one we did the "social graces" and we looked at that(.)

I: OK yeah

LA1SW: So, we were exploring our own values and that type thing(.) There's been other pods group erm team pods then when we have looked at a specific case, a very stuck case in the team and whereby the whole team have been involved because the pod are really struggling with moving on with a case(.) So, we've done that(.) We've also done some direct work, so, tools she would use like direct work stuff like erm I I'm trying to think but like "words and pictures"

I: Yep

LA1SW: there's that(.) There's also one that we've learnt from her recently which is the best possible house and then the worst possible house because erm one thing I haven't mentioned is erm((pause)) our authority also employs a Signs of Safety approach, particularly around cases of child protection(.) But our EP, you know, every EP is different and other teams in the authority have a different allocated EP but what I would say about our EP is she's more systemic than the Signs of Safety

I: OK

LA1SW: So, that can that can be, I guess, one of the constraints that you asked of me earlier((pause))there are some Social Workers who are very invested then in the Signs of Safety approach which then comes into conflict with the EP, who's more systemic

I: OK(.) OK, yeah

LA1SW: there are other workers like myself who are a bit((pause))(.) who feel like they can use both approaches and they complement one another(.) But our EP is((pause)) is very much an advocate for systemic and then we have some

workers who are really, really invested in Signs of Safety so that's, you know, but then that's not a negative because ((pause)) it's we((pause)) we are a team who, sensitively and constructively challenge one another, and that that can only be a good thing(.) In pod, that's the whole purpose of pods is that we do challenge our own values(.) We do challenge our, you know, common biases you know, tunnel vision, and ((pause)) and so on(.) So, it's ((pause)) it's not a bad thing(.) So yeah, she uses different direct work(.) So, for example, Signs of Safety uses "three houses"(.). She doesn't like that approach((pause))

I: OK

LA1SW: so she she has alternatives(.) She gives us ideas in terms of direct work(.) Yeah, erm ((pause))

I: It sounds like quite a flexible and creative approach(.)

LA1SW: Yes, yes, there's no((pause)) I wouldn't say that, you know, you asked me about her focus and, you know, the tools that she uses on her role(.) It's not((pause)) I can, you know, it's not that it's not((pause)) and how can I describe this? There's no like huge rules about, you know, like "I can do this and I can't do that"(.). If that makes sense(.) Yeah, it's a((pause)) it is a creative and flexible role within the pod(.) And it's just about sharing ideas, coming up with possible hypotheses which, you know, some Social Workers will agree with some((pause)) some will not(.) But it's((pause)) it's all about, sort of, challenge(.) And, I was thinking, and I think moving from a team I worked for three years in a team that didn't have this ((pause)) the luxury of an EP and this approach(.) Yeah, I think it does really, really support you as a Social Worker(.) You don't feel so isolated and so you don't feel so much pressure with you being the main decision maker on a case(.) You've got other people, sort of, it's just it's a shared responsibility(.) That's what it's about and that EP is part of a shared responsibility to a case(.)

I: Yeah, yeah(.) Brilliant(.) Well thank you so much(.) There's just one kind of final thing I wanted to ask you in terms of the questions and it was just **is there anything I haven't asked about the team or the role of the EP or the work that you do that you'd like to share? Is there anything else?**

LA1SW: Erm(.) No one thing I was gonna say and I I guess it's it's((pause)) it's not a constraint but I guess it's a challenge(.) I guess every pod as you can imagine, runs differently because group dynamics is so complex, isn't it? And power is a factor that sort of runs within ((pause)) within those parts, isn't it? And I guess(.) I would say that sometimes, especially with less confident and newly qualified Social Workers it can be having the EP there is really beneficial, however, I think there is a slight power dynamic in that sort of group where a little bit of "what the EP says goes" and that's not because of the EP's approach and her ways but I think as a newly qualified to come be easier to go with someone else's decision as opposed to ((pause)) its sometimes can prevent newly qualifieds from developing their own professional judgment(.)

I: OK

LA1SW: And maybe less they may feel like they can't challenge that EP if they disagree and go with that EP because I ((pause)) I guess that EP is experienced for one but also they are a unique experts within that pod(.) We the rest of us are all Social workers or social work trained(.) She brings a very different element to it which is positive(.) But I guess for some((pause)) newly qualifieds they really worry about: one, maybe being criticized, which doesn't happen, it's sensitively challenge, but are maybe less likely to disagree or challenge because of that power dynamic maybe(.)

I: Do you think - and I really don't want to put words in your mouth, but do you think that could be related to kind of somebody who's newly qualified and hasn't yet really develop their professional confidence?

LA1SW: Yeah, definitely(.) It's ((pause)) it's ((pause)) yeah, that's exactly what I mean(.) I guess what as((pause)) as a pod leader and as their senior what I want is to see them developing their professional judgment(.) And yeah, that's not quite fair because they are newly qualified but I feel like sometimes the EP being present doesn't support them to do that because of the power dynamic(.)

I: Yeah, and do you think you might? You might not have a solution, but is there anything you think that could be done to try and address that?

