



Doctorate in Educational Psychology (DEdPsy)

“This is your last chance to prove to us you can be here, we’ve tried everything to help you.” – Exploring the use of reduced timetables as exclusionary practice for young people in Wales

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Summary

This thesis is divided into three parts: a major literature review (Part A), an empirical research paper (Part B), and a critical appraisal (Part C).

Part A: Literature Review

The literature review is comprised of two sections. Part 1 consists of a narrative review, which aims to provide the background context of reduced timetables by considering inclusion and exclusion policy and relevant psychological underpinnings. Part 2 consists of a systematic review of the literature specifically mentioning reduced timetables within the context of the United Kingdom's education system.

Part B: Empirical Research Paper

The research paper details the current study with aims to explore the use of reduced timetables for secondary school aged young people who present with externalising behaviours in Wales. A questionnaire was circulated across Welsh local authorities to gather data on how reduced timetables are used nationally. Semi-structured interviews were carried out to explore a more in depth understanding of reduced timetables in schools. The methodology, process and analysis of the data are presented, and implications of the findings are detailed.

Part C: Critical Appraisal

The critical appraisal provides an overview of the research process, in addition to a reflexive and reflective account of the development of both the researcher and the research. Decisions made throughout the research process are considered and the implications of these are discussed.

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Abbreviations

ALN – Additional Learning Needs

ALNCo – Additional Learning Needs Coordinator

BPS – British Psychological Society

CASP – Critical Appraisal Skills Programme

CYP – Children and young people

EBSA – Emotionally based school avoidance

EP – Educational Psychologist

EPS - Educational Psychology Service

EWO – Education Welfare Officer

LA – Local authority

PSP – Pastoral Support Plan

RTA – Reflexive Thematic Analysis

SEN – Special Educational Needs

TEP – Trainee Educational Psychologist

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UK – United Kingdom

YP – Young people (adolescents)



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Part A: Literature Review

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Structure of the Literature Review

This literature review will form two parts. The first consists of a narrative review that aimed to provide a comprehensive overview of the social and political background of reduced timetables and their use for young people with socio-emotional differences. The review will then make links to exclusions, young people at risk of exclusion, and informal exclusions. This is followed by a discussion of psychological underpinnings exploring their links to adolescents, with a particular focus on the application of bio-ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

The second part will comprise of a systematic literature review that sought to explore current research on the use of reduced timetables. Considerations and implications for Educational Psychology (EP) practice are drawn from the themes. This section will conclude with the rationale and research questions for the empirical study.

A1 - Narrative Literature Review

This narrative review aims to provide the background context to reduced timetables by considering concepts and contexts that may inform or surround them. Narrative reviews aim to synthesise findings from a range of sources in order to provide an account of the relevant history, theories and research related to a topic (Siddaway et al., 2019). The review will begin by defining the terms inclusive education, supporting young people (yp) with socio-emotional differences, exclusion, off-rolling and informal exclusions, at risk of exclusion and reduced timetables. This is followed by an exploration of relevant psychological underpinnings that may be helpful to consider when understanding reduced timetables.

1.0 Inclusive Education

Inclusive education has established itself as a key aim of education research, policy, and practice globally. Broadly defined as “the central message is simple: every learner matters and matters equally” (UNESCO, 2017, p. 12). Yet, the discourse around what constitutes inclusive education is complex. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) define inclusive education as “a process intended to respond to student diversity by increasing their participation and reducing exclusion within and from education” (UNESCO, 2009, p.13). Older publications from UNESCO state that ‘real’ inclusion relates to the right of all children to a high-quality education, with a focus on those, who for different reasons are at risk of exclusion or marginalisation (UNESCO, 1994). Danforth and Jones (2015) offered the view that UNESCO’s stance on inclusion is different to reintegration, and refer to integration as a failed attempt at inclusion.

1.1 Inclusion in Wales

Wales is currently undergoing major education system-level reforms and initiatives that include the curriculum and the development of the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) system (Welsh Government, 2021; 2018). The new curriculum in Wales was published in January 2020 and began phasing in from September 2022 (Welsh Government, 2022). The Inclusion and Pupil Support (2016) document was produced by the Welsh Government to provide guidance on inclusion and support for learners in compulsory education. Within this document, inclusion is defined as:

“a process through which all pupils access common opportunities in ways relevant to their needs, and which ensures that they fully belong to the school community. Inclusion requires the active involvement of all concerned. It places the onus on schools to adapt their organisation and their ways

of responding to both meet the needs and value the development of all children and young people in all areas of school life” (Welsh Government, 2016, p.2).

Knight and Crick’s (2021) research explores what inclusion means in real-life practice. They emphasise the importance of teachers’ attitudes to implementing inclusive education in Wales, their analysis found that ‘challenging behaviour’ was a key issue raised by teachers as being a barrier to inclusive education (Knight & Crick, 2021). They also found that inadequacy of funding and resources and were directly correlated to a lack of inclusion for children who distract from the rest of the class (Knight & Crick, 2022). Suggesting that inclusion in principle is of course very different to the nuanced scenarios education professionals find themselves in, indicating a potential gap between policy and practice.

2.0 Supporting young people with socio-emotional differences

2.1 Language / discourse around needs

The label of ‘social, emotional and behavioural difficulties’ or ‘social and emotional needs’ are applied to yp whose behaviour is deemed to be “out of place with their school context” (p.33) which is viewed as a barrier to their own learning or to that of their peers (Holt, Bowlby & Lea, 2013). Holt, Bowlby and Lea (2013) prefer the term socio-emotional differences to emphasise that the difficulties young people face are socially constructed concerning the norms of appropriate behaviour in the education system and wider society. This term also refers to the need, rather than the behaviour they present with i.e. Emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA); challenging or persistent disruptive behaviour. Caslin (2021) raised concerns regarding the use of labels within schools and how they can reinforce the medical model, whereby the blame for the behaviour is placed on the individual; who becomes defined by the label or term attached to them. Often this means responses to approaching these difficulties tend to focus on changes the individual can make, rather than exploring the contexts around them (Timimi, 2010). Therefore, they do not change, and continue to express how they are feeling in the classroom in ways that fall outside of adult expectations, they continue to be placed on the outskirts of mainstream education (Goodley, 2017).

When yp find it hard to attend school for any reason, different labels are applied to the young person to categorise them. Examples include “refusal” “behavioural”, “truancy” and “at risk of exclusion” (Billington, 2018). Historically, these groups have been viewed in a within child approach. For example, ‘school refusers’ have been perceived as experiencing excessive anxiety, with associated somatic symptoms, whereas truants were not perceived to experience anxiety about attending school (Lauchlan, 2003). Wilson (2012) considered how responses to yp could be influenced by the interpretation of language used to describe them. Such labels or references could suggest that reasons

for the child being missing from education are a within child view, which can deflect attention from environmental or systemic factors (Pellegrini, 2007). Billington (2018) explored the views of young people missing from education and found there is a complex system of processes and interplay occurring that impacts how young people feel about themselves and school.

2.2 Importance of teachers

Teachers are viewed as critically important to the application of inclusive education (Knight et al., 2022). Several developmental theories place importance on teacher-student relationships in a young person's development such as attachment theory, interpersonal theory and social motivation theory (Sabol & Pianta, 2012). The common theme amongst these ways of meaning making are recognition of the importance of emotional support, connectedness, closeness and sensitivity as key determinants of positive educational experience for young people (Obsuth et al., 2017). Penketh & Waite's (2017) research suggests that, although in principle, teachers appear to be in agreement with the push for inclusion in education, teachers often do not feel competent or supported to work with a diverse range of learners and this can lead to the exclusion of certain groups (Penketh & Waite, 2017). In 2017, the Children's Commissioner for England, stated that children experiencing social and emotional differences are being illegally excluded because the school does not feel able to cope (Children's Commissioner, 2017). Graham et al., (2019) offer a view that staff are not identifying and meeting the needs of these children and reduced school funding has resulted in decisions to not buy in specialist support. Therefore, children and young people with socio-emotional differences may find themselves in schools ill-equipped to support them and may develop practices to exclude as a means of survival.

3.0 Exclusion

Welsh Government (2019) refers to permanent exclusion from school as a "pupil who is excluded and their name removed from the school register" (p.9). Across the United Kingdom, there are disparities in exclusion rates (Cole, 2019). Each of the four countries holds unique processes and tools to measure exclusion explanations, making it difficult to compare. These varying approaches may contribute to contrasting levels of exclusion across the UK (Duffy et al., 2021). Power and Taylor (2020) offer the view that not only is it difficult to compare the prevalence of exclusion across the UK, but there are differences in reasons for exclusion and that there must be system-level factors that need to be considered in terms of consistency of reasons for exclusion. Compared to its neighbouring country England, Wales has a set of different values and policies that underpin exclusion rates in schools, as per the devolved education system (Power & Taylor, 2020). It is also true that recorded data on exclusions do not account for the newly recognised types of exclusions that are not permanent or fixed, recently termed as informal exclusions.

A report by Gill, Quilter-Pinner and Swift (2017), indicate that the most vulnerable cyp in in society are more likely to be excluded. They are four times more likely to have grown up in poverty, seven times more likely to have ALN, and ten times more likely to have poor mental health (Duffy et al., 2021). Despite formal exclusions being the historical method of managing behaviour in schools across the UK, research suggests that exclusion as a behaviour management or punishment technique is not an effective way to change behaviour (McCluskey et al., 2016). McCluskey has carried out several studies in this area and concluded that exclusion does not address underlying issues of why a young person has presented with the behaviour. It merely moves them on and they carry their feelings of rejection and resentment with them to an alternative provision and often into adulthood (McCluskey, 2014). McCluskey's (2014) research begs the question of the purpose of exclusion; whether it is to change the behaviour of the child, or if school equilibrium is at the centre of the approach (Power & Taylor, 2020).

3.1 'Off-rolling' and informal exclusions

Power and Taylor (2020) postulate that school exclusion rates are often viewed in our society as a barometer of the social inclusiveness of the education system as a whole. It may be suggested that high rates of school exclusion are seen as evidence of an education system in crisis. Although, it could be the case that the low level of exclusion rates is what we should be worried about. Done et al., (2021) define off-rolling as "the removal of students from school rolls in the absence of a formal fixed term or permanent exclusion that conforms to legal guidelines" (p.2). For a long time, these practices were completely hidden, however, research is beginning to develop in this area. Parsons (2017) outlines the following means that could be considered as types of exclusions schools may use, including off-rolling or informal exclusion practices:

“Permanent Exclusion

Fixed Term Exclusion

Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) and Alternative Provision (AP)

Managed moves

Elective Home Education (EHE)

Reduced timetables

Extended study leave

Attendance code B - Approved off-site educational activity

Children Missing Education” (p.2)

The prevalence of such practices is difficult to gauge precisely given their illegality but also because schools have found ways of engineering legitimacy to obscure the scale of the problem (Parsons, 2017). This will be discussed in more detail later in the review.

3.2 Exclusionary practice

As there is movement towards there may be more than one type of exclusion in education that moves beyond the legal definition, there is space to consider the importance of language when we talk about exclusion. As discussed, Billington's (2018) research drew attention to the importance of the language we use for cyp's behaviour and needs. It may also be helpful to consider what labels we give to the measures we give or impose on them. Power and Taylor (2020) acknowledge that there are many practices that do not tell the whole story of practices that are exclusionary, even if they are not an 'exclusion'. If we offer language to these practices that are exclusionary to cyp, it may support acknowledgement of both the feelings of exclusion an individual may face and the act of excluding a child or young person from an aspect of school. A difficulty schools or the wider context may face with this move towards language such as 'exclusionary practice', as this may compete with the desire and pressure to be 'inclusive' (Baynton, 2020) and draw attention to the need for scrutiny of all types of exclusionary practice (Power & Taylor, 2020). Done et al., (2021) highlight the potential role for EPs in supporting schools to identify where practice may be exclusionary in a helpful and curious way. The process of re-contextualising these difficulties in a way that are not individualized on a per child basis was identified as being the least threatening way of approaching this with schools (Done et al., 2021). This approach carefully considers the tensions of the role the EP faces in wanting to protect important relationships with school staff, whilst holding ethical principles at the centre of practice.

3.3 The role of the Educational Psychologist in supporting with formal / informal exclusion

The core role of the Educational Psychologist is the application of psychological theory, research and techniques to support children, yp, their families and schools to promote the emotional and social well-being of young people (Association of Educational Psychologists, 2019). Thomson's (2020) study suggests an EPs role in supporting specifically looked after children at risk of exclusion falls broadly within the framework of an EPs core functions: training, consultation, assessment, intervention and research. Waite (2013) explored the role of the EP for children at risk of exclusion. They found when EPs are involved with those at risk of exclusion, they should offer support that is context driven though consultation and training. This level of flexibility based on systemic factors based on school need is emphasised in the paper, whilst acknowledging this is done so with more ease when there is a well-established relationship between the EP and the school and those around the

child. Parsons (2009) noted that within the low excluding LAs he studied, a young person could not be excluded without the input of an EP, who might provide insights as to alternative ways of approaching a young person and tailoring their learning environment to their individual needs. These observations suggest that EPs might have a role to play in relation to reduced timetables if a child or young person was placed on one when at risk of exclusion.

3.4 ‘At risk’ of exclusion

The term ‘at risk of exclusion’ encompasses a pupil who has not been excluded but communicates their emotions by displaying behaviours that staff may consider disruptive or challenging and would commonly lead to a school exclusion (Cole et al., 2019). Welsh Government (2016) outline that “pupils who do not respond to school actions to combat disaffection may be at serious risk of permanent exclusion or criminal activity” (p.101). The suggested intervention is a Pastoral Support Plan (PSP), which is a school-based intervention to help individual pupils to “better manage their behaviour and to identify any support mechanisms which need to be put in place” (Welsh Government, 2016, p.101). The paper further goes on to say a PSP is a means to provide additional support to avoid exclusion, rather than the aim being to exclude a pupil. In terms of strategies and interventions that Welsh Government suggest may be attached to a PSP, a few are noted below:

- “a mixed course of activities – often provided by voluntary organisations.
- staff being given guidance on behaviour management specific to the pupil.
- jointly registering the pupil at the school and a PRU providing the opportunity to benefit from the PRU’s expertise while the pupil remains at the school, aiding full re-integration later. Both primary and secondary pupils could take this option, full- or part-time – the latter is preferable for primary pupils.
- a managed move to another school – with the agreement of the pupil’s parents/carers and the receiving school. A fresh start, with the opportunity to develop new relationships, can have a positive impact on a child’s progress.” (Welsh Government, 2016, p.104).

3.5 Reduced timetables

Article 28 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) states that every child should have a right to education. However, the Education Act (1996), permits an LA to not provide a full time education if it is considered to be in the best interests of a pupil. Reduced timetables, sometimes referred to as part-time or reintegration timetables, are timetables which “restricts a pupil’s access to a full time curriculum” (Monmouthshire Inclusion Service, 2021, p.22). The English Department of Education (2020) states that “in very exceptional circumstances there may be a need

for a temporary part-time timetable to meet a pupil's individual needs. A part-time timetable must not be treated as a long-term solution. Any pastoral support programme or other agreement must have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend full-time or be provided with alternative provision." (p.19) (Department of Education, 2020). There is no mention of reduced timetables in Welsh Government policy and are not suggested within in the national PSP guidance.

There is minimal mention of reduced timetables in research (Parsons, 2011, 2017; Cole et al., 2019), and none exploring impact, degree of variation of when and how they are being implemented. Consequently, the degree to which reduced timetables are being used within education, as well as the experiences of reduced timetables, are largely unknown. Parsons (2017) argues that whilst reduced timetables are sometimes used to support pupils with medical needs, they are more often used for pupils experiencing behavioural challenges and as an alternative to exclusion, noting that pupils may be in school for only a few hours a day whilst placed on this "worrying and possibly frequent means of quasi exclusion" (p.7). Upon consideration of Parson's (2017) observations, children placed on reduced timetables could be at risk of exclusion. Yet there is currently no means to monitor their application and use. Cole et al., (2019) explored factors impacting exclusion rates. They reported there was an "unquantifiable use of reduced timetables, unofficially "sending children home, pressure on parents to place their children in different schools or face exclusion" (p.388). They go on to question if unofficial practice and unrecorded data is masking the true level of exclusions in the United Kingdom (UK).

A measure suggested in the Welsh Government exclusion paper (2015) is part time attendance at a mainstream school. This intervention is suggested to be combined with a PRU, voluntary organisation, college, work placement or home tuition offered by the LA. A consideration that may be seen as a contradiction of the part-time attendance at the mainstream school is offered in the 2016 Inclusion paper by Welsh Government whereby the view that "poor or irregular attendance interrupts learning and teaching for everybody" (p.78). This tension between the two may be felt by yp who require extra support and receive exclusions. There is also no further guidance or suggestions around specifics of part-time timetabling for children, how long it should be for, when it should be reviewed and who it may or may not be suitable for. Throughout the policy, it is clear that timetables should be topped up with alternative provision such as a PRU or a mixed course of activities. There is no mention of reducing a timetable and a cyp being at home for the remainder of the school day.

Currently, there is no statutory basis to establish a reduced timetable in Wales or for schools and/or LAs to gather and share any data on reduced timetables. Therefore, it is often managed at LA level, who generally have a reduced timetable policy, or a policy whereby reduced timetables are mentioned

(Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, 2018; Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, 2021). Each policy outlines reduced timetables as being a short term, time limited measure to be put in place only when every alternative avenue has been exhausted (Neath Port Talbot Council, 2022).

Reasons listed below:

- “1. As part of a planned re-integration into school following an extended period out of school following exclusion, non-attendance, school refusal or to facilitate a managed transfer between schools (although this should not be the norm for managed moves).
2. Following an extended absence due to ill health or other medical reasons.
3. As a temporary fixed-term, closely monitored intervention to address and manage the impact of significantly challenging behaviour or emotional or social needs, whilst alternative arrangements are being made to meet the individual needs or to coordinate with therapeutic intervention or other services.” – (Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, 2018, p.4)

Whilst the LA policies offer some sort of guidance to a practice that may otherwise go completely unregulated, they are not supported or mentioned within government or national documents. It could be argued that they directly contradict government policies previously mentioned, which specifically discuss the top up of a timetable that is reduced in mainstream class time.

4.0 Psychological underpinnings

4.1 Social cognition in adolescence

It may be helpful to consider how psychology can explain why yp, specifically may find themselves at risk of exclusion and on a reduced timetable. At present, there is no data explicitly linking secondary school aged yp to reduced timetables. This section of the literature review will explore potential social cognitive factors that may make yp more vulnerable to this approach.

Adolescent cognitive development research implies that simply being a teenager itself suggests a certain level of vulnerability in relationships, interactions and self-regulation (Bog et al., 2018), yet it is not clear in education research if this is considered throughout their school experiences (Zanolie et al., 2022). Adolescence is marked by major structural and functional development brain changes (Sebastian et al., 2010). Lambert and Miller (2011) note the influence of adolescent vulnerabilities and the impact they can have on a young person’s presentation in school and the potential bi-directionality between exclusion from school and mental health needs.

Cognitive factors contributing to adolescent ‘risky decision making’ have been explored using neuroimaging in combination with tasks that examine reward processing and cognitive control

(Blakemore, 2008). Peake et al., (2013) attempted to build upon this research by exploring risky decision making before and after an episode of social exclusion. They found that exclusion was associated with greater behavioural risk taking among adolescents with lower self-reported resistance to peer influence. They also explored the relationship between risk taking behaviours, peer influence and certain neural mechanisms that influence vulnerability. Results suggest that attentional mechanisms and, more generally, social cognitive processes have a unique direct effect on adolescents' vulnerability to peer influence on risk taking (Peake et al., 2013). More generally, neural response profiles during processing of risky decisions and negative outcomes suggest that some teenagers are better able to regulate their actions and reactions following feelings of exclusion, whilst others may experience an increase in the salience of thoughts of peers after exclusion (Peake et al., 2013; Parker et al., 2016). If this was considered in the context of reduced timetables, it may be the more a young person feels excluded, the more they may engage in risk taking or impulsive behaviours which are associated with consequences, or adult led sanctions such as exclusionary practice.