LA1SW: Yeah, like you know me and the EP might have erm so debriefs about the pods at some point and sometimes we, you know, I have her opinion about, you know, "how do you think the pod is running?" What's ((pause)) 'cause we might have new staff come in and the pod completely changes(.) I might ask her advice and my team manager about; should we structure the pod different? Or, how can I get a certain Social Worker be more involved in the pod? Or, a certain worker get for example, and she's very much part of those discussions(.) And sometimes I will mention to her you know, "right, you know, this Social Worker needs to build on her confidence, she's newly qualified"(.). So, we ((pause)) we have had discussions in the past about maybe - and I have to be mindful about this as well - not maybe stepping in too early and giving a solution but stepping back and going, "Well what do you think?" instead of, 'cause I haven't mentioned this but just another element to our pod is we do score(.) We do a scoring system at the end of every case so, for example, if you know, where are they from zero to ten in terms of well, how worried are we then I guess(.) So, like with five being in the middle "good enough" with zero being very, very worried and ten being as good as it can be(.) So, like sometimes at the end it's a bit like scoring where do you think they're at? Sometimes the EP will jump in and say her view which is really important and she gives a rationale for her scoring, 'cause sometimes we've had to tweak that a little bit and say like 'cause I know some newly qualified will go with that EP regardless of their thinking so I've had to sort of speak to the EP about no, with this particular worker I want to see her develop in the pod and I want to see her develop her own professional judgement and empower her so that's when we've maybe in the past, you know, had a little debrief about the running of the pod and just little tweaks and it works(.)

I: Good, yeah(.) Yeah(.) That sounds really interesting and I'm really intrigued by all this, it sounds like really interesting work(.) Erm ((pause)) I think that's all of my questions for you today so I will just turn off the record – ((pause))

--- END OF RECORDING ---

Appendix M – Thematic Analysis: Code Generation Audit Trail

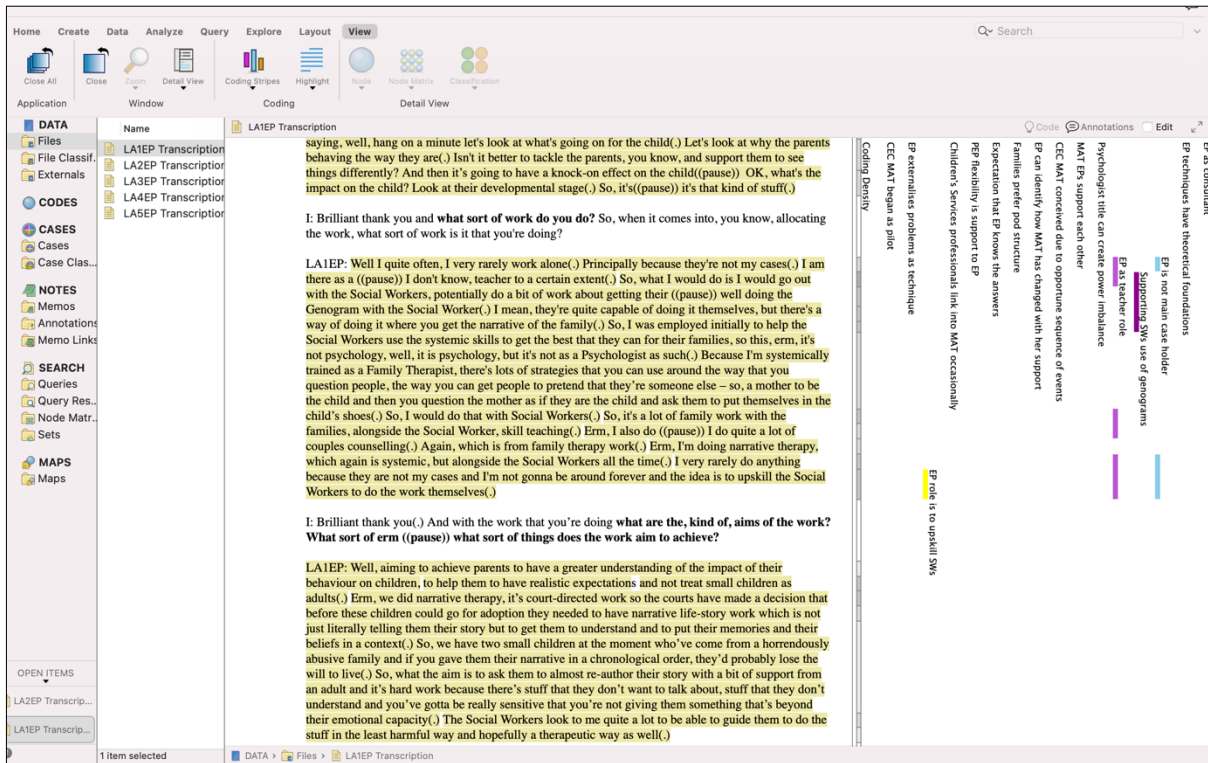


Image above shows code generation on NVivo (Version 12) for LA1EP interview.

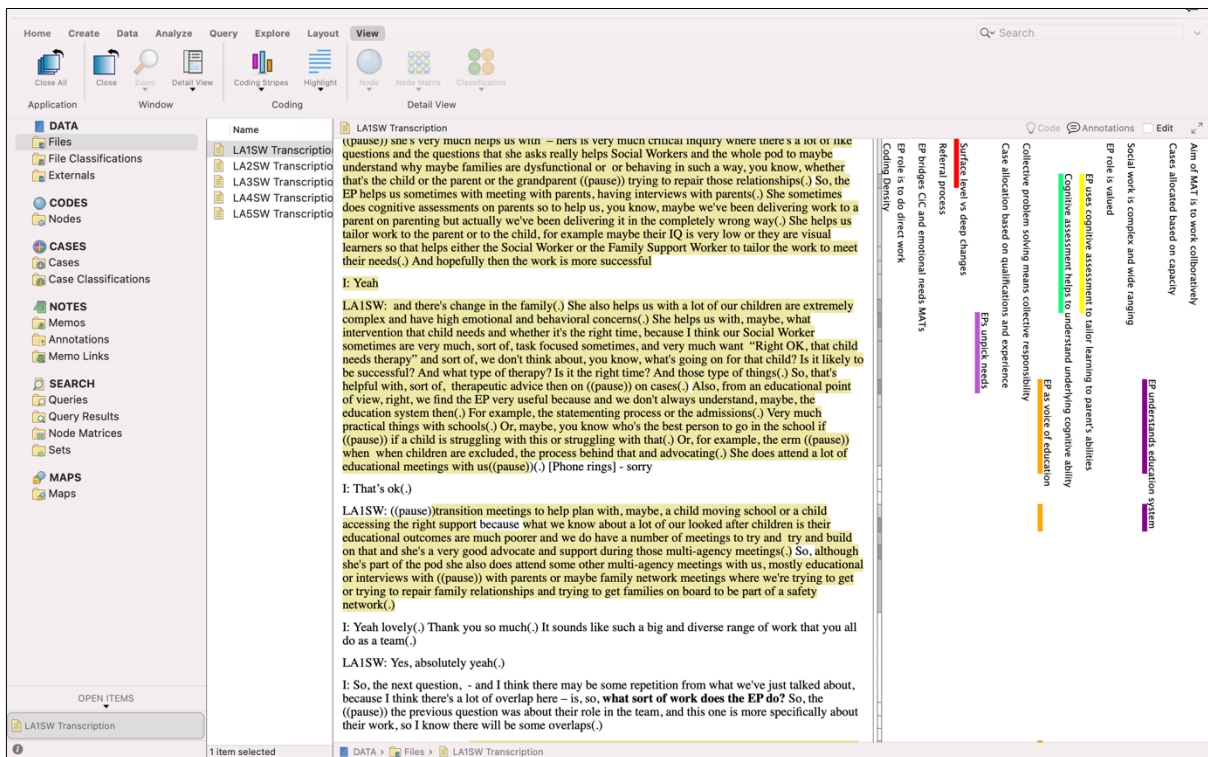
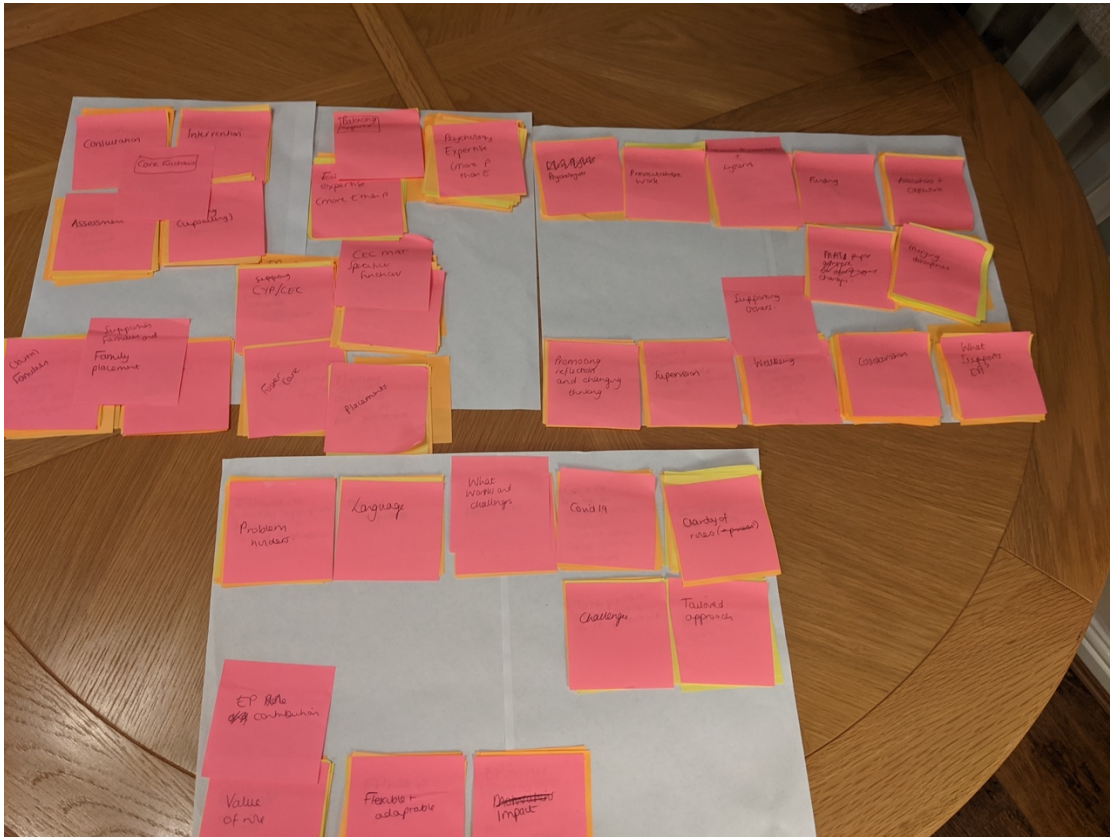
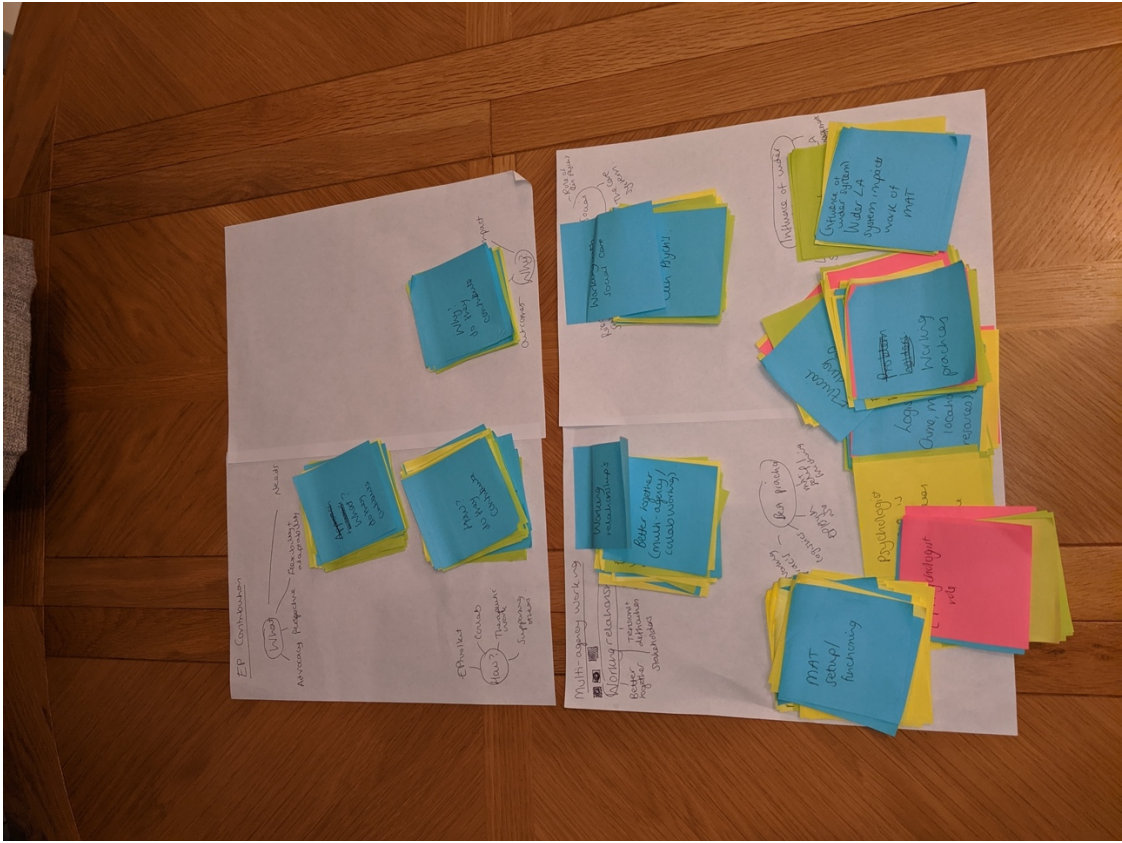