Extensive developmental research has demonstrated that adolescence is a time characterised by an increased importance of relationships, sensitivity to rejection and negative psychological outcomes associated with rejection (Killen, Mulvey, & Hitti, 2013). Feelings of belonging and exclusion are associated with brain activity in the social brain, which is associated with the navigation of complex social environments facilitating cooperation with others (Raufelder & Kulakow, 2021). Feelings of exclusion and rejection can occur for a myriad of reasons, and although exclusion may not always be intended to cause psychological harm, experiences of exclusion can have detrimental outcomes in terms of emotional and behavioural health, academic difficulties, decrease in positive social engagements and low self-esteem (Mulvey, Boswell & Zheng, 2017).

Feelings of rejection, exclusion and ostracism are all associated with negative externalising behaviour. This can range from chronic rejection over time to a single episode of exclusion (Lambert & Miller, 2011). Longitudinal studies link chronic peer rejection in childhood with increased risk-taking during adolescence in forms such as externalising behaviour (Peake et al., 2013). That is, teens with threatened or unmet social needs might engage in risky activities or behaviours as a way to interact or gain the recognition of peers. Generally, adolescents with poorer social skills and lower self-esteem are more likely to experience rejection and are more emotionally affective than less vulnerable teens (Gidlund, 2018). Whilst those who struggle with these attributes may be considered to be those who adults see as being shy, withdrawn or anxious (Mulvey, Boswell & Zheng, 2017). Yp who present with high levels of externalising behaviours that can include aggression, hyperactivity or disruption can experience feelings of social exclusion (Pouwels et al., 2017). In contrast to feelings of exclusion, a sense of belonging can define a student's sense of being accepted, valued and integrated at school,

including through encouragement by their peers and teachers (Paget et al., 2017). Raudfelder and Kulakow (2021), state that social belonging contributes to the emotional, cognitive and behavioural development of yp and may also impact developmental changes in adolescent brains. With the aforementioned research considered, it could be assumed that reduced timetables have the potential to result in a young person experiencing feelings of exclusion and a lack of belonging in their school. Whilst the aim of the reduction of school time may be to work on reintegration, it may in fact be forming a barrier for the young person and increasing their externalising behaviours such as hyperactivity, aggression or disruptive behaviours exacerbated by their feelings of anxiety linked to their now social vulnerabilities.

Whilst social cognition in adolescence can explain social and emotional vulnerability for young people and how this might impact their outward behaviour, it is important to note experiences that can exacerbate this. When considering relationships and behaviour in teenage years, it is important to consider the life experiences of the young person. Burnham's (2018) Social GRRRAACCEEESSS (SG) is a mnemonic developed to outline areas which influence personal and social identity. This conceptualisation of human experience tells us that the experiences and privilege or lack of, can impact who we are, how we view the world and consequently, how we behave. In the context of the present literature review, this is relevant because a young person's childhood experiences can impact how they experience school relationships, identity and consequently, how they navigate and express their emotions in school.

4.2 Containment

There is a growing awareness of the benefits of psychodynamic ideas in EP practice (Bartle, 2015). A key idea in psychodynamic approaches that may be helpful to consider in the realm of reduced timetables is containment (Bion, 1963). More specifically, for adults to be a container, to not only care about the child, but to think about their experience (Bion, 1963). Bion drew on the concept of intersubjectivity, noting that emotions pass between people and sometimes experiences are too painful to tolerate due to the feelings associated with them (Bion, 1963). When considering the reduced timetables context, it is important to consider containment in a layered way. A teacher or school staff member may need to be a container for the child, but an EP may be well placed to offer space for containment for staff members. Going wider in the systems, all parties may rely on policy and research that contain and offer guidance to the systems relating to reduced timetables. It perhaps begs the question that if to feel contained is to feel safe in the knowledge that someone or something is holding on to the imaginable (Bion, 1964), what may be the consequence of a young person or teacher not feeling contained?

4.3 Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Model

Bronfenbrenner's theory of human development was in a continual state of development until 2005. In its original version, Bronfenbrenner (1979) proposed that an individual's development is a result of the influence of the environmental systems they find themselves in. Bronfenbrenner termed these contexts the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem. As the model was revised, Bronfenbrenner adapted the model to emphasise proximal processes, namely, the 'Process-Person-Context-Time model' (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). This comprises the types of interaction between the individual and their environment that operate over time Bronfenbrenner considered to be the main ways that influence human development. There has been criticism of the application of the bioecological model within research. Tudge et al., (2009) examined 25 papers which outlined their intention to use the theory. The research found that just four used the updated theory. Tudge et al., (2009) argues this results in conceptual confusion and inadequate testing of the theory in wider research, which should be considered when applying the model's principles.

When considering the use of reduced timetables and the bioecological model, it could be useful to frame thinking in the context of exclusions. The model recognises that in addition to individual consequences of early trauma that the young person may face, there is the potential for many other factors indirectly, or directly influencing the likelihood of them being placed on the reduced timetable (Thomson, 2020). The framework also emphasises the importance of the interactions or processes that go on between the systems that can influence the ideas around reduced timetables. This may include the LA based policies, or the national policies that do not include reduced timetables (Welsh Government, 2015; 2016). Thomson (2020) explored the experience of permanently excluded yp using the bioecological model. Thomson's analyses suggested that the most influencing factors for yp's support were in relation to the mesosystem level interactions between those who know the young person best i.e. Parents, school staff and supporting practitioners. These relationships, interactions and opportunities to advocate for the young person were found to act as a buffer against their difficulties or exacerbate them. Thomson (2020) found it less helpful to share analyses of these complex issues in a way that presents the data in separate systems due to the nuanced interactions that go on between systems, similarly to Tudge's (2019) conclusions. To illustrate these considerations of the theory of reduced timetables, an example of the topics discussed thus far have been mapped onto the bioecological model structure in Figure 1.

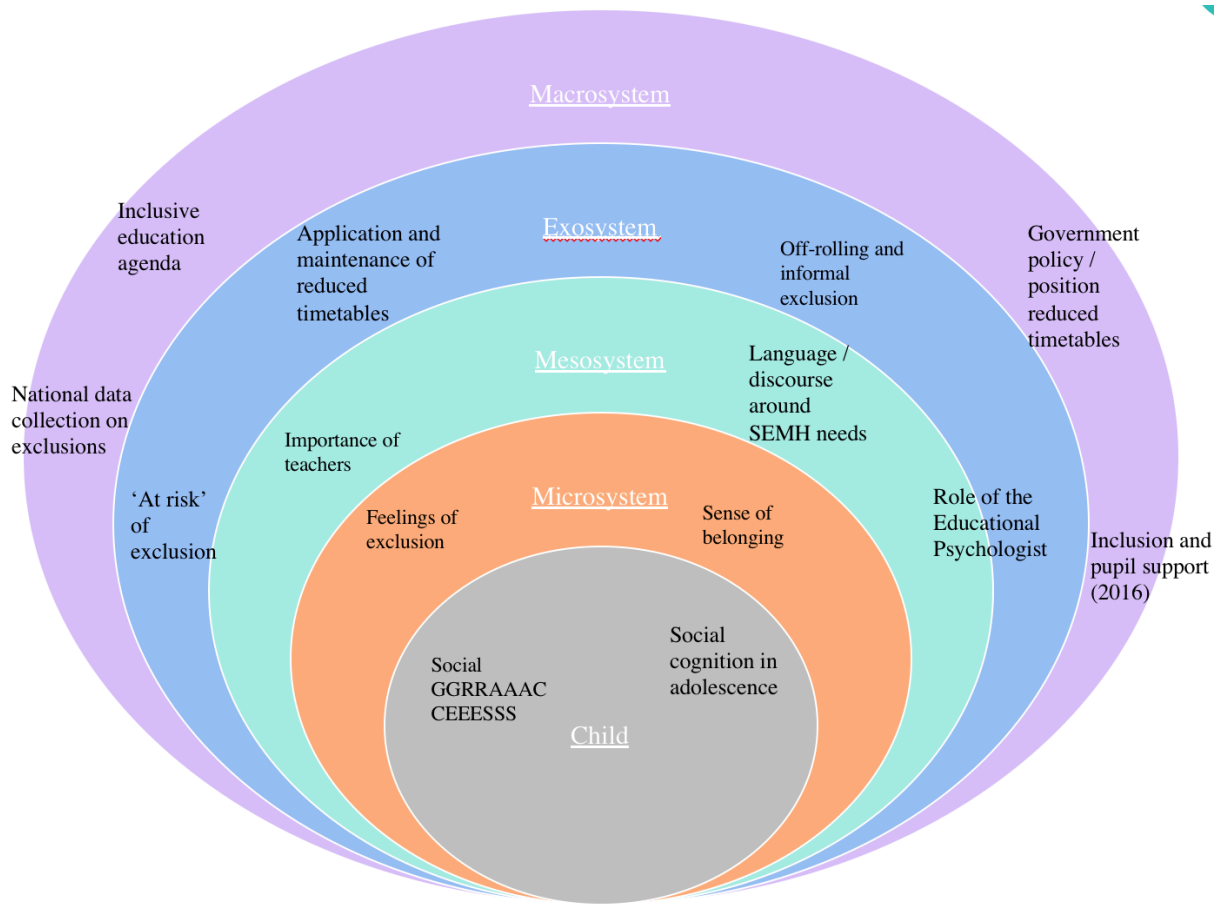


Figure 1

An adaptation of considerations for reduced timetables onto Bronfenbennar's (2005) Bioecological Systems Model

Part A2 - Systematic Literature Review

1. Introduction

1.1 Rationale and Literature research question

A systematic synthesis was carried out and the aim was to critically evaluate research focusing on reduced timetables. As the search developed, it became apparent there is absence of research specifically focusing on reduced timetables, they appear to be a smaller discussion area when researching exclusions and informal exclusions. Therefore, the literature review aims to extract the information from papers that briefly discuss reduced timetables and link them together. The review aims to provide a comprehensive picture of the current topic area and will answer the following question:

What current literature exists on the prevalence, perspectives and practice on the use of reduced timetables in education?

1.2 Method

The thematic synthesis review was modelled on Bond et al.,'s (2013) framework, due to the inclusion of both quantitative and qualitative studies and development of themes from the data. This helped to ensure that the review captured the diversity of the current research base.

1.3 Search strategy and study selection

Systematic searches were performed in July 2022, and again in March 2023, using the following electronic databases: PsycInfo, Applied Social Science Index, Education Resources Index Centre, British Education Index, Scopus and Web of Science. These databases were purposely selected due to their focus within the social sciences, and focus on multi-disciplines, enabling access to literature pertaining to EPs. The search terms on all databases were "reduced timetable*" OR "reintegration timetable" OR "part-time timetable" AND "inclusive education" OR "inclusion" AND "off-rolling" OR "unofficial exclusion" OR "informal exclusion" AND "educational psycholog*" OR "school psycholog*" (See Appendix A).

Other appropriate literature was identified using a snowball technique through search engines such as Google Scholar and scanning reference lists (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Additional manual searches were carried out in Educational Psychology in Practice, enabling access to relevant research on Educational Psychology practice. Book chapters and unpublished doctoral theses were included if they met the inclusion criteria.

1.4 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The gathered literature were analysed for relevance to this study and were individually considered by the researcher.

Table 1

Inclusion criteria for systematic literature review

Inclusion Criteria
Papers that involved children and young people in education placed on reduced timetables, linked to exclusions or off-rolling.
Research published in a peer reviewed journal, unpublished doctoral thesis or textbook.
Position papers and reports were included for context and further information on the topic.
Papers based within the UK and written in English were preferred to ensure it was relevant to the laws and education system in this country.
Published between the years 2010-2023.

Table 2

Exclusion criteria for systematic literature review

Exclusion Criteria
Papers discussing reduced timetables as a result of a medical need or emotionally based school non-attendance.
Papers based outside the UK.
Papers older than 2010.

The process of the review adhered to the guidelines of Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta Analyses (PRISMA) (See Figure 2) (Page et al., 2021). In total, 22 studies were found. Once duplicates were removed, 16 were screened, whereby the title and abstract were

reviewed, leaving 12 to undergo an additional sifting process. Following this criteria and guidelines, five were included in the review (See Appendix B). In addition to the five found directly from the searches, an additional seven were found through the manual searches and scanning reference lists. See Appendix B for rationales for excluded papers.

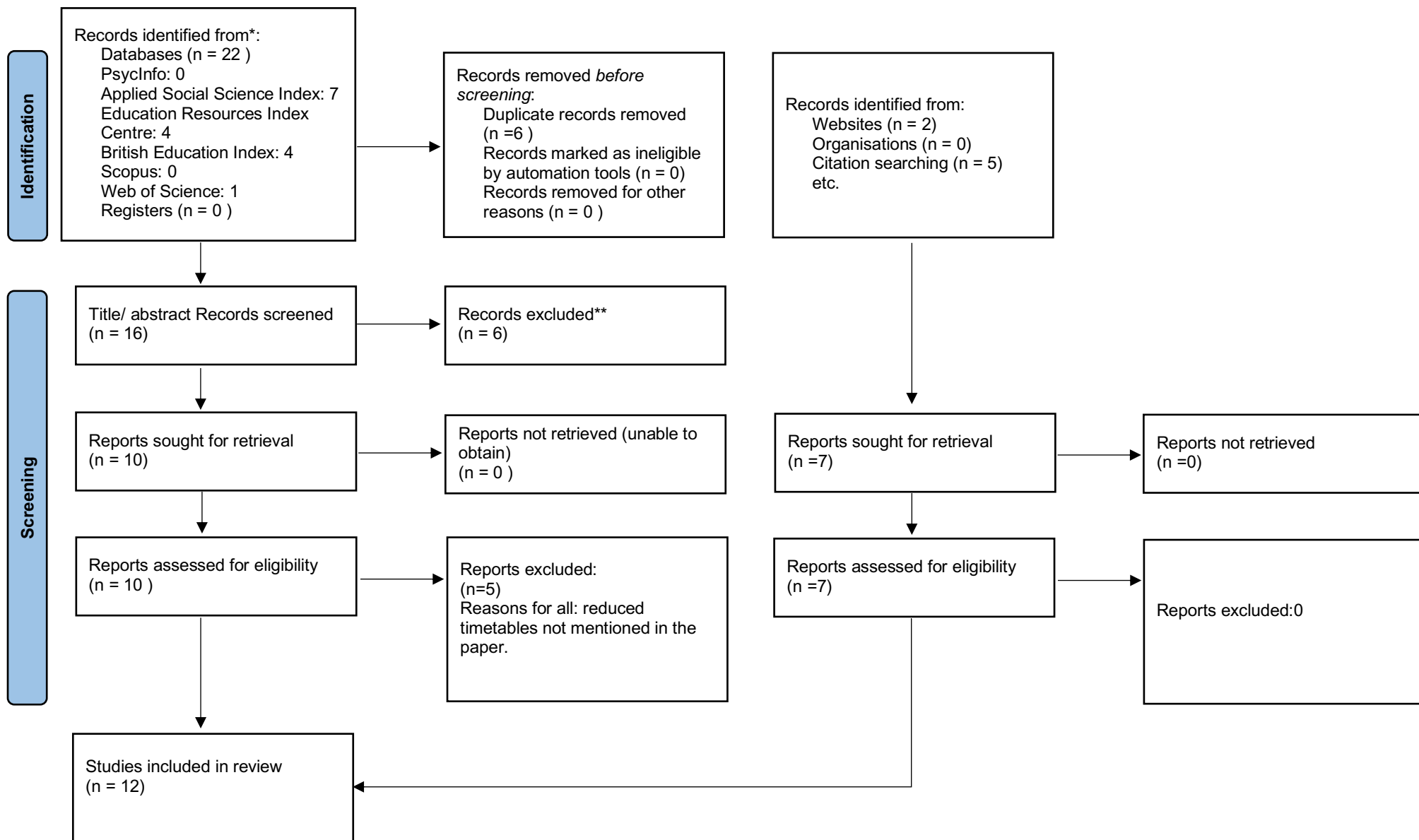


Figure 2
 PRISMA process for systematic literature review

2. Presentation of findings

2.1 Quality appraisal

Studies that met the inclusion criteria were examined for quality, collecting both descriptive and evaluative information. Due to the combination of methodologies being examined, the trustworthiness, relevance and results of each study were critically assessed using The Critical Appraisals Skills Programme (CASP) checklist (CASP, 2018) (extract included in Appendix A(i)).

2.2 Data extraction

Data extraction and synthesis procedures were based on those outlined by Cresswell, Hinch and Cage (2019). Conducting the coding of the findings was a multi-phase process, involving extracting information about the methodology and participants as well as the findings. This was carried out through multiple readings of each study and coding all the relevant information. The codes were developed and categorised into themes of the findings.

2.3 Outcomes

In total, 12 studies were included in the review (see Table 3), which took place between 2010 and 2021. Five studies used qualitative methods, five were reviews of literature and two adopted a mixed methods design. 11 of the 12 were published in peer reviewed journals and one was a chapter in a book. The papers largely involved 'stakeholders' involved in decision making of exclusions in some capacity. Headteachers and senior leadership school staff were participants in three, EPs were interviewed in one and one study involved interviewing excluded yp.