Image above shows code generation on NVivo (Version 12) for LA1SW interview.

Appendix N – Thematic Analysis: Theme Generation Audit Trail



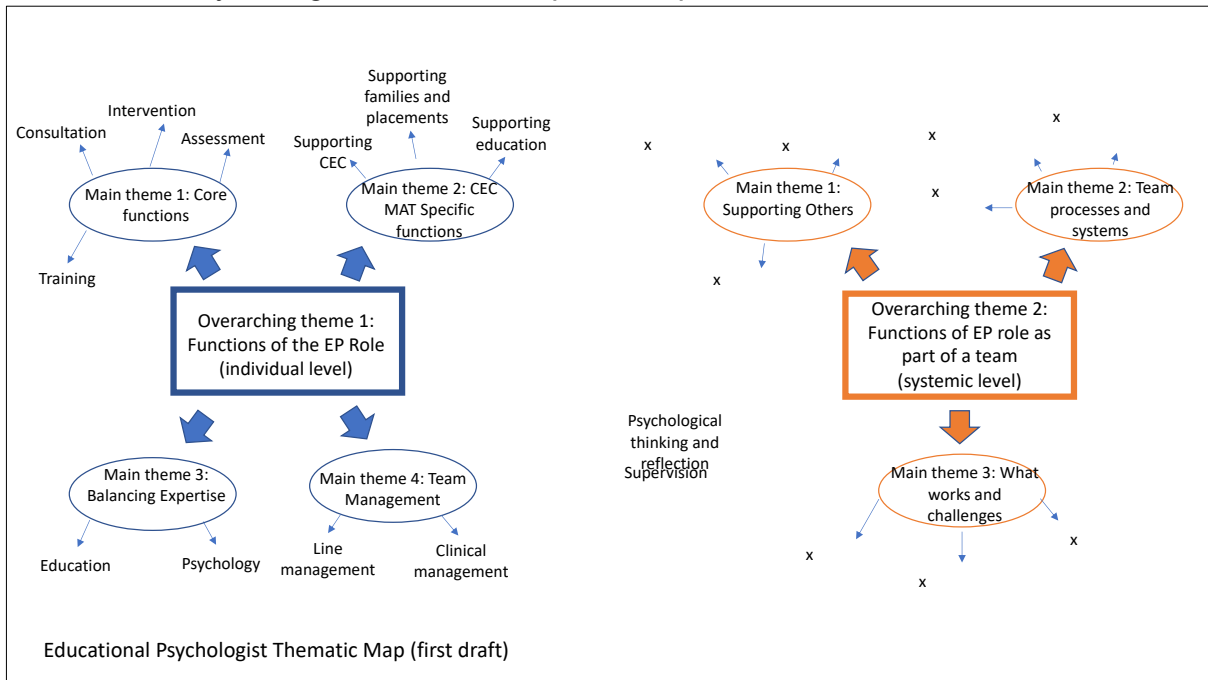
Educational Psychologist Theme Development



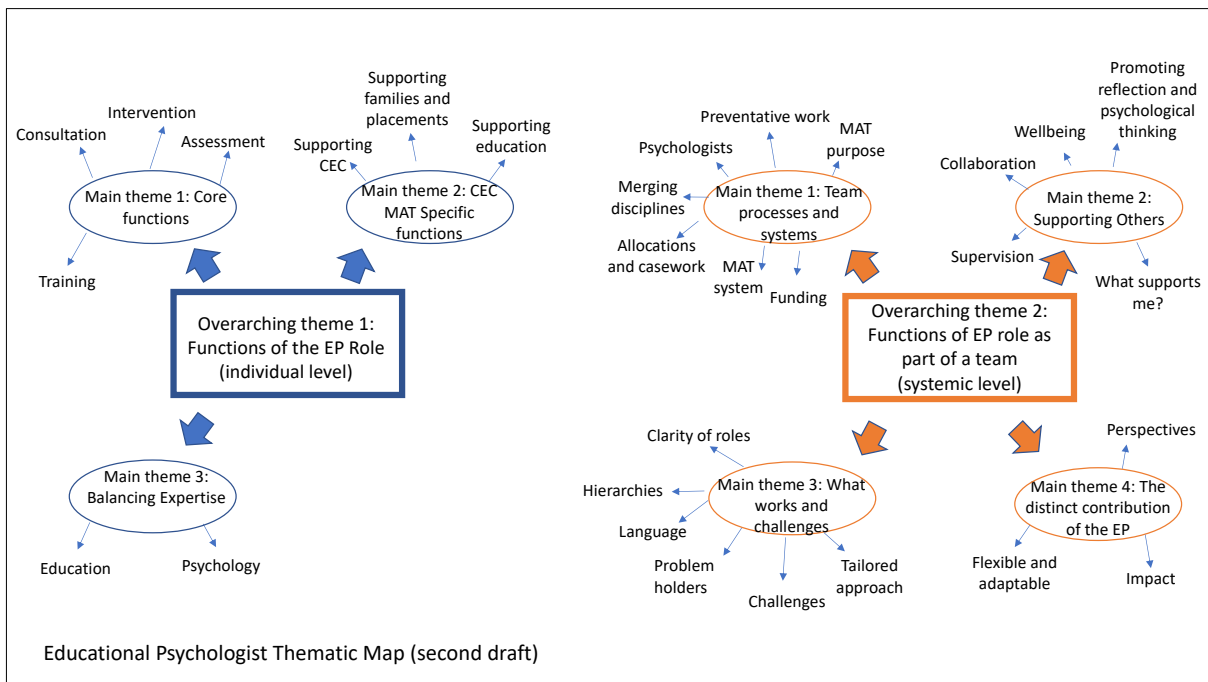
Social Worker Theme Development

Appendix O – Thematic Analysis: Thematic Map Development Audit Trail

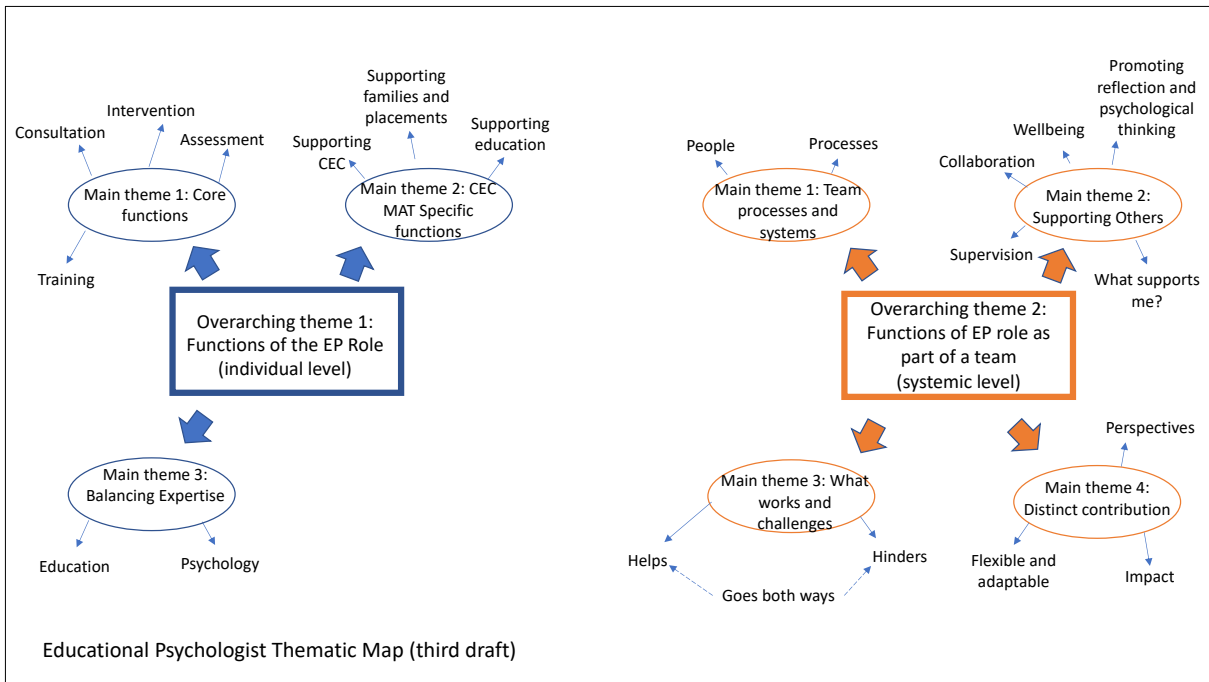
Educational Psychologist Thematic Map Development