Table 3

Characteristics of included studies in systematic literature review

Reference	Country	Research focus	Participant characteristics	Design	Approach	Themes – findings	Critique
Duffy, G., Robinson, G., Gallagher, T. and Templeton M., 2021. School exclusion disparities in the UK: a view from Northern Ireland. <i>Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties</i> , 26(1), 3-18.	Northern Ireland	To examine the disparities in exclusion rates of students from the perspectives of representatives from system level educational bodies and third sector organisations representing children and families who experienced the exclusion process. Also to present policy and legal frameworks associated with exclusion in Northern Ireland.	Nine stake holders associated with practices of school exclusions in Northern Ireland.	Interviews	Participants were part of a larger dataset based on interviews with participants from across the UK. Examined and coded (informally).	There are a series of tensions between implementing a child centred approach and diminishing support services and resources. Concluded that professionals are committed to an inclusive approach. However, the development and implementation of supporting frameworks take time, and there is evidence of tension between perceptions of those working at a system level and schools.	No formal analysis approach used. Purpose of paper could be considered somewhat confusing as the aim is not clear. This research is part of a larger, UK wide project. Study is limited in terms of scale and representativeness of all parties that offer an important view of exclusions.
Briggs, D., 2010. 'The world is out to get me, bruv': life	England (one South	Examine the reasons for the behaviour of the	20 excluded young people, staff	Interviews	Ethnography	Argues the placement of young people in off-site provisions is a	Participants were all boys and data was collected from a city

after school 'exclusion'. <i>Safer Communities</i> , 9(2), 9-19.	London Borough)	participants, and their attitudes to education.	and headteachers at the off-site centres.			form of unofficial exclusion and has significant life implications for the young people. Argues it contributes to social exclusion and increased exposure to crime.	based borough, therefore findings can only be generalised to that area. Participants were from the alternative provision; a view was not offered from the mainstream school staff's perspective therefore data may be considered skewed.
Done, E. J. & Knowler, H. (2020) 'Painful invisibilities: roll management or "off-rolling" and professional identity', <i>British Education Research Journal</i> , 46 (3), 516– 531.	England	Draws on Foucault to explore tensions between a political standard and an inclusion agenda, ant to consider how the professional identities of school leaders are shaped such that 'off-rolling' becomes possible.	Relevant papers on off-rolling considered.	Review		Chronic underfunding of the inclusion agenda has combined with an over-emphasis on academic performance to create unsustainable pressures on many senior school leaders.	Offers a helpful systemic conceptualisation of why England is seeing high rates of off-rolling. However, does not offer a view that could be applied to the young people impacted by the exclusions. Reduced timetables were briefly mentioned but not focused in concluding points.
Maxwell, N., Doughty, J., Slater, T., Forrester, D. & Rhodes, K. (2020).	Wales	To explore the reasons for home education and the safeguarding of	Key stakeholders in home education	Child practice and serious case review	Exploration of common themes.	Just under a third of home educators had children with additional learning	97% of participants identified as being white women. This suggests the findings

<p>Home education for children with additional learning needs – a better choice or the only option? <i>Educational Review, 72(4), 427-442.</i></p>		<p>children educated at home.</p>	<p>and home educators.</p>	<p>analysis, semi-structured interviews.</p>		<p>needs who were removed from school due to what parents reported as negative experiences. These included the suitability of the school system to children with additional learning needs. Concludes that a more nuanced understanding of education is required where home education, full time or combined with school attendance may be in the interest of the child.</p>	<p>cannot be considered across cultures. It also suggests that a third of participants had children with additional learning needs, however the definition of this is not stated in the study and some participants discussed tensions on this with school staff.</p>
<p>Done, E. & Knowler, H. (2021). 'Off-rolling' and Foucault's art of visibility/invisibility: An exploratory study of senior leaders' views of 'strategic' school exclusion in southwest England,</p>	<p>England (South West)</p>	<p>Investigation of the views of senior leaders relating to 'off-rolling'.</p>	<p>SENCOs and senior leadership team</p>	<p>Multi-stranded methodology. Online questionnaire Vignettes outlining scenarios, participants were</p>	<p>Descriptive statistics and exploration of common themes in qualitative element.</p>	<p>Ofsted's definition of 'off-rolling' as the gaming of academic performance monitoring procedures has acquired a hegemonic status which obscures or, indeed, facilitates non-recognition of other types of off-rolling.</p>	<p>Authors recognised that a higher response rate was anticipated and would have permitted some grouping of data by participant type and contextualisation of responses. An alternative data collection method may have been more helpful to lessen the chances of</p>

<i>British Educational Research Journal</i> , 47, 1039-1055.				invited to identify each scenario as 'off-rolling' or otherwise' and asked to comment.			worries to share details of a highly sensitive / emotive topic.
Parsons, C. (2017). The continuing school exclusion scandal in England, <i>Forum for Promoting Education</i> , 60(2), 245-254.	England	To set out the multiple ways in which students can find themselves outside the formal school system, and identifies systemic pressures that drive the statistics collected nationally.		Review		The most vulnerable children are poorly served by an education system, deregulated to the point where as many as 150,000 may be out of education and the whereabouts of many are unknown.	The views developed in this study are based on estimated numbers of exclusions from a variety of sources where there are disparities, therefore could be considered unreliable.
Done, J., Knowler, H., Shield, W. & Baynton, H. (2021). Rocks and hard places: Exploring Educational Psychologists' Perspectives on	England	Exploring Educational Psychologists' knowledge of and perspectives on exclusionary practices in schools, particularly illegal	Educational Psychologists	Mixed methods: Online qualitative questionnaire and in depth semi-structured	Reflexive Thematic Analysis	Findings suggested the role of business models in the provision of EP services to schools can be a barrier to EPs being involved in decisions around exclusionary practices.	Self-selection to participate, accompanied by awareness of the researchers' positionality as advocates of meaningful inclusion, is likely to have

<p>“Off-Rolling” or Illegal Exclusionary practices in mainstream secondary schools in England, <i>Educational Psychology Research and Practice</i>, 7(2), 1-12.</p>		<p>practices referred to as “off-rolling”.</p>		<p>interviewing.</p>		<p>Participants shared ethical dilemmas as systemic features that inhibit direct challenges to school practices relating to inclusion.</p>	<p>produced a sample sympathetic to their aims.</p>
<p>Done, E. J., Knowler, H., & Armstrong, D. (2021). “Grey” exclusions matter: Mapping illegal exclusionary practices and the implications for children with disabilities in England and Australia. <i>Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs</i>, 21(1), 3644.</p>	<p>England and Australia</p>	<p>The paper provides an outline of, and rationale for an international research project that will identify commonalities and disparities in illegal school exclusionary practices in England and Australia.</p>		<p>Review / proposal of initiative using the research</p>		<p>Authors argue that the repeated commissioning of research by national governments and school inspectorates, intended to ascertain the scale of the problem and its impact on the lives of the excluded, serves to defer meaningful action to prevent its occurrence. An experiential continuum is proposed as a preliminary analytical</p>	<p>Offers an interesting and helpful conceptualisation of continuum thinking for exclusions. However may be considered radical by the education sector and would be difficult to apply in both English and Australian contexts given their differences. A large number of studies included are the authors own, whilst this is a reflection on the amount of work the authors have done and</p>

						framework for future research.	knowledge in the area, it may have create a level of bias in the paper.
Power, S., & Taylor, C. (2020). Not in the classroom, but still on the register: Hidden forms of school exclusion, <i>International Journal of Inclusive Education</i> , 24 (8), 867–881	Wales	Explores the diverse and hidden forms of exclusion that take place in Wales.	Headteachers	Interviews	Exploration of common themes	Other forms of exclusion (beyond fixed/permanent) can carry negative consequences. Argues that until the effects of these forms of exclusion are known, at all levels, we cannot accurately measure a school on inclusivity.	When considering rigor, no ‘official’ or evidence based approach to analysing the data was used. This paper offers a helpful view of systemic considerations to exclusion in Wales. However, schools were selected to take part in the study and therefore can skew the dataset and cannot be generalised.
Done, E. & Andrews, A. (2020). How inclusion became exclusion: policy, teachers and inclusive education, <i>Journal of Education Policy</i> , 35(4), 447-464.	England	Explores how inclusive the inclusive education landscape has changed in England in recent years, charting recent key developments in areas such as policy, statutory		Literature review		Neoliberal education culture tends to exacerbate exclusionary pressures and mechanisms. This is despite political discourses which present education as inclusive and teachers’ professionalism to deliver inclusion.	Fails to acknowledge the tensions and difficulties those within education face when or if they realise the system they find themselves in. This could be seen as offering a lack of implications or next

		guidance and teacher training.					steps for future research.
Cole, T., McCluskey, G., Daniels, H., Thompson, I. & Tawell, A. (2019). Factors associated with high and low levels of school exclusions: comparing the English and wider UK experience, <i>Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties</i> , 29(4), 374-390.	England, part of a wider UK comparison study	To sketch factors associated with the four jurisdictions of the UK. The present study focuses on the English based scene, with the aim of later comparing this data across the UK.	Key stakeholders i.e. five specialist officers working in local authorities, a senior officer working for a national voluntary organisation.	Interviews	Interviews were collated by one of the writers and further analysed by the interdisciplinary research group in a large workshop in Oxford to establish potential patterns of exclusion, informed by policy, cultural and historical factors.	Some good practice occurring, but national, local and school developments contributing to deteriorating situation. Including unhelpful government guidance and regulations, school accountability frameworks affecting curriculum and leading to neglect of SEND children and loss of local authority powers and funding resulting in reductions in support services.	Full analysis details not outlined in the paper, therefore limiting transparency.
Denham, S. (2021) Alternatives to school exclusion: interviews with	North East of England	Exploring the approaches used across age phases and types of	46 Headteachers	Semi structured interviews	Thematic analysis	Three themes were identified; exclusionary systems, processes and	Data gathered from a small geographical area.

<p>headteachers in England, <i>Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties</i>, 26(4), 375-393.</p>		<p>schools seeking to provide alternatives to school exclusion.</p>				<p>practices; limbo; and inclusionary systems processes and practices. The research highlights the vast range of alternative approaches to school exclusions used in different types of schools</p>	<p>Denham binarises schools as being 'inclusive' or 'not inclusive'. Not in line with the view of Done and Knowler (2021) who view exclusion on a continuum.</p>
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3. Themes

The systematic review identified how and when reduced timetables are spoken about in the literature. Three overarching themes were revealed through the thematic literature synthesis. The first theme relates to the recognition of reduced timetables, the second encompasses the purpose reduced timetables serve, and the final theme relates to clarity. Implications for these areas will be discussed.

Overall, the research depicts reduced timetables as one aspect of a wider issue around informal exclusions / off-rolling and difficulties in the inclusion agenda generally. However, none of the studies found specifically focus on reduced timetables in relation to the main aims of the research. Consequently, no research has been found that offers data, detailed insight into experiences around reduced timetables, or perceptions of how or why they are used. This will be discussed further in the rationale. Therefore, the next element of the literature review will discuss general themes of what papers do offer on reduced timetables.

3.1 Recognition of reduced timetables

As mentioned, no papers were found that focus specifically on reduced timetables. In the literature, reduced timetables are most commonly mentioned when discussing the legal aspect of informal exclusions (Done & Andrews, 2020; Done & Knowler 2020). This is whereby schools use methods that are not considered 'off-rolling', but approaches that slip under the radar and borderline formal exclusion strategies. This category of measures generally includes reduced timetables, managed moves, internal exclusion or encouragement to elective home education (Maxwell et al., 2020). These measures are unique in that they are not captured in national datasets and schools/LAs do not legally have to collect information on them. Whilst the principles of these approaches may be similar, reduced timetables are unique in the sense that they are the only form of informal exclusion whereby cyp are sent home without any form of supervision or guidance from the school. Thus, highlighting the need for dedicated research on reduced timetables. This section will synthesise the small amounts of information in the research papers that specifically discuss reduced timetables and consider why they may be the most unknown and unrecognised aspect of exclusionary practices.

Parsons (2017) acknowledged that reduced timetables can be used for medical reasons but are more often used as a response to a young person who presents with externalising behaviours that are perceived to disrupt school, often referred to as 'persistent disruptive behaviour'. Reduced timetables seem to be a symptom of schools attempting to cope with the competing demands of inclusion and the perceived desire to maintain regular business of schooling; they have resorted to the widespread use of exclusionary practices that fall short of formal exclusion (Denham, 2021). Done and Knowler

(2021) refer to the concept of less focus being on the things we don't measure or have to be transparent about despite practitioners knowing about such practices as the art of invisibility/visibility, and of what is shown and not shown is related to the "responsibilisation" (p.519) of our education system. This suggests that a lack of accountability for these measures, therefore their invisibility allows schools can to seen to be reducing exclusion rates. Despite this being acknowledged throughout the literature on informal exclusions, there has been no research to date trying to gather data on reduced timetables or types of informal exclusion. Hence, the suggestion that informal exclusions, including reduced timetables being prolific in schools, could be considered an assumption that has not been explored and is still mostly anecdotal.

3.1.2 Exclusion as a continuum

Helen Done & Elizabeth Knowler are researchers based in the UK who have offered a plethora of knowledge and research the subject matter of exclusions and off-rolling that offers helpful conceptualisations of why these approaches happen within schools (Done, Knowler & Armstrong, 2021). This includes the continuum of exclusionary practices, offering parallels from Australia and England (Done, Knowler & Armstrong, 2021).

Continuum thinking, a term coined by Boyle (2019), can be adopted to facilitate a shift in thinking from discourses that focus on exclusionary events, presented as "rare, isolated, and bound by legally defined parameters or evidential necessities" (Done, Knowler & Armstrong, 2021, p. 40). Boyle (2019) offers continuum thinking as being a continuum of events based on legal definitions of school exclusion and also of experience based on a much broader range of exclusionary practices (Done, Knowler & Armstrong, 2021). This way of thinking can expand the range of activities considered to be exclusionary and increase awareness of how they are related or lead to outcomes such as informal exclusions or off-rolling (Done, Knowler & Armstrong, 2021). Binarising something as being an exclusion or not, may not be inclusive to the exclusionary practices that go on in the education system, and the feelings of exclusion that occur as a consequence. This type of continuum thinking pays respect to the marginalizing experiences that young people face which risk a self-perpetuating negative response such as anger, low self-esteem or risk-taking behaviours and consequently, increases the chances of more formal exclusions. It may be that reduced timetables fall more appropriately into this continuum concept, as it doesn't fit neatly into the widely used off-rolling term. If this way of thinking was adopted, it may bring the same recognition for exclusionary practices, such as reduced timetables, as more clear-cut formal exclusions.

3.2 The purpose reduced timetables serve

3.2.1 Inclusion enabling exclusion

Inclusive education as a theory features internationally across education policy, although it is conceptualised differently across contexts, whether it be schools, local areas, or nationally (Done & Knowler, 2021). However, the main body of research found in the current review suggests that the inclusion agenda within the UK, operates in a way that excludes many students from school (Done & Andrews, 2020). Done & Knowler (2020) offer a more nuanced view of those who are or are not excluded, they suggest there is a much more complex melting pot of factors that need to be considered. Where formal exclusion is on the decline, in Wales, such informal exclusionary practices have likely proliferated (Power & Taylor, 2020). Power and Taylor (2020) propose that there is clear motivation for schools in Wales to develop methods to avoid permanent exclusion. Stating that “schools in Wales are put under pressure to (therefore) not exclude” (p.870). The authors state that where policies punish, rather than reward, levels of exclusion, as they do in Wales, schools are incentivised to engage in practices that relieve pressure for their staff and pupils, but do not impact school statistics. Power and Taylor (2020) suggest that whilst Wales and Scotland have historically been seen to have a more inclusive education system than England, this is likely to have been a misleading view. They both identified flaws within the system that encourage informal exclusion or off-rolling practices. Power and Taylor (2020) go on to say if what counts as exclusion expanded to the range of practices that are widely considered as informal exclusion or off-rolling, the rate of exclusion in Wales would be considerably higher.

Done and Knowler argue that aspects of English education system can exploit the vulnerability of both children and schools (Done & Knowler, 2020). These practices occur invisibly to allow the survival or progression of a school in the eyes of those who bear down pressure on them. Some papers look at specific off-rolling or informal exclusion interventions such as parental pressure to electively home educate, managed moves, and the use of internal inclusion rooms (Maxwell et al., 2020). There are commonalities between the interventions being a result of a lack of resources in schools, difficulty empathising with the children, and them often not being successful in re-engaging the children. This point links back to the purpose of these practices and if they are to support the needs of a school system or to benefit the yp.

3.2.2 Importance of school staff

The discourse around off-rolling and informal exclusion convey a sense of moral outrage (Done & Knowler, 2021). However, little is known about the affective dimension of teachers’ and school staffs’ participation in such practices and the consequences for their own professional identity. Done and Knowler, in their 2021 position paper, offer the view that dissonance is made tolerable by a discourse that these practices, despite competing with their values, will hopefully have longer term

desired outcomes. It seems that teachers are facing an era of pressures to reduce formal exclusions and increasing burdens for high attendance rates and high academic outcomes (Done & Knowler, 2021). Ofsted and the Timpson review (2019) suggest that informal exclusions imply a failure in behavioural management in schools, evoking the now familiar narrative of teacher blaming. It is difficult to see how this discourse can help motivate teachers to think curiously about these practices. It may be that assumed deficits in knowledge of alternative strategies for reducing perceived disruptive behaviour should be addressed through revisions in teacher training and professional development opportunities.

Denham (2021) explored the approaches used as alternatives to formal school exclusion. The research involved speaking to headteachers and found that schools being able to isolate and segregate children for limited periods was allowing for the adoption of exclusionary practices such as reduced timetables. Findings suggested that exclusionary approaches were more prevalent in secondary schools through systems, processes and practices of isolation and segregation. Some participants felt these measures were needed to allow the young person to regulate their behaviour and to give respite to other yp and staff (Denham, 2021). When considering reduced timetables specifically, participants mentioned unstructured times such as lunch and break being difficult for yp, which is why they may have a timetable that only includes mornings or afternoons. However, Denham concluded that of the schools that have reduced days for cyp, it did not come across as a temporary solution, which contrasts what is made explicit by the Department of Education (2020).

Done, Knowler, Shields and Baynton's (2021) paper is the only research conducted from the EP perspective exploring EPs' role in off-rolling. Within the analysis, the importance of EPs being critical friends to school staff is considered. This role involves being a colleague with a trusting relationship eliciting positive change within a school by challenging and critiquing practice in a supportive way. Implications were for EPs reminding schools about the legalities of exclusions and off-rolling but that there can be a tension between EPs' role in advocating for parents and being a critical friend to school colleagues.

3.3 Clarity

Research included in the current review suggests that there is a lack of clarity and transparency in not only the number of young people accessing reduced timetables or being excluded informally, but also in the processes and systems that underpin the processes of reduced timetabling. This seems to be enabling practices such as yp being left on reduced timetables indefinitely (Denham, 2021), or parents

becoming overwhelmed and deciding to remove their child from school due to a lack of collaboration or autonomy for their child's education (Maxwell et al., 2021).

3.3.1 Lack of policy and statistics

LAs or governments within the UK do not have to collect data on how many cyp are on reduced timetables, how long they are in school each day or how many days a week they are expected to be in school (Parsons, 2017). Implications of this could be schools having cyp in for very short periods a day, for a limited number of days a week and there is no system developed to regulate this. As there is no system supporting this, it could be assumed that cyp are missing large blocks of education without alternative education being offered because they would be marked as being in school or not needed in school.

It may be fair to suggest that caution should be used when interpreting data on exclusions, official or unofficial. Power and Taylor's (2020) paper states that Welsh Government actively encourages alternative 'solutions' to exclusions, such as managed moves and internal exclusions, in which LAs play a mediating role. Their paper also highlights that finding out about the nature and extent of exclusionary practices that operate beneath the level of official statistics is extremely difficult and should always be interpreted tentatively. Power and Taylor's (2020) research, and other papers included in this review suggest that the data found on these hidden practices probably even still significantly underplay the range and frequency of different practices that effectively exclude a student from the mainstream classroom (Done & Knowle, 2021; Cole et al., 2019). Within Power and Taylor's (2020) paper, no instances of illegal exclusion were revealed by participants, even though it is widely acknowledged that these practices are widespread (Butler, 2011). This leads to the query of how school practitioners feel about being transparent about reduced timetables practices, and what factors influence their motivation to be transparent.

3.3.2 Living in the unknown

Participants in Power and Taylor's (2020) research spoke about schools' ability to remove yp from the mainstream classroom for varying periods, which could be from five minutes, to days. This was developed to a theme of 'Ynys', which is Welsh for island. This can be done without any formal recording and assumingly, the young person is not marked as not being in school, because they are not required to be there, thus meaning they can go undetected. The paper concludes that lower rates of exclusion in Wales is more likely to be explained by government policies and accountability mechanisms that discourage exclusion, than by schools full of engaged students and well-resourced LA support. This idea of Ynys could be likened to the theme 'Limbo' developed by Denham (2021). Denham (2021) found that yp at risk of exclusion were left in limbo. This meant that teachers did not think they could manage mainstream, or felt like they did not have the resources to meet the child's

needs whilst awaiting Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) funding. Therefore, school didn't want them back in until resources to meet their needs had been increased, despite their placement at alternative provisions finishing. Denham (2021) stated that when this happens, school place the yp on a reduced timetable, timed around when they had staff capacity to support them.

3.3.3 Coercion

Done et al., (2021) note the lack of clarity around reduced timetables and off-rolling more generally. This is linked both to motivation around reduced timetables but also clarity for those impacted by them. In some cases, it has been suggested that coercive measures, coupled with this lack of clarity, commonly leads to 'elective' home education (Done & Knowler, 2019). Within Maxwell et al.,'s (2020) paper, it is noted that the decision to home educate or engage in exclusionary practices, can be the consequence of school's attitudes towards, and willingness to work with parents. The participants for this piece of research were parents who felt coerced into home education who spoke of bullying from school, being continuously let down by school and had felt under excessive pressure by school. Due to a combination of these factors and the perceived pressure being placed on them by schools, reduced timetables were tentatively agreed to by parents (Maxwell et al., 2020). It could be viewed that these voices of parents whose children are on reduced timetables or home educating are missing from the daily discourse within schools, because they are not in schools. Opportunities to advocate for their child may be limited and they are no longer a day to day difficulty for school.

Done et al., (2021b) found evidence of pressuring or manipulating parents into agreeing to home education or reduced timetables and instructing parents to keep children at home if the young person's behaviour does not meet school behavioural expectations. This may be despite parents being ill-equipped to home educate or their child requiring specialised support. Unlike home education, there is no formal expectation for parents to be educating their child at home if they are on a reduced timetable. There is no offer of 'catching up', even if the structure of the child's timetable means they are only missing some of one subject and are consequently behind in the work when they are due to be in school. There is no narrative or discourse in the research surrounding what implications this may have on the child, the school or the family (Done, et al., 2021b).

4.0 Implications for Educational Psychology practice

The literature review conducted highlights several implications for EP practice. Inclusion is a key focus not only for the political and educational agenda, but also for EPs (British Psychological Society 2017). EPs are well placed to support the development of inclusive environments and systems within school through their practice of consultation, systemic work and strong relationships with schools (Baynton, 2020).

Depending on the label or narrative attached to a young person within a school or context, there is potential for EPs to support on an individual level, directly or on a consultative basis. Whilst this is one way for EPs to support, it may be more helpful for EPs to support schools in engaging in conversations about labels and language used to support young people with social, emotional and mental health needs presenting with externalising behaviours. These shifts in language and ‘critical friend’ relationship EPs have with schools to offer a safe space to explore the relationship between needs and behaviour. Further, EPs have access to current and relevant knowledge on the psychological underpinnings discussed in this literature review, relating to inclusion, supporting school staff and educational policy. These are concepts that EPs can include into their work with schools to encourage a new perspective in how school staff are making sense of young peoples’ needs when considering reduced timetables.

5.0 Research rationale

The literature review set out to explore the question: “*What current literature exists on the prevalence, perspectives and practice on the use of reduced timetables in education?*” The research highlighted some important themes and considerations for reduced timetables and how they relate to practices such as off-rolling, informal exclusion and their clarity in application.

A considerable limitation is that there is no existing literature dedicated to understanding reduced timetables specifically. The majority of the empirical studies focused on making sense of the relatively new concept of off-rolling and informal exclusion. Within these, reduced timetables have been linked as approach that falls within the informal exclusion category. These papers outline that such practices are a somewhat grey area, falling through the cracks of the formal or legal systems schools are expected to adhere to when supporting children (Done, Knowler & Armstrong, 2021). Such papers refer to ambiguity in how these approaches are applied, using terminology such as muddling through, limbo, clarity and Ynys. These findings suggest that these approaches for yp with externalising behaviours can be isolating and difficult for everyone involved (Maxwell et al., 2020; Power & Taylor, 2020).

Participants in the empirical papers included yp, EPs, headteachers, parents of young people and senior leaders. Each of which are key stakeholders in these processes and can both be impacted by the practices. However, unheard voices in this area of research include, support staff, LA staff, class teachers and further, more recent research collecting views from young people may be beneficial. Done, Knowler, Shield and Baynton’s (2021) paper supports the view that EPs have a role within

supporting schools and families with such practices, but they are a small piece of a wider systems change that need to occur to protect yp and their families.

While there are a few empirical papers, there were some position papers and reviews included in the present literature review (Done, Knowler & Armstrong, 2021; Done & Andrews, 2020; Done & Knowler, 2020; Parsons, 2017). These papers offer a helpful insight summarising the research or offering a psychological concept to the practices of reduced timetables or off-rolling that supports meaning making. However, they do not support with the developing evidence base that offers real life perspectives and a scientific underpinned form of analysis. Cole's (2019) paper offers a helpful foundation of understanding exclusion patterns across the UK and will be part of a bigger study. However, the method of analysis is not clear or transparent and could be seen a limitation to the research. It does highlight the importance of understanding figures across the UK and how or if we should or can compare them in relation to exclusion rates.

Whilst it is important to provide a platform to share voices of those who are impacted by the measures put in place for children at risk of missing education (Billington, 2018). Several studies included in both the narrative and systematic review highlight that reduced timetables and informal exclusions more widely are a systems based problem constructed by the inclusion systems yp and schools find themselves within. This has taken the shape of LA and school-based policies and procedures, in the absence of national guidance or statutory processes. The present research will aim to explore the use of reduced timetables in a way that focuses on the contexts that enable them to occur.

Research questions

Based on the gaps in the literature, it was considered important to offer a foundation of research on the topic of reduced timetables. The current research will aim to address the following questions:

Question 1: How and when are local authorities in Wales using reduced timetables for young people experiencing socio-emotional differences presenting with externalising behaviours?

Question 2: What are practitioner perceptions and experiences of reduced timetables?

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“This is your last chance to prove to us you can be here, we’ve tried everything to help you.” – Exploring the use of reduced timetables as exclusionary practice for young people in Wales

Part B: Major Empirical Research Paper

Word Count: 11,599

1. Abstract

A reduced timetable restricts a pupil's access to a full-time curriculum. In Wales, there is no statutory basis upon which to establish a reduced timetable and there are no processes to collect data or information on the use of reduced timetables. Schools may introduce a reduced timetable as a means to avoid permanent exclusion as a method of managing the increasing inclusion agenda pressures (Parsons, 2017). While they fall short of exclusion, reduced timetables can prevent cyp from accessing education. For children experiencing adolescence, this may exacerbate vulnerabilities to feelings of exclusion, perceived risky decision making and emotional regulation difficulties, and consequently, heighten difficulties in school (Parker et al., 2016).

The present study explored current practice of the use and maintenance of reduced timetables across Wales. A mixed methods design was adopted. To understand the application of reduced timetable nationally, a questionnaire was distributed across Wales and was completed in 13 LAs. The experience of supporting a young person on a reduced timetable was explored by interviewing seven professionals who work with them. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics and reflexive thematic analysis respectively (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The three overarching themes were developed considering ideas around needs of yp placed on reduced timetables, how they are used across schools and what this means for those experiencing reduced timetables. Implications for practice are discussed in relation to schools, LAs and Welsh Government, followed by implications for Educational Psychologists and ideas for future research.

2.0 Introduction

2.1 Reduced timetables

Article 28 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) states that every child should have a right to education, whilst the Education Act (1996) permits an LA to not provide a full-time education if considered to be in the best interests of a pupil. Reduced timetables, sometimes referred to as part time or reintegration timetables, “restricts a pupil’s access to a full time curriculum” (Monmouthshire Inclusion Service, 2021, p.22). The English Department of Education (2020) states that “in very exceptional circumstances there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet a pupil’s individual needs. A part-time timetable must not be treated as a long-term solution.” (p.19). However, the Children’s Commissioner in England (2017) reported that some schools were “unlawfully placing children on a part-time timetable due to a profound and troubling lack of awareness of the law” (Denham, 2021, p.377).

Overall, there is minimal mention of reduced timetables in research (Parsons, 2011, 2017; Cole et al., 2019). None exploring impact, degree or variation of when and how they are being implemented and no research found is dedicated to them as a distinct approach. Consequently, the degree to which reduced timetables are being used within education as well as the experiences of reduced timetables is largely unknown and subject to misinterpretation. Parsons (2017) argues that whilst reduced timetables are sometimes used for pupils with medical needs, they are more often used for pupils experiencing behavioural challenges and as an alternative to exclusion. Noting that pupils may be in school for only a few hours a day whilst placed on this “worrying and possibly frequent means of quasi exclusion” (p.7). Cole et al., (2019) explored factors impacting exclusion rates. They reported there was an “unquantifiable use of reduced timetables, unofficially ‘sending children home’, and pressure on parents to place their children in different schools or face exclusion” (Cole et al., 2019, p.388). Denham (2021) concluded that reduced timetables are used during a limbo process schools and families found themselves in. This was sometimes for children whose schools felt “full-day attendance was unrealistic” (p.389), and that reduced timetables in their participating schools did not come across as a temporary solution, often decided by schools, rather than being LA or nationally informed.

2.2 Reintegration and exclusion

When understanding the use of reduced timetables, it is important to consider the relationship between reduced timetables, reintegration and exclusion. Reintegration is said to be the goal of reduced timetables (Merthyr Tydfil Borough Council, 2018). Whereas exclusion, in the formal sense can be what causes a reduced timetable (fixed term), or can be the outcome of a reduced timetable

that does not go well (permanent). Atkinson and Rowley (2019) concluded that it is essential to consider the systems children are surrounded by when considering reintegration from alternative provision. Whilst the principles of reintegration may be similar for reduced timetables, it is currently a gap in the literature. Denham (2021) found that exclusionary practices were more prevalent in secondary school systems, processes and practices. Owen, Woods and Stewart (2021) conducted a literature review exploring factors that enable or disable reintegration into secondary mainstream schools from alternative provision. They found that inclusion, belonging, social emotional support, appropriate planning and support for families encouraged reintegration. Whilst overlooking the impact of exclusion, lack of family support, lack of collaborative working, lack of understanding, lack of staff training and rejection/relational difficulties were barriers to reintegration (Owen, Woods & Stewart, 2021).

The term 'exclusion' has historically been used to describe either a fixed term exclusion or a permanent exclusion (Butler, 2011). More recently, research on informal exclusions or 'off-rolling' has attempted to expand the definition of exclusion to other practice (Done, Knowler & Armstrong, 2021). Parsons (2017) argues that such practices were previously hidden and occur in schools more frequently than originally thought. These include managed moves, elective home education, internal exclusion rooms and reduced timetables (Parsons, 2017). Recent research suggests that these practices are desired to remain hidden to keep exclusion rates down and perceptions of schools to maintain a level of perceived inclusion (Done et al., 2021b). Power and Taylor (2020) reinforce this view and suggest that "schools in Wales are under pressure not to exclude" (p.870).

Boyle (2019) proposed a view of conceptualising exclusion on a continuum, rather than a binary concept i.e. Excluded or not excluded. Boyle (2019) offers continuum thinking as being both a continuum of events based on legal definitions of school exclusion and also a continuum of experience based on a much broader range of exclusionary practices that requires a nuanced view (Done, Knowler & Armstrong, 2021). Whilst reduced timetables anecdotally are associated with off-rolling and informal exclusion practices, this has not been explored empirically. Therefore, its place in conversations on exclusionary practices is largely missing. If schools are under pressure to keep yp on roll, reduced timetables being an unregulated and unrecorded approach could be a means to maintain inclusionary facades.

To better understand experiences of exclusion for yp, Parsons' (2011) research engaged in in depth work with five LAs in England and found that it is important for LAs, consortia's and regional clusters to work through a shared commitment. He suggested this is best done across an area with explicit principles and procedures to tackle exclusion in all of its forms in a community based

inclusion approach. Currently, it could be assumed that reduced timetables come under the umbrella of informal exclusion, however this has not been explored empirically. It is also important to consider reduced timetables individually. Other practices such as internal inclusion rooms and managed moves, all include yp being safeguarded and cared for at school. Reduced timetables are unique because they involve yp being sent home, under supervision of parents, physically isolated from school with unclear expectations of what is expected of them (Denham, 2021). Therefore clarity of its use and impact is needed in research to better understand what this means for schools, cyp and their families.

2.3 Reduced timetables in Wales

Welsh Government does not include information on reduced timetables in any policies. However, they and Estyn, the education inspectorate for Wales, have offered guidance and policy regarding exclusionary practices such as managed moves (Welsh Government, 2011; Estyn, 2018). Estyn offer the view that for yp at risk of exclusion, options such as a managed move should be considered before seeking additional resources. Concluding that “this offers a pupil fresh start without the disruption caused by multiple fixed term exclusions or a part time timetable” (p.12). Estyn (2018) argue this group of yp, are among the most vulnerable in Wales. Estyn recommended that Welsh Government should “provide clear, up to date guidance to local authorities, schools and PRUs on the use of managed moves and of PSPs, especially around part-time timetables” (p.6). Welsh Government has not offered any guidance or policies around any type of exclusionary practices or reduced timetables since Estyn’s paper has been published.

Power and Taylor (2020) affirmed that LAs have a more central role in education in Wales than they do in England, consequently, schools rely on LAs for provision and guidance. Therefore, some LAs in Wales have a reduced timetable policy, or a policy whereby reduced timetables are mentioned. These guidance documents outline reduced timetables as being a short term, time limited measure to be put in place only when every alternative avenue has been exhausted (Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, 2018; Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, 2021).. However, there do not appear to be auditing or accountability processes for schools or LAs managed at national level to safeguard yp from potential poor practice. LAs list reasons for reduced timetables generally being to support a medical need or for reintegration (Neath Port Talbot Council, 2022). Reasons are listed below:

- “1. As part of a planned re-integration into school following an extended period out of school following exclusion, non-attendance, school refusal or to facilitate a managed transfer between schools (although this should not be the norm for managed moves).
2. Following an extended absence due to ill health or other medical reasons.

3. As a temporary fixed-term, closely monitored intervention to address and manage the impact of significantly challenging behaviour or emotional or social needs, whilst alternative arrangements are being made to meet the individual needs or to coordinate with therapeutic intervention or other services.” – Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council (2018)

2.4 Relevance to Educational Psychology

The core role of the EP is the application of psychological theory, research and techniques to support children, yp, their families and schools to promote the emotional and social wellbeing of cyp (Association of Educational Psychologists, 2019). Thomson’s (2020) study suggests that an EPs role in supporting looked after children at risk of exclusion falls broadly within the framework of an EPs core functions: training, consultation, assessment, intervention and research. Waite (2013) explored the role of the EP for cyp at risk of exclusion. They found that when EPs are involved with those at risk of exclusion, it is important for them to offer support that is context driven through consultation and training. Flexibility based on contextual factors is emphasised in the paper, whilst acknowledging this is done so with more ease when there is a well-established relationship with the EP and the school and context around the child. Banyton (2020) demonstrated that EPs have a role in training with schools when it comes to informal exclusions and off-rolling.

In Etsyn’s (2018) report on managed moves, they note that where practice is less effective, cyp are unknown to any support services such as Educational Psychology Services (EPS) and have been out of full time education for a considerable amount of time, possibly accessing a reduced timetable. Parsons (2009) found in the low excluding LAs he studied, a young person could not be excluded without the input of an EP, who might provide insights as to alternative ways of approaching difficulties and tailoring the learning environment to their needs. These observations suggest that EPs might have a role to play in relation to reduced timetables. Power and Taylor (2020) referenced EP capacity as being central to the institutional level of informal exclusions. Whilst EP involvement may be helpful, Done et al., (2021) acknowledged potential conflicts for EPs when addressing potential exclusionary practices with school. They found that EPs have a desire to advocate for yp and families, but that EPs also have obligations to their school, in addition to the reliance EPs have on schools to inform them of such practices, which must be balanced. (Done et al., 2021). Baynton (2020) suggests that EP relationships with their schools are key to understanding off-rolling practices within schools on both an individual and whole school basis. Whilst acknowledging the barriers to EPs understanding what is happening in terms of exclusions or informal exclusions/off-rolling. EPs rely on schools sharing with them and asking for their support, unless systems are build up that they are consistently involved in (Baynton, 2020).

2.5 Socio-emotional differences, externalising behaviours and exclusionary practice

The label of ‘social emotional and behavioural difficulties’ or ‘social and emotional needs’ are applied to cyp whose behaviour is deemed to be ‘out of place’ with their school context and viewed as a barrier to their own learning or to that of their peers (Caslin, 2021). Holt, Bowlby and Lea (2013) prefer the term socio-emotional differences to emphasise that the difficulties yp face are socially constructed in relation to the norms of appropriate behaviour in the education system and wider society. When yp find it hard to behave in the way other people expect them to, different labels are applied based on their outward presentation, categorising the reasons why they are not attending school. Examples include, ‘refusal’, ‘behavioural’, ‘avoidance’ and ‘challenging behaviour’ (Pellegrini, 2007; Caslin, 2021). When a child or yp communicates their difficulties in an inward way such as masking until they get home, refusing to attend because of feelings of anxiety, they may be labelled with the term emotionally based school avoidance (Shilvock, 2010). But if a child or young person communicates their difficulties in an outward way whilst they are in school, it can lead to consequences such as exclusions or reduced timetables. Each group of young people may be seen and labelled differently based on their outward presentation despite them perhaps experiencing similar emotions (Billington, 2018). This may beg the question around whether we support need or behaviour in school, or whether schools view these needs as a within child difficulty or systemically (Pellegrini, 2017).

Research suggests exclusionary practices for yp are experienced contextually (Done, 2022). For example, how one school does it, is not how another does, or one class teacher does it differently to the next. Done and Knowler (2021) acknowledge that dissonance goes on for teachers regarding exclusionary practices. They suggest this is made tolerable, despite competing with their values, with the aim it will hopefully reach a longer term desired outcome i.e. reduction in behaviour they find difficult to support. Ofsted (2019) acknowledged that off-rolling can often be “primarily in the interests of the school, rather than the pupil” (p.50). Not to forget that yp in their class engaging in ‘persistent disruptive behaviour’ may be detracting from teaching the other yp, if they are not offered support to meet their needs. In fact, Denham’s (2021) research concluded that sometimes exclusionary practices took place to give respite to other yp and staff members. It is not only adults in school impacted by these practices, reduced timetables and exclusionary practices have a great impact on parents/carers of yp. Research suggests that parents can feel driven to, or pressured by schools, to home educate their children because of pressures related to perceived unwillingness from school to work with parents and children to meet the child’s social, emotional and educational needs (Maxwell et al., 2020).

2.6 Psychological considerations

Perceived rejection from school is linked to behavioural difficulties in the classroom and lower achievement, and a lack of belonging creates emotional problems, as belonging is a need rather than a want (Osterman, 2000). Research suggests this may be exacerbated for adolescents. Yp who present with high levels of externalising behaviours that can include aggression, hyperactivity or disruption can experience feelings of social exclusion (Lambert & Miller, 2011). These yp who feel rejection because of consequences that come from their own behaviour can show trajectories of negative outcomes (Pouwels et al., 2016). Yp who present with high levels of externalising behaviours that can include aggression, hyperactivity or disruption can experience feelings of social exclusion (Pouwels et al., 2016). Baumeister (2012) states that social belonging contributes to the emotional, cognitive and behavioural development of yp and may also impact developmental changes in adolescent brains (Raudfelder & Kulakow, 2021). With this in mind, it may be worth remaining curious about what school's expectations are of yp who are physically excluded from school (i.e. reduced timetable) and what appropriate expectations of them may be when they are in school, as it may be that the exclusionary practices themselves are maintaining or even exacerbating behaviour.