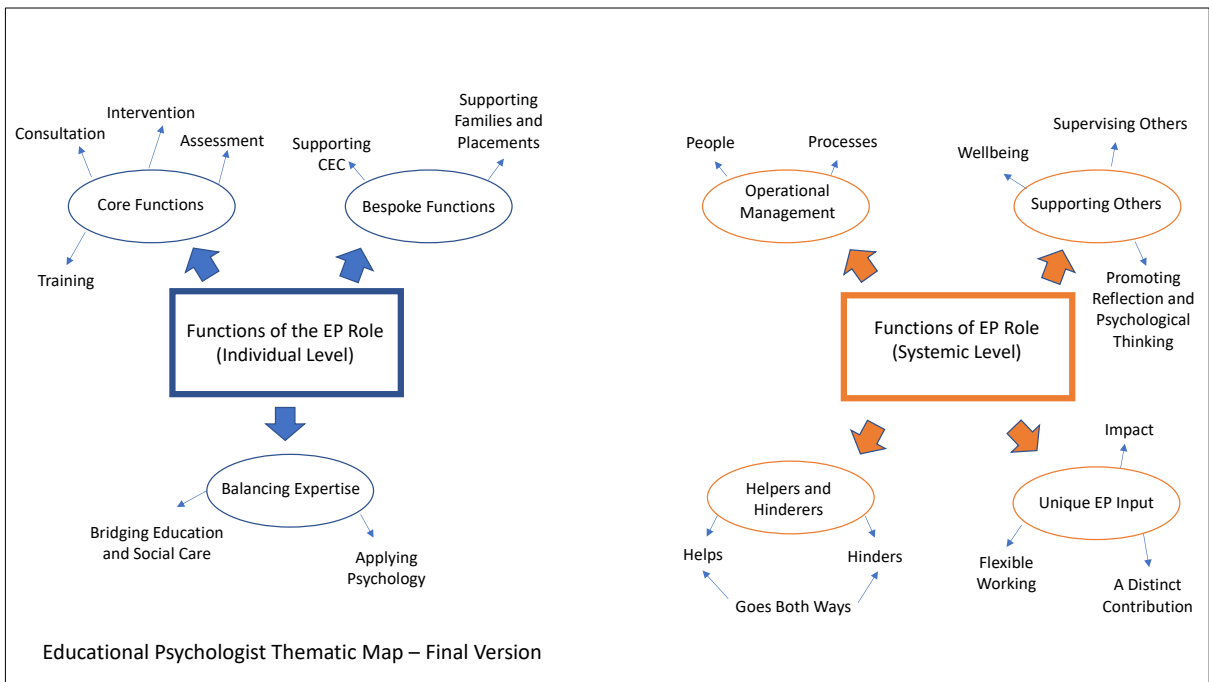
Educational Psychologist Thematic Map – Version 1



Educational Psychologist Thematic Map – Version 2

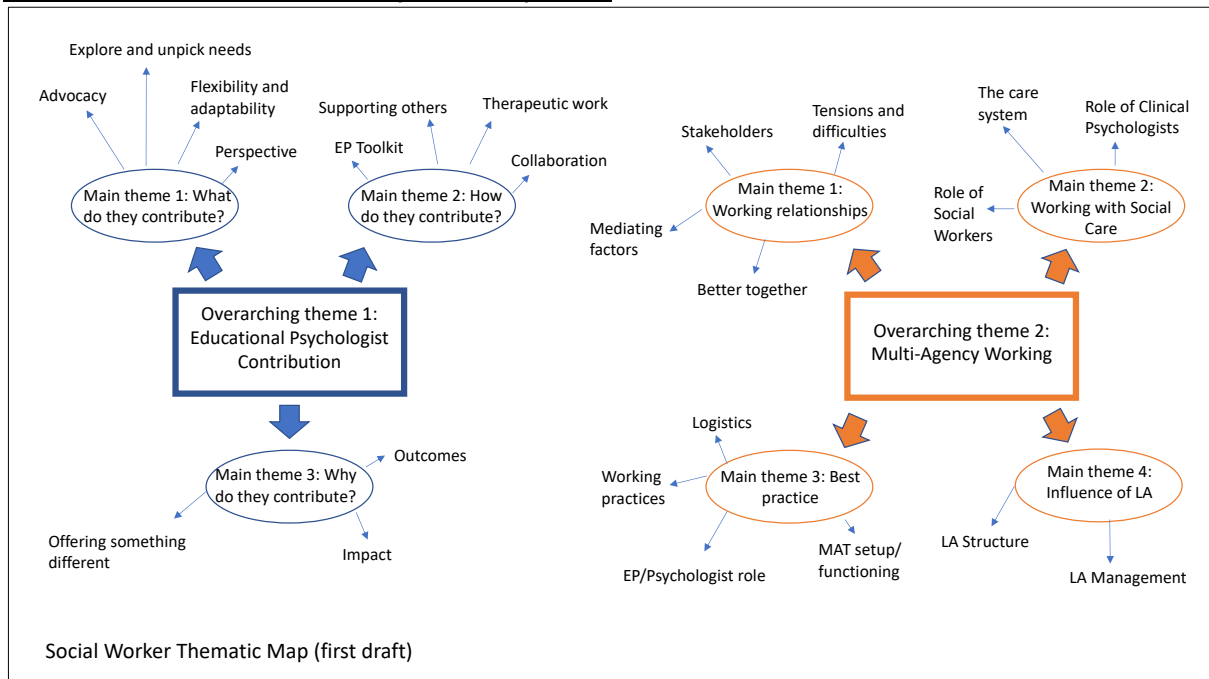


Educational Psychologist Thematic Map – Version 3

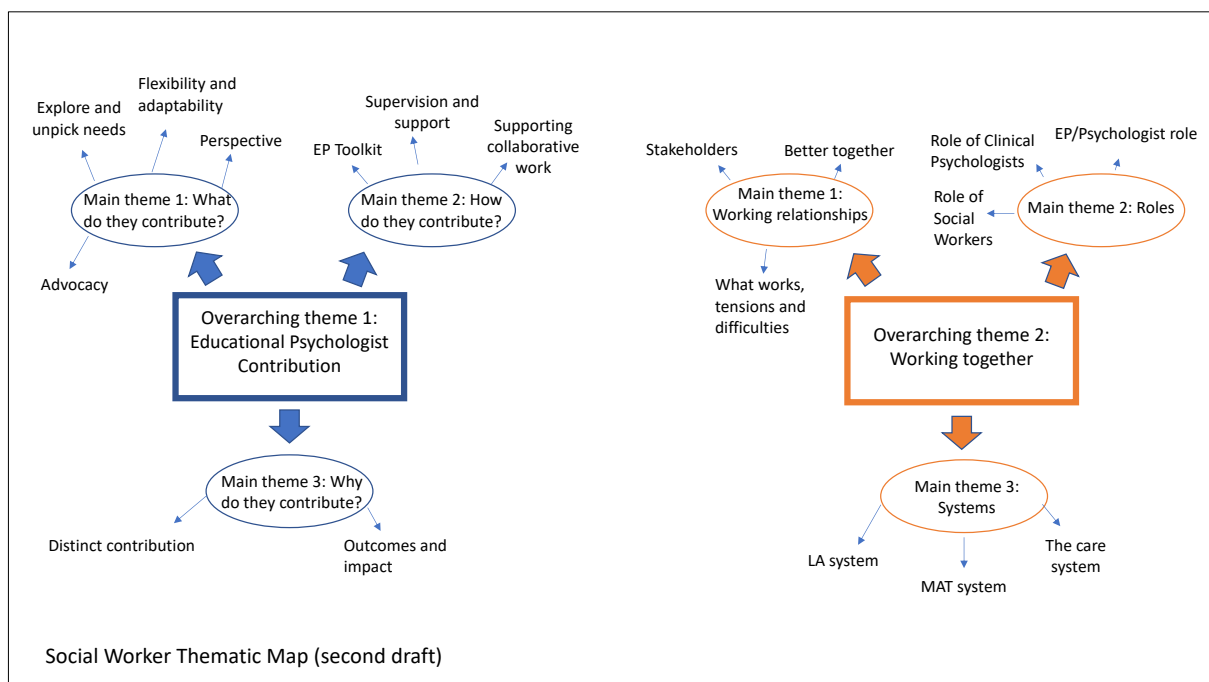


Educational Psychologist Thematic Map – Final Version

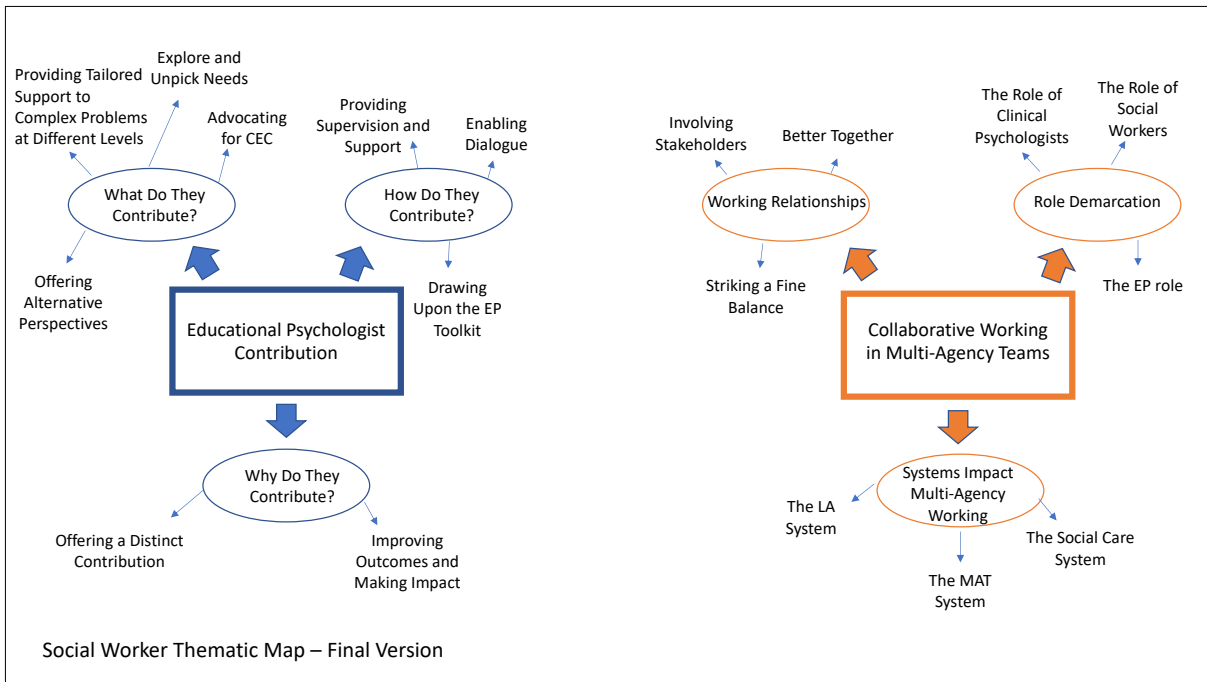
Social Worker Thematic Map Development



Social Worker Thematic Map – Version 1



Social Worker Thematic Map – Version 2



Social Worker Thematic Map – Final Version

Appendix P – Research Project Ethical Approval

On 27 Mar 2020 14:18, psychethics <psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk> wrote:

Dear Rhiannon,

The Ethics Committee has considered your PG project proposal: Using Activity Theory to explore the role of the Educational Psychologist working in social care teams. (EC.20.03.10.5983RA).

The project has been approved.

Please note that if any changes are made to the above project then you must notify the Ethics Committee.

Best wishes,

Adam Hammond

School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee

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Appendix Q – Ethical Considerations and Actions Taken

Ethical Consideration	Action Taken
Informed consent	The researcher informed participants of the study objectives and gave an explanation of what would happen in the interview should they agree to participate. Gatekeeper permission and informed consent was sought prior to conducting interviews. Participants were asked to make contact with the researcher to confirm their interest in participation and were therefore able to ask questions and gain clarification if needed.
Confidentiality	As gatekeeper permission had been sought, this may have impacted the participants confidentiality. However, participants were assured that there was no expectation that they should share the content of the interview discussion with their manager and were advised that their participation would not be disclosed further.
Anonymity	All interview audio recordings were transcribed within four weeks from the interview date. At this point, all audio recordings were permanently deleted, and all transcripts were made anonymous.
Right to withdraw	Participants were advised of their right to withdraw prior to taking part in the study and at the end of each interview. Following the interviews, participants were emailed with a date four weeks from then, which specified when and how to withdraw their participation. Participants were advised that after this date, the transcript of their interview would be made fully anonymous and therefore it would not be possible to withdraw.
Debrief	All participants were provided a hard copy of the Participant Debrief Letter prior to and following participation. This letter notes the contact details for the researcher, supervisor and University ethics board for participants to make queries.

Appendix R – Establishing Trustworthiness in Thematic Analysis

Establishing Trustworthiness in Thematic Analysis	
Stage of Thematic Analysis	Means of Establishing Trustworthiness in the Current Study
Stage 1: Data Familiarisation	<p>Credibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Immersion with the data (e.g. repeated listening to audio files and re-reading of interview transcripts) <p>Dependability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raw data stored in organised and secured archives with password protection Reflective journal stored in secure archives with password protection Process reviewed in supervision with research supervisor <p>Confirmability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentation of thought development in reflective journal Documentation of potential codes and themes in reflective journal