Research suggests there is merit in carefully considering the language we use when working with people aged between 10-19 years old (Brizio et al., 2015). Brizio et al., (2015) go on to state that whilst we can never separate adolescence from childhood, it is important to adopt a life-course perspective that pays respect to the systemic, cognitive, and physical differences that occur when a person reaches secondary school, experiences developmental changes and more autonomy as they get older. McDonagh (2018) raises the point that adolescence is a defining developmental period and biological transition within this age bracket, but the term can perpetuate a within child form of seeing this group of people as only their developmental stage. McDonagh (2018) advocates for the use of the term 'young people' for this age group, as it unifies an understanding of both the discrepancy from a child and an adult, but this language is used in health and social settings (European, child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 2023). It is also notable that the ALN system in Wales uses the term 'young people' throughout policy and documentation (Welsh Government, 2021).

Bronfenbrenner's theory of human development is often understood as a model of nested structures to represent environmental contexts (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The framework highlights the complexity of factors interacting for yp and emphasises the need to consider systemic elements when planning and developing support. Within the most recent development of the theory, Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) describe four key components, known as process, person, context and time, that are defining properties of the model. Banyton (2020) interviewed parents of yp who self-identified as having experienced off-rolling. A key aspect of consideration was interactions between parents and

staff, mostly in relation to clarity, or lack of collaboration perpetuated by power imbalances in the exclusionary process. When considering time, Banyton (2020), found that there had been exclusionary practices that were occurring since primary school prior to their off-rolling that was impacting the young person's and parent/carers' interactions with school.

The model is also embedded within the role of the EP, which aims to shift from a within child focused way of rationalising behaviour and need (Pellegrini, 2007). Therefore, this framework could be particularly valuable in supporting proximal processes that could create change where appropriate when considering reduced timetables. Thinking about reduced timetables contextually also offers an alternative to the within child response previously discussed.

2.7 Rationale for current study

The researcher aims to focus the current project on understanding the landscape of the use of reduced timetables within secondary schools across Wales. With the lack of research, there are many unknown factors when it comes to reduced timetables, including purpose, prevalence, experience and process. An aim of the study is to offer a foundation to the research base on reduced timetables, to understand basic use and purpose from those experiencing them. For the purpose of the research, with the importance of language used in mind (Billington, 2018), the present study will refer to the group of young people accessing reduced timetables as yp with socio-emotional differences presenting with externalising behaviours. This was chosen in a way to offer understanding of the experience of the young person having needs and being literal about how they are expressing their emotions. When considering Owen et al.,'s (2021) research on reintegration into mainstream schools, coupled with the research on adolescence / young people (Brizio et al., 2015) the present study will focus specifically on young people, in secondary school. In line with McDonagh's (2018) paper, the paper will use the term 'young people', when describing the demographic of people the research focuses on.

In the absence of government gathered data, this study aims to determine whether reduced timetables are happening in Wales, and if so, how LAs are managing them. Parsons (2017) suggested LA maintenance was a key factor in understanding exclusionary practices. Estyn (2018) refer to the absence data collection and performance management at regional consortia level and recognising the importance in considering the context of schools in supporting this group of yp (Estyn, 2018). Therefore, the present research will take a contextual approach to reduced timetables, focusing on what occurs around the young person in terms of process and maintenance of reduced timetables for secondary school aged yp. There are many unknown factors in terms of the impact of reduced timetables on yp and their families and what reduced timetables may mean for them. This will be

focused through the lens of those who support this group of yp and understanding their experiences with, and perceptions of, reduced timetables.

2.8 Research questions

The current research will aim to address the following questions:

Question 1: How and when are local authorities in Wales using reduced timetables for young people experiencing socio-emotional differences presenting with externalising behaviours?

Question 2: What are practitioner perceptions and experiences of reduced timetables?

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Ontology and epistemology

The research is rooted in a critical realist paradigm, recognising the multi-layered complexity of reality, as shaped by culture, social agency, and historical and political context (Braun & Clarke, 2022). This ontological position asserts the view that the objective reality cannot be determined (Bergin et al., 2008). This ontology acknowledges there is some ‘truth’ in the application of reduced timetables for yp and reasons for this. However, participants experience and will share their own ‘reality’ of reduced timetables (Braun & Clarke 2013). This stance allowed the researcher to view all responses equally.

The epistemological stand point applied for this research is contextualism. This approach enables the view that “meaning is related to the context in which it is produced” (Braun & Clarke, 2013 p. 328). As no single method can get to ‘the truth’, this research takes the position of listening to people’s ‘truths’ within the contexts they find themselves in. Therefore, the experience of reduced timetables is relevant and related to the school, LA or regional area they work in, which sits within the broader LA and is contextualised by its systems which may be punctuating the issue of reduced timetables differently based on processes surrounding yp.

3.2 Research design

In keeping with the researchers ontological and epistemological stance, a mixed methods design was adopted to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. This included an online questionnaire (Appendix C) and seven semi-structured interviews (Appendix D). As discussed, the story of reduced timetables across Wales is currently untold. Therefore the research aimed to cover both the breadth of if and how it was occurring nationally, whilst also exploring the depth of experiences for those supporting yp on the reduced timetables.

Mixed methods research combines both quantitative and qualitative concepts, language and methods into a single study (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Done (2022) offered the view that problems can arise in researching sensitive topics through qualitative methods where prevalence is yet determined. Suggesting that triangulation design, using mixed-methods, is often looked to as a “means of enhancing the validity of study findings whilst providing a more comprehensive or nuanced analysis” (p.245).

The approach adopted in the current research is a convergent parallel design (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2018). This approach utilises qualitative and quantitative methods which are mixed to obtain

the triangulated results in this design (Creswell, 2003). The purpose of this design is to “obtain different but complementary data on the same topic” (Morse, 1991, p.122), to best understand the research topic. The intent in using this design is to bring together the differing strengths and nonoverlapping nature of the approaches. Both types of data occurred simultaneously, therefore will be collected at the same time and their implementation does not depend on the results of data analysis in the other component (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017). This method was chosen as opposed to a sequential design, which is discussed further in Part C of the research.

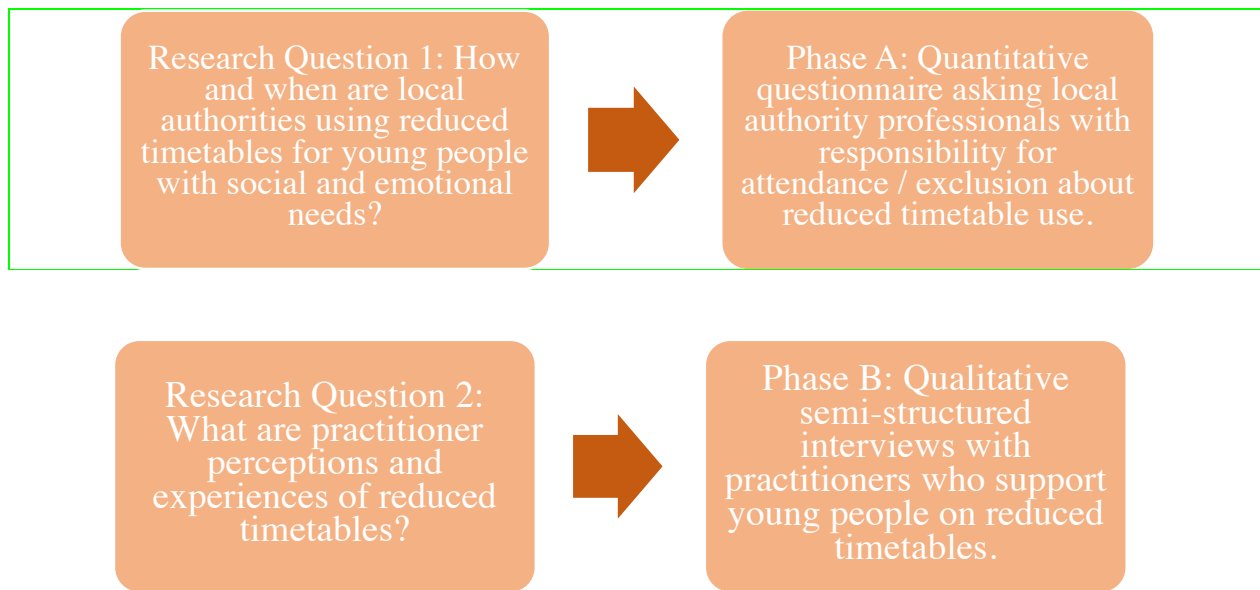


Figure 3

Outline of research questions and research design

3.3 Participant information and recruitment

Quantitative:

Participants were recruited through purposive sampling of professionals with responsibilities for attendance and/or exclusions across all 22 LAs in Wales. The gatekeeper letter (Appendix E) was sent to all Principal Educational Psychologists (PEPs) in Wales to either complete themselves or to share the questionnaire with the person best placed within their LA to complete (if it was not them). It may be that there are differing roles for those best placed to complete the questionnaire. PEPs were seen as a consistent figure across all LAs. Alongside the gatekeeper letter, PEPs were sent a participant information sheet (Appendix F) which included a link to the Qualtrics questionnaire (Appendix C). The first question on the questionnaire contained a link to the consent form (Appendix G), to which the participants were asked to read and click ‘I consent’, before they were able to access the rest of the questionnaire. Once participants finished the questionnaire, they had access to an embedded debrief

form (Appendix H). The emails inviting potential participants were sent in September 2022, and resent in November 2022.

Qualitative:

Data for the qualitative element included interviewing practitioners working within one consortia in Wales supporting young people on reduced timetables. Potential participants were identified from the Welsh Government (2016) policy on working with yp at risk of being missing from education, however, this list is not exhaustive. Examples of possible participants include, but are not limited to: ALNCoS, Youth Service Practitioners, Education Welfare Officers, Psychologists, Social Workers Charity Organisation Practitioners, school-based Counsellors, Youth Offending Team Officers, Teachers, ALN Officers, Teaching Assistants. Further exploration of potential participants is discussed in Part C (see Figure 21). Done (2022), suggests that participation in research relating to a sensitive topic such as off-rolling “carries a certain professional risk and reluctance to volunteer authentic accounts of events at school level will almost certainly be intensified where specific exclusionary practices are known to be illegal” (p.244). Therefore, to encourage authentic contributions, job roles of participants in the present study will not be included in the research paper. Further deliberation of this can be found in Part C of this research.

Participants were initially recruited through purposive sampling via the PEPs within their LA, whom were sent a gatekeepers letter (Appendix I) and asked to share the research information, including the participant information sheet (Appendix J), consent form (Appendix K) and one page information sheet (Appendix L) to services that fit the inclusion criteria. Additional participants were recruited through research of potential services within the chosen LAs that could fit the inclusion criteria, the researcher emailed these services. The documents were sent to contact emails for services who have been identified as working with yp at risk of being missing from education (Welsh Government, 2016). Further recruitment occurred through snowball sampling (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), following word of mouth from the participants and their respective services. Seven interviews were carried out in total. These included participants from secondary school pastoral team, the charity sector, counselling services, youth support team, a TEP, an ALNCo, and an inclusion room lead. All participants support young people placed on reduced timetables, and have regular, direct contact with them.

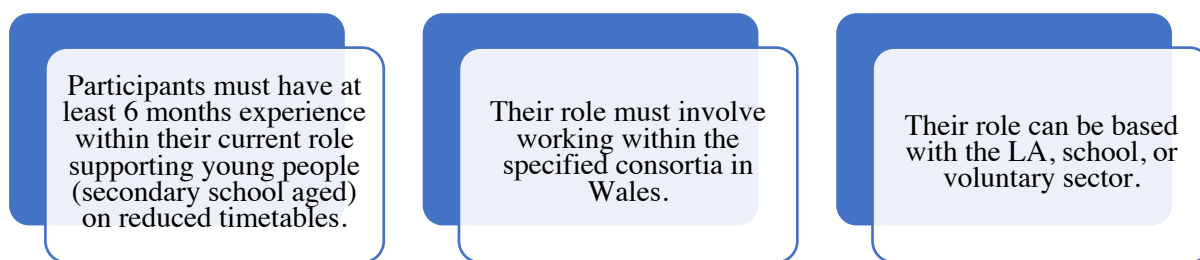


Figure 4

Inclusion criteria for participation in qualitative element

3.4 Procedure

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was developed on Qualtrics via a Cardiff University Account (Appendix C). It comprised of 15 questions, with participants being directed through a minimum of 11 questions, depending on the responses given. The aim of the questionnaire was to gather information about if and how LAs are using reduced timetables and what data is being collected on them. The rationale was to establish a baseline understanding about reduced timetables in Wales as there is no national collection of data on this topic. Therefore, the research aimed to make this approach visible in offering a breath of information across the country. Questions were developed using the Welsh Governments paper on inclusion (Welsh Government, 2016) in terms of how to use PSPs, and also on previous research suggesting how reduced timetables are used in England (Department of Education, 2020).

Semi-structured interviews

Participants for the semi-structured interviews were recruited through purposive sampling of staff who support young people on reduced timetables, across one consortia in Wales (See Figure 5). The decision to conduct interviews with practitioners who work within one consortia was underpinned by research suggesting that exclusions are influenced by LAs (Parsons, 2011), which feed into consortia's. The included consortia also share a health board and some support services available to young people attending school in the area. Participant information sheets (Appendix J) and one page brief sheets (Appendix L) were sent to gatekeepers within local authorities to share with professionals who support young people on reduced timetables. Participants were asked to contact the researcher via email if interested in the study. Following receipt of a signed consent form, participants were invited to an interview. The semi structured interview schedule (Appendix D) was developed based on the literature review, and areas of consideration detailed in the national Inclusion and Pupil

Support (2016) policy, and contained nine open ended questions with prompts. Depending on the participants' preference, the interviews took place in person or via Microsoft Teams. This was to allow for equal opportunities for all potential participants. Before beginning the interview, participants were reminded of the purpose of the research and informed to follow their safeguarding procedures where appropriate (if they discussed sensitive issues regarding a specific child). At the end of the interview, participants were given a debrief form (Appendix M).

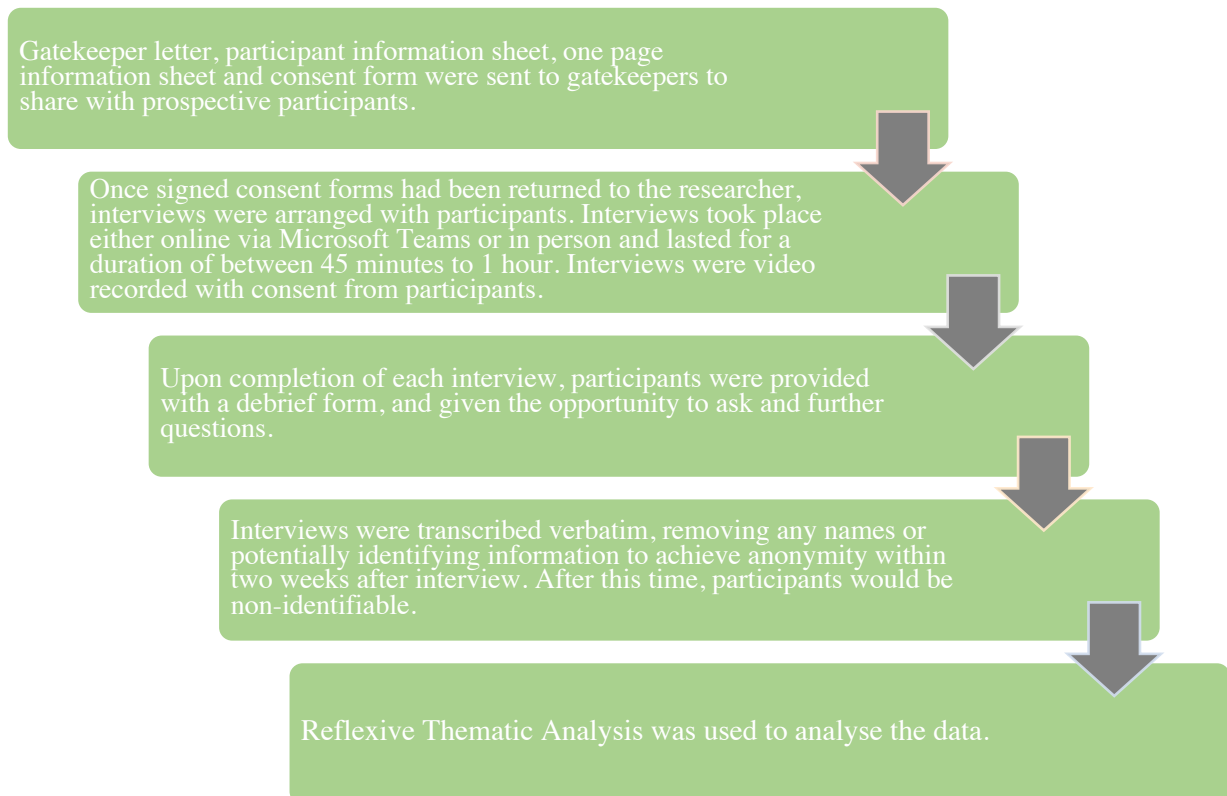


Figure 5

Qualitative research procedure

3.5 Pilot Interview

A pilot interview took place with a trainee EP in June 2022. The purpose of the pilot interview was to explore the robustness and ensure openness and flow of interview questions (Beebe, 2007). The researcher also wanted to explore whether the interview questions appropriately supported the interviewee to offer responses that answer the research questions. This was part of the development of the interview guide in relation to sequencing of questions, constructing and wording questions and social desirability (Braun & Clarke, 2013). There were no major amendments to the interview schedule upon reflection of the pilot interview. The interview was not included in the overall analysis.

3.6 Transcription

As some interviews took place online and some were in person, there were small discrepancies in how they were transcribed. Interviews were video recorded via Microsoft Teams had transcriptions generated automatically through the Microsoft Teams transcription feature. These were downloaded and listened to in full by the researcher to ensure accuracy and make amendments where needed before finalising. In person interviews were also transcribed using the Microsoft Teams function, set up in the room with the researcher and participant. All identifying information, such as names of schools and LAs were removed to maintain anonymity within the transcripts. Each recording was listened to at least twice to ensure accuracy and to ensure no information was lost to allow for a thorough analysis to take place (Willig, 2003).

3.7 Data analysis

Quantitative:

The quantitative data collected from the online questionnaire via Qualtrics, was used for descriptive statistics. This was chosen to illustrate the data in a visual format that was easy to consume in a way that meaningfully summarised the dataset (Murphy, 2021).

Qualitative:

The data for the current project was analysed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) (see Table 4 for rationale) (Braun & Clarke, 2022), other analyses were considered (see Table 5). All stages of RTA were completed by hand to reflect the importance of the researcher playing an active role in the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2020). Although the six step process is presented in a way that suggests a linear approach, data analysis involved movement back and forth between different steps (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Braun and Clarke (2022) highlight the importance of the reflexive researcher in the process of RTA and offer the view this can be encouraged by keeping a reflexive journal. The researcher adopted this approach, extracts of this can be seen in Part C. Braun and Clarke (2022) refer to the importance considering the researchers identity in the research and whether they are an insider or outsider to the topic. The researcher of the present study considers themselves as occupying the space between (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). This speaks to the position of being with our participants and understanding there are shared experiences between participants and the researcher that could be closely related, particularly if the researcher has professional experience working in the topic area. Dwyer and Buckle (2009) share that it might be that we carry stories with us as we work through the analysis, therefore we cannot separate ourselves.

The researcher coded the data by hand, which allowed the coding process to be fluid and continue throughout the familiarisation stage of the analysis. As per the epistemology of the current study, the

data-derived codes allowed for semantic themes to be developed, which offered a true reflection of the concepts identified by participants during the interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The process of analysis is depicted in photographs in Appendix O.

Table 4

Analysis rationale

Rationale for choosing RTA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The researcher’s research values align with the values underpinning RTA (Braun & Clarke, 2021). • Works especially well for a single researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2021). • Allows for development of themes from the data to give an overview of group experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2013), this is particularly helpful for the current study as there is no current research in this area. It is hoped the themes derived from the data will give a foundational insight into the topic area. • RTA offers a flexibility of application to the data, this supported in offering a rich and detailed account across professional groups.

Table 5

Summary of alternative analyses considered

Alternative analyses considered	Description	What they offer	Reasons for not choosing
Grounded Theory	Grounded Theory involves the theory being ‘grounded’ in the actual data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This meant the development of theories happens after the data is collected. Its process features line by line coding, memo writing and not engaging with relevant literature prior to starting the analysis.	Conceptualised as a suitable method for the discovery or generation of new theory from data. Could have been suitable for the present study given the limited research in the past (Holton, 2007).	More appropriate for constructivist epistemologies. Ethical consideration around the time labour of this type of analysis and questions around appropriateness for a time sensitive piece of research such as the present study.

Foucauldian Discourse Analysis	Involves a process of free association of the text, consideration of discursive constructions, perception of subject positions before considering constructions in relation to historical and social contexts (Willig, 2008).	Allows the researcher to heavily consider historical and cultural contexts influencing the researcher's analysis and encourages these connections.	The research questions of the present study were not focused on discourse, but wider, contextual themes.
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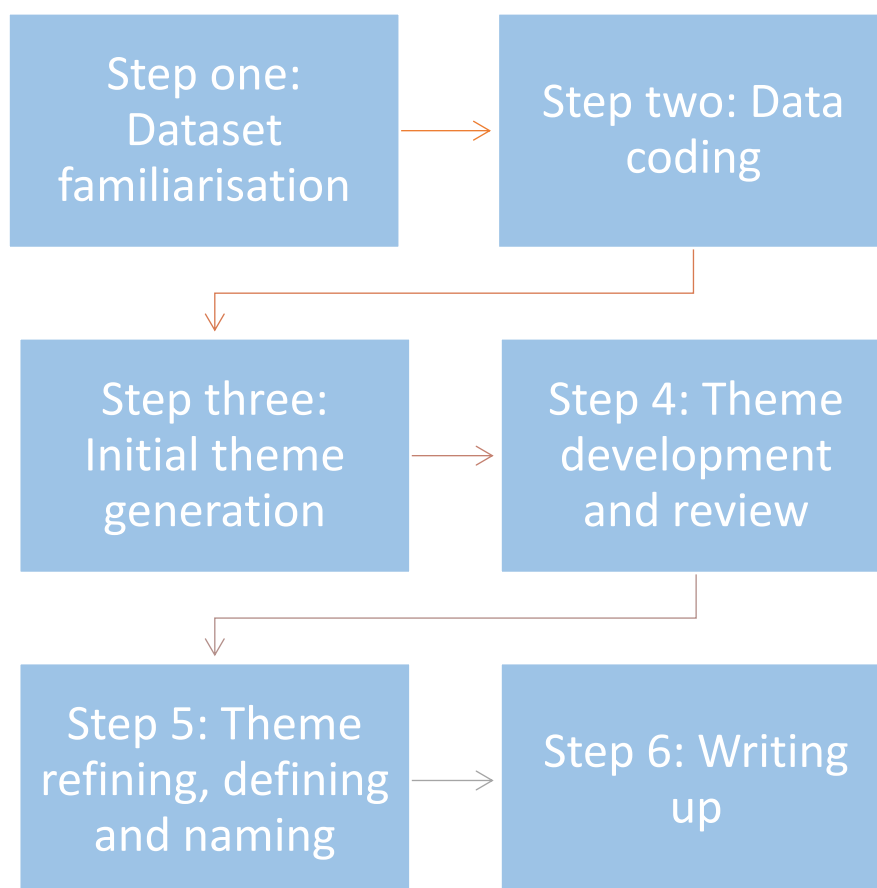


Figure 6
Braun and Clarke (2022) Thematic Analysis procedure

3.8 Reliability and validity

Yardley’s (2000) framework was used to ensure the validity and reliability of the research and analysis. An overview of this process is presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Yardley (2000) framework details

Core Principle	Evidence of consideration from the current study
Sensitivity to context	<p>A research proposal was submitted and gained ethical approval from Cardiff University ethics committee Appendix N).</p> <p>Both a narrative and systematic literature review were conducted to examine the existing literature.</p> <p>The interview schedule was used to guide conversation. The use of open ended and probing questions were used within interviews to encourage participants to offer a response that meaningfully represented their views.</p> <p>The relevance and implications to EP practice were discussed, alongside relevance to the role.</p> <p>All LAs in Wales were invited to take part in the questionnaire to gain a breadth of different contexts and experiences.</p>
Commitment and Rigour	<p>The researcher carried out a reflexive thematic analysis approach and followed all steps accordingly. All stages of thematic analyses were carried out by hand, to allow the researcher to be fully immersed in the process.</p> <p>The interview schedule was informed by previous literature on the topic.</p> <p>The researcher accessed regular supervision throughout the development of the research.</p>

	<p>There were two elements of the study carried out, in an attempt to achieve an in-depth method of understanding the context of the topic.</p> <p>The researcher engaged in regular reflection throughout data analysis via a research diary which informed the process.</p> <p>The researcher was immersed in the data through transcription, coding and theming. Substantial time and commitment were given to the data analysis.</p>
<p>Coherence and transparency</p>	<p>Ontology and epistemological perspectives were carefully considered prior to research design to ensure these positions were informing methodological decisions and processes.</p> <p>Methodology section offers details of decisions made, rationale, materials used and procedure undertaken for the study.</p> <p>Visual evidence of theme and subtheme development is included in Appendix O to offer transparency of analysis.</p> <p>Part three of the submission details a critical appraisal of the present research to outline development and reflexivity from the researcher's perspective.</p> <p>The literature review offered a clear rationale for the present study and its relevance to EP practice.</p>
<p>Impact and importance</p>	<p>The present research is the first within the evidence base of the subject, despite there being research discussing the impact of reduced timetables. Therefore, a clear gap in the existing literature was identified.</p> <p>The present study has offered a foundation to the understanding and process of reduced timetables for future research to add to.</p>

	<p>Clear and thoughtful implications and ideas for future research were identified to build upon the present research.</p> <p>Implications for practice are considered in relation to the EP role and outlined in depth in a systemic format.</p>
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3.9 Ethical considerations

The below ethical considerations have been made with reference to, and in consideration of, the British Psychological Society (BPS) Code of Ethics and Conduct (2021).

Table 7

Outline of ethical considerations

Ethical consideration	How this was addressed	
	Phase A	Phase B
Informed consent	<p>Participants were sent a link to the questionnaire and participant information sheet via the direct email from the researcher or through the gatekeeper. Embedded was a link to the consent form at the beginning of the questionnaire, participants were unable to proceed to the questions without confirming consent.</p>	<p>Prospective participants were provided with an information sheet and consent form via the gatekeeper. Participants were asked to return completed consent forms to the researcher before an interview was arranged. The researcher verbally read the participant consent form to participants at the beginning of the interview to ensure consent was still confirmed.</p>
Confidentiality and anonymity	<p>Only identifying information gathered was the local authority the participant worked for. This was only to understand who to resend the questionnaire details to and was kept confidential and not shared within the research.</p>	<p>While interviews could not be anonymous, the recordings were kept confidential and stored on a password protected device accessible only to the researcher. No identifiable data will be shared therefore participants will not be traceable.</p>
Right to withdraw	<p>Participants were made aware before completing the questionnaire of their right to</p>	<p>Participants were reminded of their right to withdraw in all research documents provided, including the</p>

	withdraw participation up until the point of their data submission.	participant information sheet, consent form and debrief form. Participants had two weeks to withdraw participation following completion of the focus group, until the recording would then be deleted. After this, withdrawing would not be possible as participants were not traceable.
Risk of harm and debrief	A debrief form was included at the end of the questionnaire	Participants were provided with a debrief form (Appendix M), following participation. This included a summary of their involvement and a reminder of the purpose of the study. Contact information was again provided so that participants could contact the researcher should they wish to. Before the interview, the participants were reminded to follow their appropriate safeguarding procedures if they discussed anything that was a safeguarding concern. Also reminded them that the researcher would be doing the same.
Online Security	Qualtrics uses Transport Layer Security encryption for all data. The survey was protected with passwords that could only be accessed by the researcher.	Where interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams, the video recording function was used as it was the only recording function available on Microsoft Teams. This was made clear in the participant information sheet. Once transcription took place, the recording was permanently deleted.

4.0 Analysis

4.1 Analysis of the Quantitative data

Of the 22 invited, 13 LAs in Wales completed the questionnaire (response rate 59%), their responses will be presented in this section, supplemented by a series of visual aids. The questions and responses have been grouped into three areas: 'Process', 'Rationale' and 'Efficacy' of reduced timetables. This grouping is to allow for ease of understanding of the journey of reduced timetables and to contextualise perspectives of how and why they are used.

4.1.1 Process

When asked about LA policies on reduced timetables, 100% of participants said that their LA discusses reduced timetables in a policy. 30% of participants said it is covered as part of another policy, whilst 70% said it has its own policy.

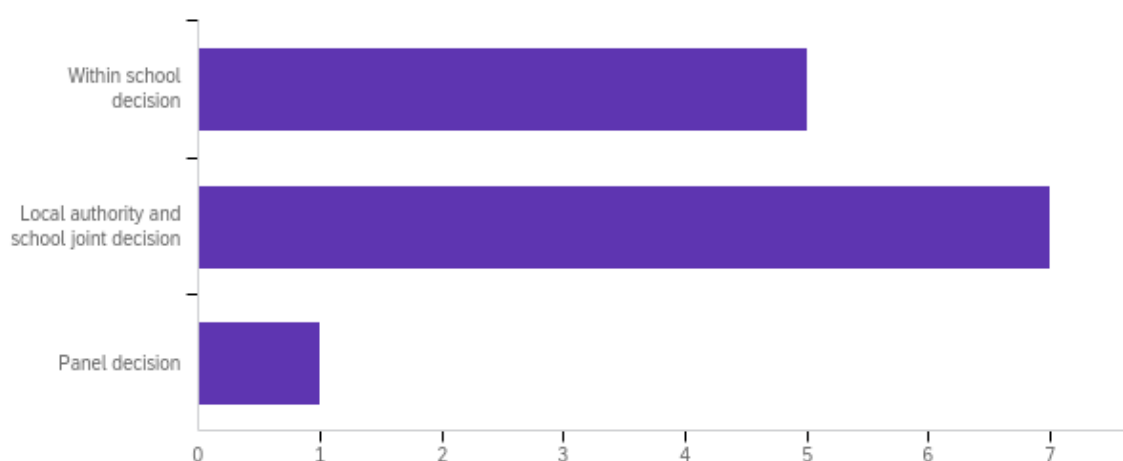


Figure 7

Responses to survey question “If a school wanted to place a young person on a reduced timetable, is this an internal process or does it require input from the local authority (e.g. Inclusion Manager)?”

When asked about how it is decided a young person will be placed on a reduced timetable, over 50% said this was an LA and school joint decision, almost 40% said it was a within school decision and 8% said it was a panel based decision. Participants were asked if EPs were involved in the support of a young person on a reduced timetable, 92% responded ‘sometimes’, 8% said ‘no’.

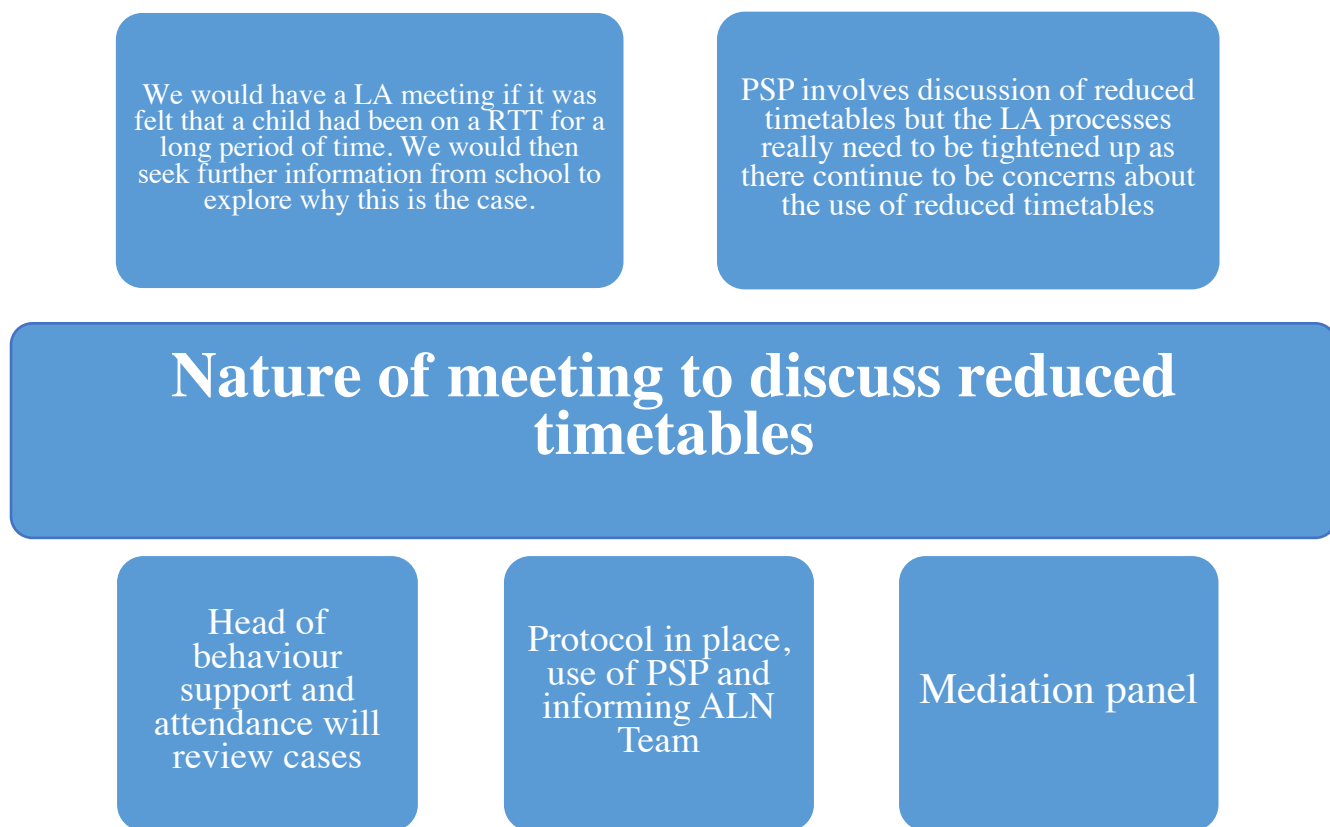


Figure 8

Responses to survey question “Do you have any local authority processes/meetings/panels within the local authority to discuss reduced timetables? If yes, please specify:”

Participants were asked about opportunities to discuss reduced timetables at a LA level. 46% of participants said there are not LA meetings or panels to discuss reduced timetables, 54% did. Responses to what meetings they were discussed in are illustrated in Figure 8. Participant responses included names of panels, who are involved in the meetings i.e. ‘Head of behaviour support’, and review mechanisms that include reviews i.e. ‘PSP (pastoral support plan) involves discussion of reduced timetable’.

4.1.2 Rationale

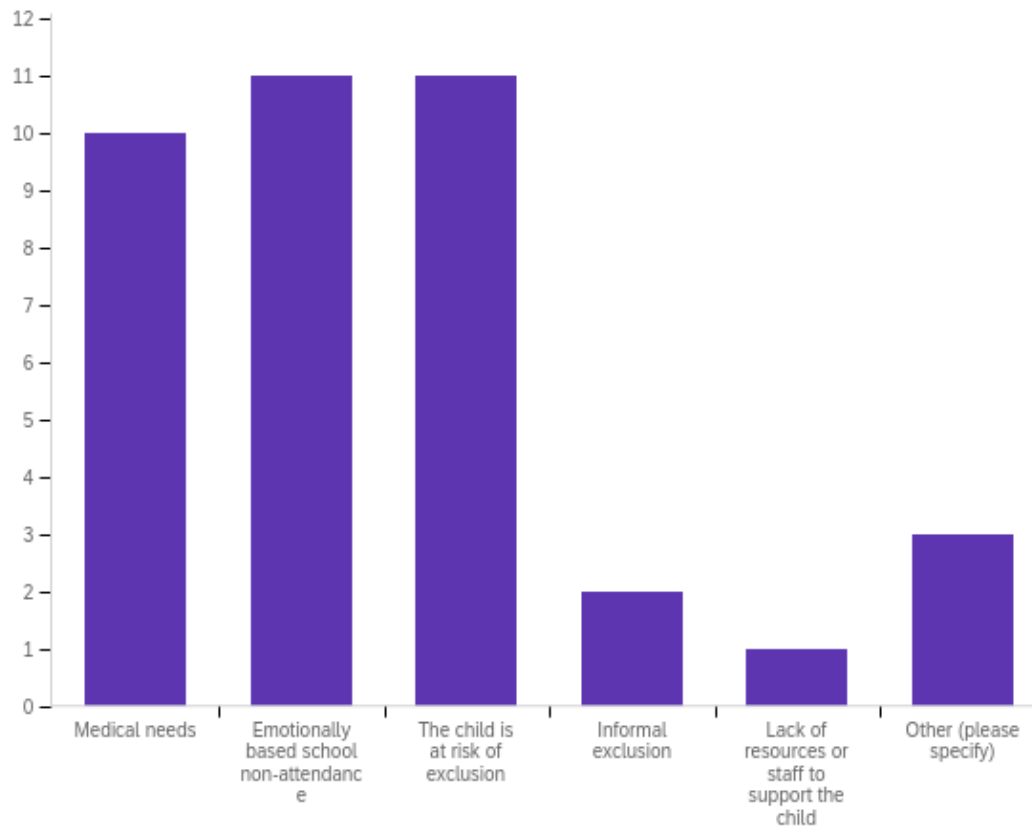


Figure 9

Responses to question: “What reasons may lead to children in your local authority being placed on a reduced timetable?”

Participants were asked what reason may lead to a young person in their LA being placed on reduced timetables and were given the option of selecting more than one option. 26% of participants selected ‘medical needs’, 29% selected ‘emotionally based school non-attendance’, 29% selected ‘the child is at risk of exclusion’, 5% selected ‘informal exclusion’, 3% selected ‘lack of resources to support the child’ and 8% selected ‘other’ and were asked to specify. These participants specified responses as follows: ‘it is a range of issues’, ‘reintegration to mainstream following a long or short term intervention at the PRU / alternative education’, and ‘struggling to manage transition into school’.