Stage 2: Systematic Data Coding	<p>Credibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peer debriefing (e.g., with research supervisor and peer) <p>Dependability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Process reviewed in supervision with research supervisor <p>Confirmability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentation of code development in reflective journal Use of a coding framework (Nvivo Version 12) Documentation of audit trail of code generation (see appendix M)
Stage 3: Generating Initial Themes	<p>Dependability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Process reviewed in supervision with research supervisor <p>Confirmability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Debriefing with research supervisor Documentation of theme development in reflective journal Creating visual thematic maps to aid theme development (see appendix O) Documentation of audit trail of theme generation (see appendix N)
Stage 4: Developing and Reviewing Themes	<p>Credibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Debriefing with research supervisor Documentation of audit trail of theme generation (see appendix N) Appraise referential adequacy by reviewing raw data, codes, and themes to assess for coherence of concepts

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessing the balance of codes to encompass supporting and contesting views (e.g. instances of participants agreeing and disagreeing with the notion that LA management support the EP role) <p>Dependability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Process reviewed in supervision with research supervisor <p>Confirmability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentation of theme development in reflective journal Creating visual thematic maps to aid theme development (see appendix O)
<p>Stage 5: Refining, Defining and Naming Themes</p>	<p>Credibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Debriefing with research supervisor Appraise referential adequacy by reviewing raw data, codes, and themes to assess for coherence of concepts <p>Dependability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Process reviewed in supervision with research supervisor <p>Confirmability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentation of theme naming Documentation of theme development in reflective journal
<p>Stage 6: Writing the Report</p>	<p>Credibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Debriefing with research supervisor <p>Transferability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentation thick description of context, process, and analysis in written report <p>Dependability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft report reviewed by research supervisor <p>Confirmability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentation of audit trail with reference to supporting evidence in tables, figures, and appendices Documentation of methodological and theoretical decisions, and analytical methods adopted in written report Researcher recognises their active role in research process, acknowledging that codes and themes do not simply “emerge” from the data Reflective and reflexive account of the research process written and submitted with final report, which includes exploring researcher’s awareness of bias in research process