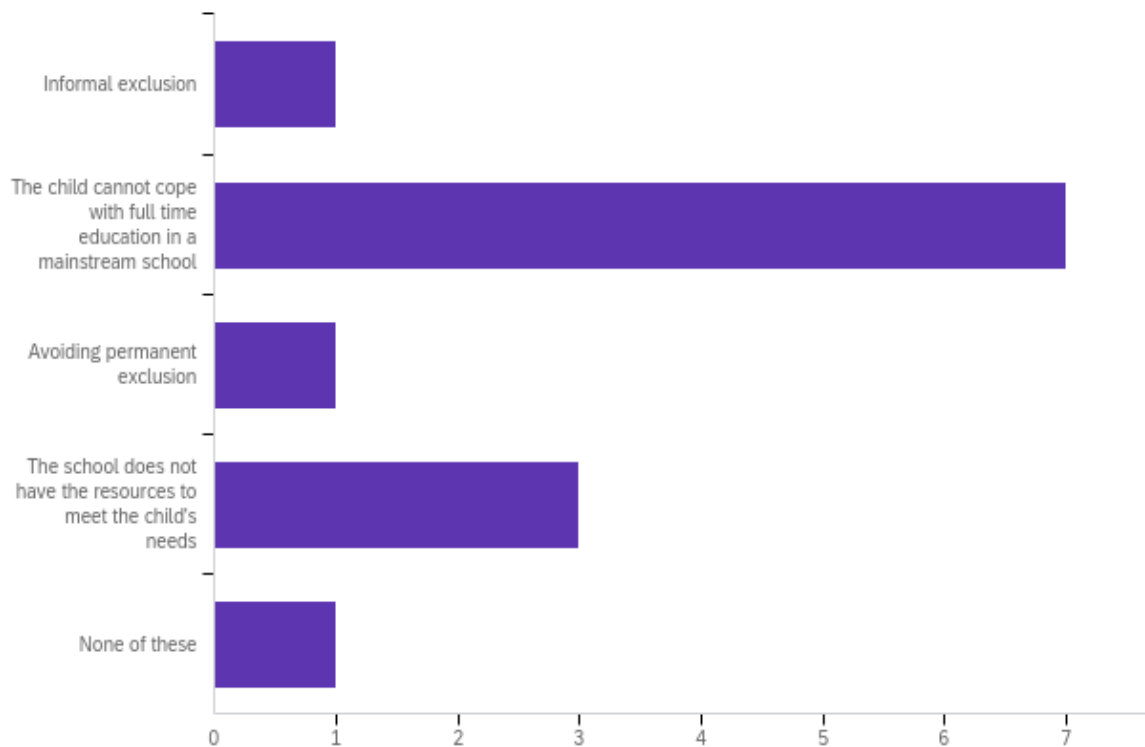


Figure 10

Responses to question: *“Which statement do you believe best describes the use of reduced timetables for young people with social and emotional needs who present with externalising behaviours?”*

The most commonly selected choice for this question was ‘this child cannot cope with full time education in a mainstream school’, with 54% of respondents choosing this option. 23% selected ‘the school does not have the resources to meet the child’s needs’. Whilst ‘informal exclusion’, avoiding permanent exclusion’ and ‘none of these’ were chosen 8% each. Respondents were given the option to select only one answer for this question.

4.1.3 Efficacy

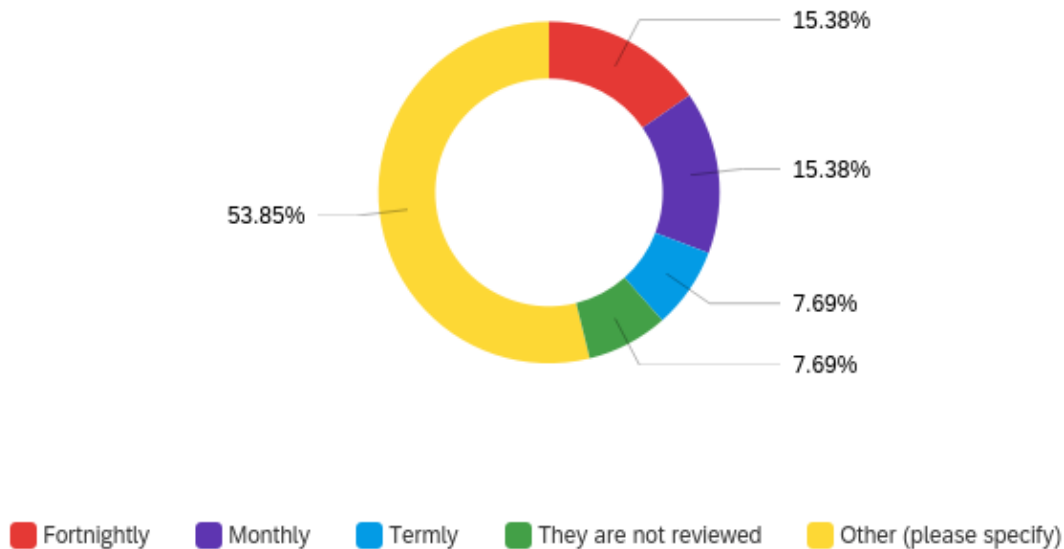


Figure 11

Responses to question: “How often are reduced timetables reviewed?”

Each LA appears to have their own developed arrangements for reviewing reduced timetables. 15% review them fortnightly, 15% review monthly, 8% review termly and 8% review in other ways.

Responses to the ‘other’ section are as follows:

- Fortnightly reviews with 6 week (max) as recommended that pupil is placed on a reduced timetable
- PSPs are reviewed every 6 weeks
- Half termly
- Formally every 6 weeks, but we would expect an informal review before the 6 weeks is up
- This is monitored by the ESW service but the recommended review periods are not always adhered to by schools
- ‘regularly’ according to the policy
- Stated by the panel, usually half termly

Participants were asked who reduced timetables were reviewed by. 50% of participants selected by ‘local authority and school’, 41% selected by ‘school’ and 8% selected ‘other’. The additional response to the ‘other’ selected stated by ‘school and parents’.

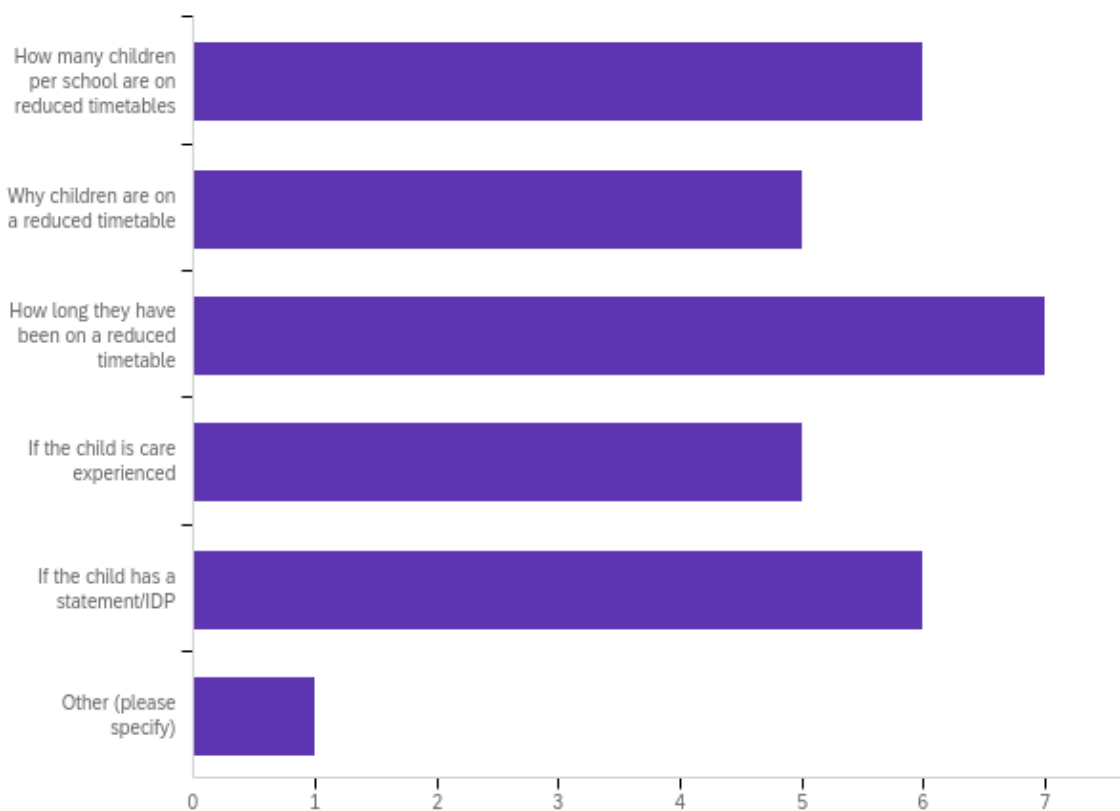


Figure 12

Responses to question: *“Please share what data you collect on reduced timetables:”*

When asked if their local authority collects data on reduced timetables, 67% selected yes, 33% selected no. For those who said yes, Figure 12 illustrates their responses. The most frequently selected answer was ‘how long they have been on a reduced timetable (23%), followed by ‘if the child has a statement/IDP’ (20%) and ‘how many children per school are on reduced timetables’ (20%), then ‘why children are on a reduced timetable (17%) and ‘if the child is care experienced’ (17%). The remainder of the responses were ‘other’ (3%), the additional offer to comment some qualitative data for this response included ‘any agencies involved, FSM, who oversees the PSP, hours, PSP provided, if on alternative providers’.

In terms of how often this data is collected, 43% selected ‘termly’, 29% selected ‘annually’, 0 selected ‘monthly’, and 29% selected ‘other’. Responses from the ‘other’ results included ‘as and when the learner is placed on a reduced timetable, and ‘continually via IDP system’.

Participants were asked if they share data on reduced timetables i.e. Regionally or nationally. 29% selected ‘yes’, 71% selected ‘no’.

4.1.4 Efficacy

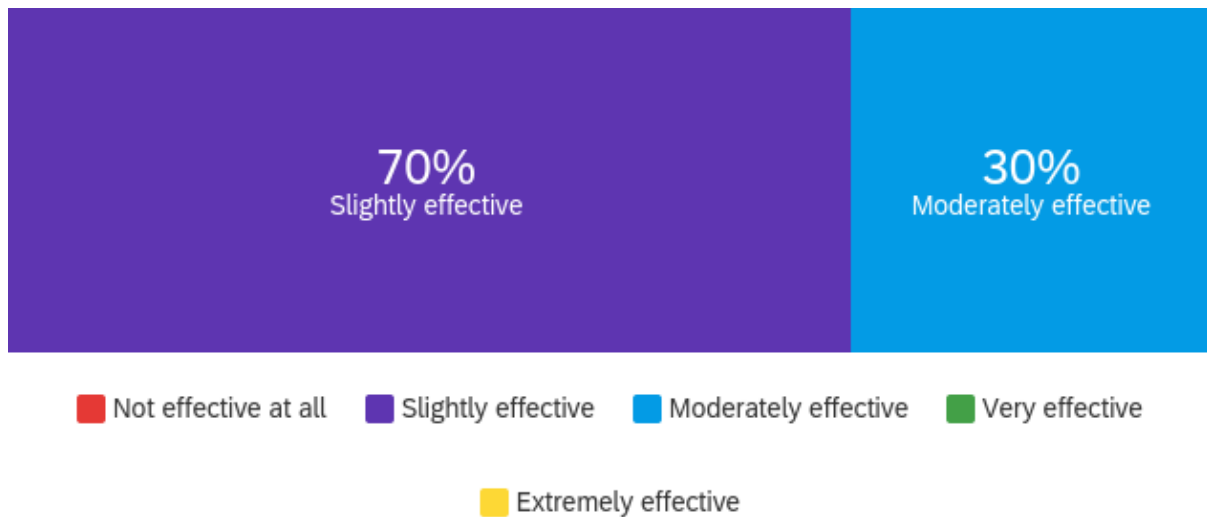


Figure 13

Responses to question: *“How effective do you think your local authority is at implementing, maintaining and reviewing reduced timetables?”*

As seen in Figure 13, 70% of participants believe their local authority is ‘slightly effective’ at implementing, maintaining and reviewing reduced timetables. Whilst 30% believed they were ‘moderately effective. Notably, no participants chose ‘very effective’, extremely effective’ or ‘not effective at all’.

When asked ‘Do you think anything could be done differently to support young people on reduced timetables?’ 100% of participants selected ‘yes’.

Participants were asked to offer an extended qualitative response if their answer was ‘yes’. Their responses are illustrated in Figure 14.

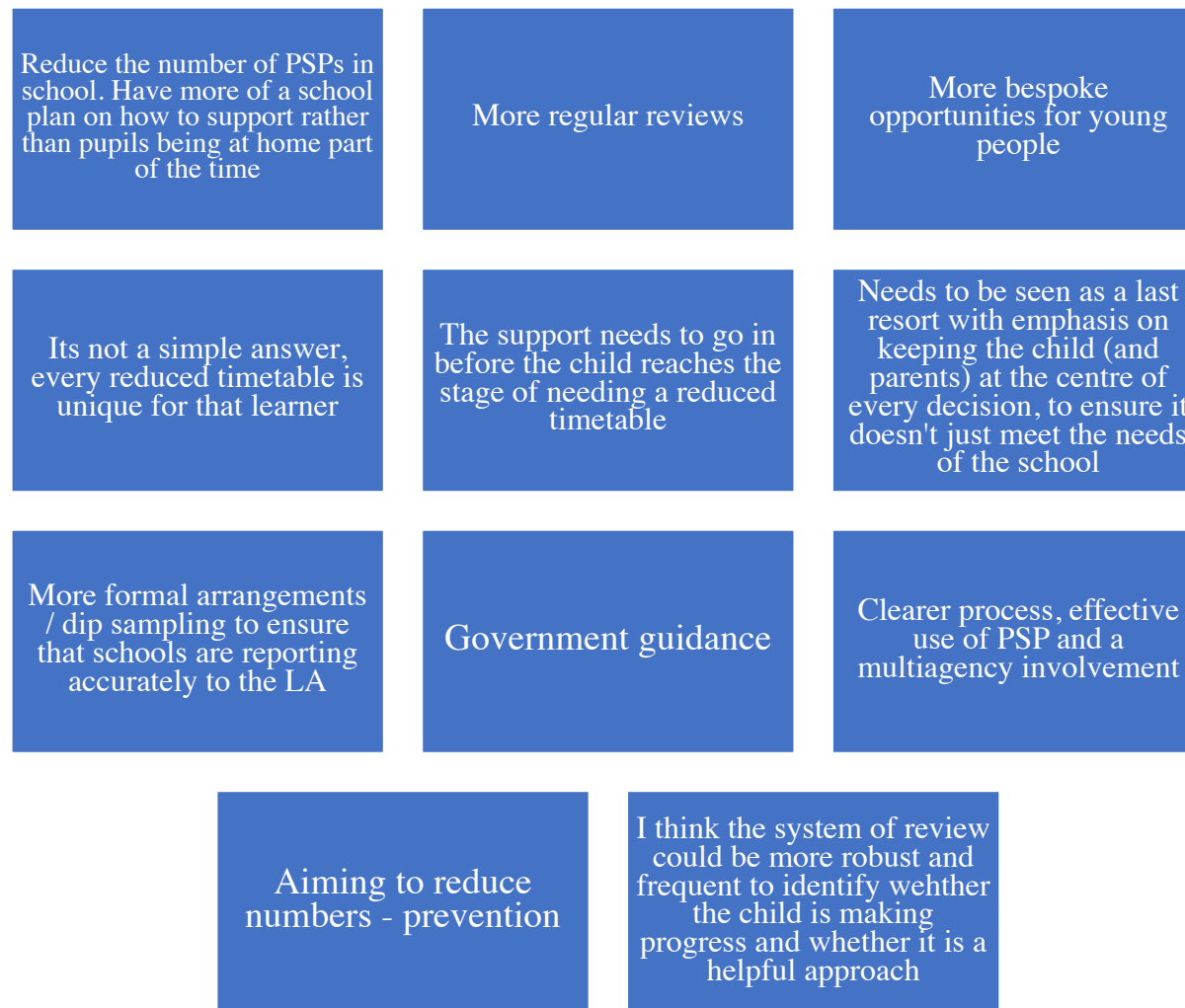


Figure 14

Responses to question: *“Do you think anything could be done differently to support young people on a reduced timetable?”*

4.2 Analysis of the Qualitative data

This section will present the main themes and subthemes developed from the thematic analysis of the data focused on answering research question 2.

As can be seen from the thematic map (Figure 15), three main themes were identified from the interview data: 'Resource or young person led?', 'Searching for clarity', and 'Isolated together'.

Arrows included in Figure 15 highlight connections and interactions development between themes.

The main themes and subthemes will be discussed in the next section. The analysis will be presented using quotations from participants and an explanation from the researcher.

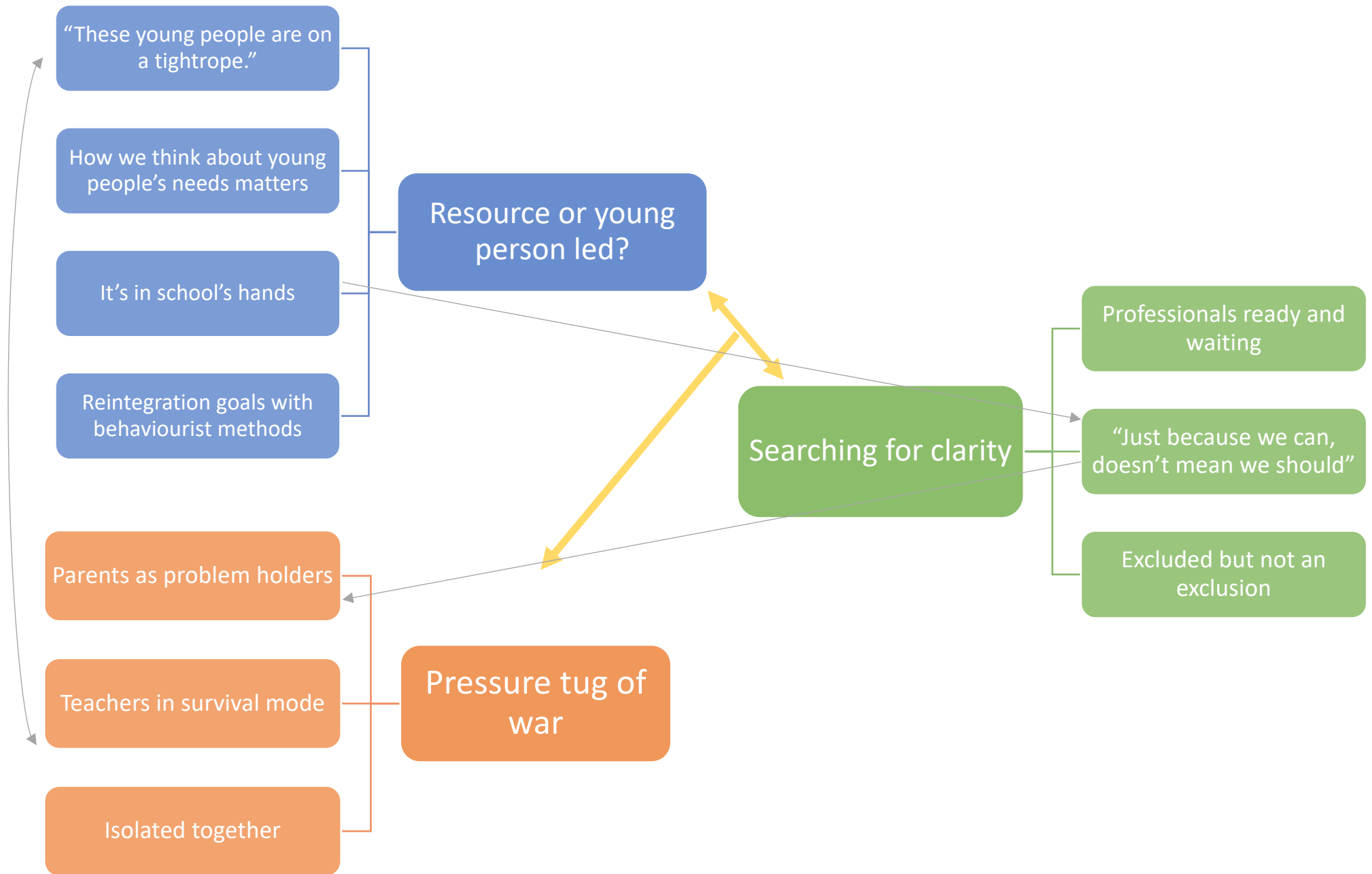


Figure 15
Thematic Map

4.2.1 Theme 1: Resource or young person led?

This theme reflects the discourse developed from the data regarding the purpose of reduced timetables. It also highlights the different ways participants thought about young people's needs and the reasons for their outward presentation and the implications of this i.e. the young person's identity in school and the level of agency school has. For some participants, limitations of staff or resource capacity in school leads to schools struggling to meet young people's needs, who otherwise may be able to access a full time education. For others, this group of yp cannot cope with a full school day.

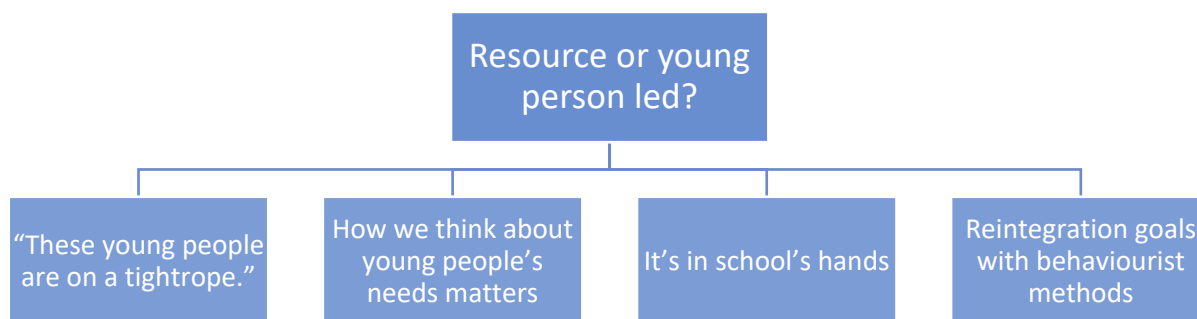


Figure 16

Theme 1 and subthemes

Subtheme 1: *“These young people are on a tightrope” – Participant 5*

Participants spoke of the idea that yp placed on reduced timetables the researcher constructed as being on ‘on a tightrope’ This is a metaphor for them feeling like they are in a difficult situation and have to be careful about what they might say or do in school, regardless of their feelings of stress, anxiety and overwhelm. This also meant they have little room for mistakes once they reach this point. Participants spoke about yp being aware that if they continued with their behaviour, they may have their reduced timetable reduced further, or be permanently excluded. Thus, leaving them feeling unsafe and uncertain of their place in their school.

“They know it’s their ‘last chance’, they don’t want to be permanently excluded. They don’t want the stigma or label. So they’ve got to keep it together for the hours they are in school, even if it’s hard.” – Participant 2

This concern appeared to be intensified when school staff tell yp and their families that they are doing everything they could to reintegrate their child back into school, but the young person was not holding their side of the agreement. The expectation is placed on the young person to make changes that will reward them with the opportunity to stay in school.

“They’re told, you can’t come into school the way you used to. And if this carries on you will be excluded. Those are the ways the carrot conversation goes. Like this is your last chance, to prove to us you can be here. We’ve tried everything we can to help you.”

– Participant 6

Participants spoke of the change in the young people’s day to day routine being heavily impacted by the reduced timetable, and the struggles yp face as a result of this. Participants shared details of the timetables as being sporadic and making school more difficult for yp.

“She couldn’t build up routines, she wasn’t sleeping properly then because she didn’t have anything to get up for in the mornings. She wasn’t accessing her free school meal either.” – Participant 7

Participant 6 discussed that the increased pressures of these expectations would often result in amplified feelings of stress and anxiety for the young person. Participant 6 was curious about how this impacts the young person’s intra-personal skills and consequently, how they presented behaviourally in school.

“How is this helping anxiety and what type of self-narrative do they build up over time, that I need stuff to reduced and be taken away from me because it’s too much of a stress trigger?” – Participant 6

Subtheme 2: “It’s in school’s hands”

This subtheme represents the idea that reduced timetables are applied differently across schools. Participants related this as being almost always, at least partially, caused by resource issues in school. This can take the form of lack of support staff, physical space or access to training that offers helpful thinking and strategies to support yp who present with socio-emotional differences and externalising behaviours.

“Obviously it doesn’t depend on whether it’s doable (the young person being in school). It’s always linked to staffing, resourcing, funding and physical space. This is especially the case with secondary schools.”- Participant 5

“We see trends in individual schools or even local authorities, it’s important. Families are contacting us and don’t know what to do. They don’t understand their rights.”
– Participant 4

Participants linked resourcing difficulties as not only being a cause of reduced timetables, but also the lack of availability in support may actually be a contributor to the externalising behaviours that yp present with.

“A very significant reason is lack of funding or ability to support a young person in school. They may need support, that isn’t happening. Which is causing behaviours to escalate and ultimately leads to schools suggesting reduced timetables. They’ve just placed the reduced timetable in order to avoid needing to provide that support.”
– Participant 3

More specifically, it seems that the staff that are available in school find it difficult to meet the needs of yp who find themselves on reduced timetables. Participants suggested this difficulty can lead to a difficult dyadic relationship between teacher and pupil. Thus, making it difficult for teachers to be adaptable or flexible in their approach to supporting yp. And in this relationship, teachers / schools are the party with the power, therefore it’s the yp who are asked to make the changes.

“But ultimately, there’s teachers who literally cannot cope with that child in their class. Because it’s all built up in the behaviour and the issues they’ve had together. Ultimately, it’s about trying to build their relationship back up, but some teachers aren’t willing to do that or give them a second chance.” – Participant 6

On the contrary, participant 7 offered an example of when reduced timetables are applied in a hopeful way, in collaboration with staff and yp. Noting that it can be a positive experience if there is a ‘wrap around’ approach, bringing them in, rather than pushing them out.

“A school I worked in, when they were on reduced timetables they just weren’t accessing specific lessons, they were in the unit. Their sense of belonging was so strong because

they had those staff members they knew they could go to. They built friendships there too.” – Participant 7

Subtheme 3: How we think about young people’s needs matters

There was a sense from participants that how school staff are making sense of young people’s needs made a difference to how they responded to them and the overall narrative of the child across the school context was developed. Their thoughts and rationalisation of behaviour impacted how they consequently felt about the young person and their emotional capacity to support them.

“They’re not trained to respond when a child says something emotive. I think that initial teacher training there should be greater focus on behaviour management and well-being.” Participant 1

Between participants, there appeared to be somewhat of a binarised way of thinking around whether the young person cannot cope with school, or if the school cannot cope with the young person. Participants fell into one of these two groups.

“These children cannot cope with school for 5+ hours, they can’t manage the day so we are making it easier for them to cope (by being in less).” – Participant 2

“The behaviour is very difficult for school to manage. He can’t read or write, I mean he’s 11 now. But finds it really difficult to maintain a full day of school. And you know, his behaviour is very attention seeking, so they put him on a part time timetable. – Participant 6

Some participants considered the difficulty of reducing a young person’s timetable when school staff were finding their behaviour difficult to manage. This was in relation to the safeguarding of the child and concerns about the parent’s ability to support complex needs, particularly when trained professionals at school were struggling.

“We need to think about what is in the child’s best interests, we also need to think about safeguarding the child. Some of these children experience quite expansive behaviour at home as well as at school. It’s complex. - Participant 1

Subtheme 3: Reintegration goals, behaviourist methods

Throughout the interviews, some participants spoke of the overall purpose of reduced timetables being to reintegrate yp back into full time education. But all spoke of the methods being behaviourist in nature. If a young person behaved a certain way, their timetable was reduced. If their behaviour improved, it could be considered for it to be increased.

“What’s what it boils down to. Why is this being done? Who is this for? Who is benefitting from the arrangement? You know, so it’s difficult isn’t it? I’d like them back in school and feel part of the community. That’s my best hopes.” Participant 5

There was feeling amongst some participants that reducing time was not sufficient in creating change for the young person to understand why they were expressing their emotions in this way. Participants felt that this would be better supported with a timetable that was filled up with other activities or with the focus being on improved relationships.

“What are they hoping to achieve with keeping them out? Because keeping them out for everyone to have a breathing space is not a plan. Keeping them out so they can go and do an intervention three times a week with a youth worker is different.”
– Participant 3

Participant 2 highlighted the potential danger of a young person being placed on a reduced timetable for a long period of time and how this can be detrimental to the hopes of the child reintegrating. This often seems to be because the young person is not changing their behaviour in the way a school might expect. Or it can be when it’s going well and school do not want to risk the progress that has been made and leave it reduced.

“It’s far too easy to say yep, they’re on a reduced timetable, it’s going ok. So just leave it there. They think, right the situation is calmed, let’s leave it there. I think the young people also feel comfortable and don’t want to be challenged. But it’s not meant to be the final outcome for them. They often don’t travel around the school building, or interact with others. I do think they are very institutionalised by the process.” – Participant 2

Participant 7 felt that school's overall goal is not reintegration and there is not a clear understanding of what the young person can do to gain approval or be allowed back into school. These feelings of exclusion experienced by the young person, can lead to the behaviour that resulted in the child being placed on the reduced timetable.

"They were all saying to her, you need to try harder. But the whole process was not explained in the meeting, there were no timelines, nothing in place, but the professionals have all the power. Participant 7

"They end up excluded, so that reduced timetable has worked. Because sometimes I think it's like a plaster over a big crack. There's no process, no actual intervention. What could actually be done to reintegrate them back into the classroom." – Participant 7

4.2.2 Theme 2: Searching for clarity

This theme reflects the view that there is a general perceived lack of clarity or shared understanding of the process of reduced timetables, which was found across all participants. The level of ambiguity appears to have left external professionals awaiting requests for involvement from schools in order to become involved in the support. Due to the absence of statutory guidance or processes, it has meant that schools have a level of power and independence to apply the timetables how they feel is appropriate and are at times not offered support to navigate this. Thus leaving opportunity for yp to potentially be excluded from school life and consequently, lose their sense of belonging and identity as a pupil.

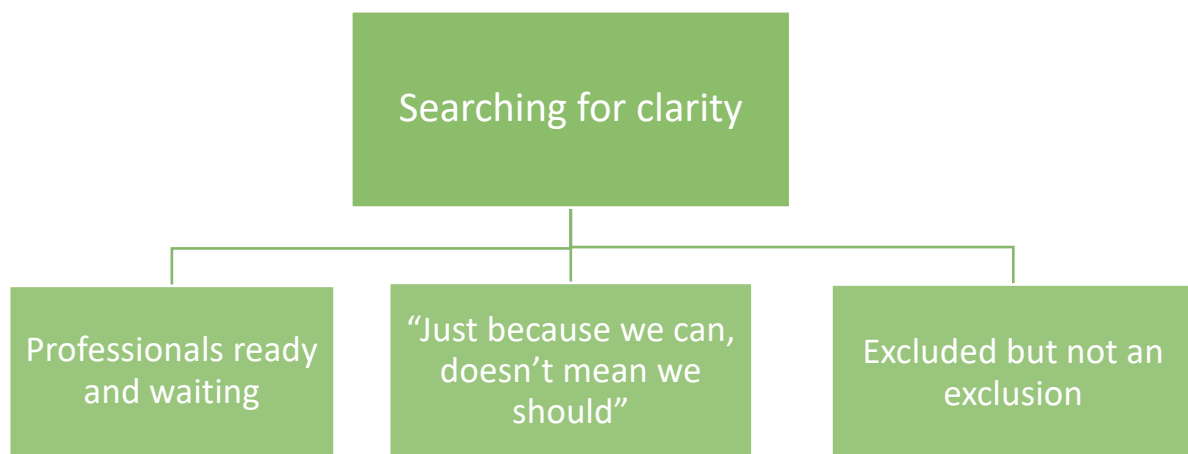


Figure 17

Theme 2 and subthemes

Subtheme 1: Professionals ready and waiting

Participants spoke of the professions of practitioners involved in the process of a reduced timetable. This was mostly discussed as being a within school decision that involves class teachers and ALNCOs, external professionals were brought in at school request. For professionals who were LA or charity based, they felt they had a lot to offer in the process and would like the division of labour to be shared via systems set up to include them. There was a level of frustration from their point of view, relating to their perception that the process was not transparent and there was not a clear aim of the reduced timetable or future planning for the young person.

“Schools need to think, what are we gonna gain, what are we gonna lose and what is the net benefit. Does everyone agree and buy into that? Does everyone understand their role? What is the pathway for us to measure that its doing what we wanted it to do? I don’t see any of that taking place, and work our asses off to get involved.” Participant 4

There was a shared agreement that EPs would be well placed to be involved in the decision making process of reduced timetables and exploring the barriers to fulltime education. This seems to be in relation to the EPs’ unique contribution to multi-agency support.

“From the EPs I’ve worked with, there is a real person-centred, empathetic approach to thinking about well-being. I think them being part of this collaboration is important. We just need to be alongside each other, sharing what is going on.” Participant 4

However, professionals acknowledged this can be difficult, because this doesn’t seem to be the work schools prioritise for professional involvement. It was suggested that this is because schools use reduced timetables as a means to put the ‘problem’ (managing a young person’s behaviour) to one side through the reduced timetable.

“In majority of cases, there should be an element of EP support to look at the barriers, at an early stage. What is preventing full time education? What is causing the behaviours?”
– Participant 5

“Often schools say an EP has not been involved because they (the young person) don’t meet criteria for referral. Or this child isn’t at the top of their list. They will say oh I’ve only got two slots left for the year. Some children are in school and causing school bother, these young people aren’t.” – Participant 6

Subtheme 2: “Just because we can, doesn’t mean we should”

This subtheme relates to the level of freedom and autonomy schools have in relation to reduced timetables. The quote, from participant 2 illustrates the notion that just because schools are able to put a child on a reduced timetable for any length of time a day they can, does not mean they should. There are ethical, moral and professional decisions to be thought of when considering implementation. There currently is not national or statutory guidance to protect schools or families, this is potentially letting all parties down.

“I think there’s space for informing policy really and writing a really robust policy around reduced timetables that everybody follows and being very explicit on that. But also in the process of working with the restorative work. I mean talking about working with children and young people with the teachers around them. How do we make this a better place for you, where you feel you can access all elements of school life?” – Participant 6

“Yes, schools can do what they want, and yes it’s hard for us. But just because we can doesn’t mean we should. We have to be brave and look at it differently.” Participant 6

Policies are not developed to support schools to appropriately manage the support for this group of yp. Participants believe they will continue to fall through the net and not make progress to meet their potential. Parallels were drawn between reduced timetables and other approaches to support yp with socio-emotional differences in school. However, these other approaches (such as managed moves) do have national guidance policy.

“It’s not a conversation around what this is going to mean for you and your family if your child goes on a reduced timetable. None of that happens, it’s just sort of done to them. They say it’s a last resort, they have to do this or they’re excluded, or placed on a managed move.” – Participant 7

Participants highlighted the potential for reduced timetables to continue falling under the radar nationally. Currently, Welsh Government do not collect any data on reduced timetables. This means the picture of their use nationally is somewhat unknown, and many yp, schools and families could potentially be struggling to manage this area.

“You know, Welsh Government don’t know how many reduced timetables local authorities have do they? Or even if we are reviewing PSP effectively, it’s not like having a statutory assessment by law. It’s completely fair to say there is a level of freedom isn’t there.” – Participant 1

“We don’t have enough guidance over it. Have you ever read the guidance on managed moves? It’s very clear, everyone should be in agreement. But with reduced timetables, it’s not even that. So it could literally be one staff member going, right ok, we’re gonna go for a reduced timetable and that’s it. There’s a definite need to legislate and make it much clearer for schools.” – Participant 5

On an individual level, participants shared that yp could be forgotten about after being placed on a reduced timetable for an extended period of time.

“I do think they need to be structured in a way that is beneficial for the child but also something that is reviewed more regularly. Some young people are left, we think they’re doing ok, so let’s just leave it. Then we may be a term down the line and you think, well they’re not going to go back.” - Participant 2

“They feel a bit like people have washed their hands with them.” - Participant 4

Subtheme 3: Excluded but not an exclusion

Participants spoke about the idea of having an ‘exclusion’ in school, and the difference between an exclusion and a reduced timetable. They made links between the feelings of exclusion yp might feel by being placed on a reduced timetable and being given a fixed term exclusion. As both ‘excludes’ them from school for a period of time.

“They’ve basically been excluded from something haven’t they? And it’s linked to their behaviour, they may or may not know why they behave like that.”
– Participant 5

“They think, I’m on a reduced timetable and that might come with feelings around not being part of something and like rejected. I think rejection is a big trigger for behaviour.” - Participant 1

“They go on for months, and I’ve known ones as short as 30 minutes a day. I’ve known ones that are out of school hours after school, so they don’t mix with other pupils.”
– Participant 5

Participants offered the view that there is a close link between reduced timetables and permanent exclusions. Noting that they can sometimes be used as a means to avoid an incident that may lead to a permanent exclusion.

“It can be used to avoid a permanent exclusion, it’s a difficult balance.”

- Participant 6

“There is a build-up of poor behaviours or attendance concerns or exclusions. I have no doubt they would be permanently excluded if they reduced timetable wasn’t there.” - Participant 2

Others made links to the process of becoming permanently excluded. Suggesting that a reduced timetable is sometimes used as part of the process leading to being permanently excluded, to form a graduated response.

“When they are taken out of those lessons they are excluded from that part of the day with their peers. Thinking about it now, it was a part of their campaign to exclude. Ultimately, it just does, they’ve always ended up in exclusion.” - Participant 7

“Everyone willingly goes along with it. I think it’s because of their fear of their child being permanently excluded. Also because they don’t know if they can say no.”

– Participant 3

This threat of permanent exclusion is very difficult for yp and their families, so a reduced timetable is given as a sort of ‘last chance saloon’ to avoid being permanently excluded from school. Families feel grateful they have been offered the perceived lifeline of the reduced timetable and this creates a power imbalance.

“The threat of permanent exclusion is horrendous because they don’t know what happens and they just agree to a reduced timetable. But if they were permanently excluded, they would actually have more rights.” – Participant 5

“Reduced timetables just adds discontinuity to what was already discontinuous. And that just doesn’t help a sense of belonging and being nurtured really.” Participant 3

Participants offered the view that it is unfavourable for secondary schools to have a high number of permanent exclusions on their records. Therefore schools may opt for a reduced timetable and consider ways for this to be handled internally and the absence of policy on reduced timetables enables this.

“In my experience in a comp. I know they prefer a reduced timetable than a permanent exclusion because of the figures to Welsh Government. No one likes those records to be shown.” – Participant 4

“There’s always issues around how it’s being recorded on the register. There’s no evidence of that reduced timetable on the roll, so there is a huge impact on the young person. They are missing enormous chunks of school and going unnoticed.” – Participant 5

4.2.3 Theme 3: Pressure tug-of-war

This theme reflects the views participants had in relation to who's 'problem' this is. The issue of supporting a young person who presents with behaviours that adults finds difficult to support seems to be one person's problem or another. Participant 3 illustrated this point in their interview: *“How do we get out of this idea that this suits our needs at the moment, but it just shifts the risk or challenge onto someone else doesn't it?”*

For example, if a child is in school all day, they are the school's responsibility. Participants painted the picture of a cycle; if the teacher feels like they are finding it difficult to manage, they may raise this with senior leadership, a reduced timetable may be implemented. Parents feel pressure from school to change their child's behaviour to school expectations, children then feel this pressure from parents and school to change their own behaviour. This appears to be occurring in a context that does not hold shared understanding to encourage change for all parties involved.

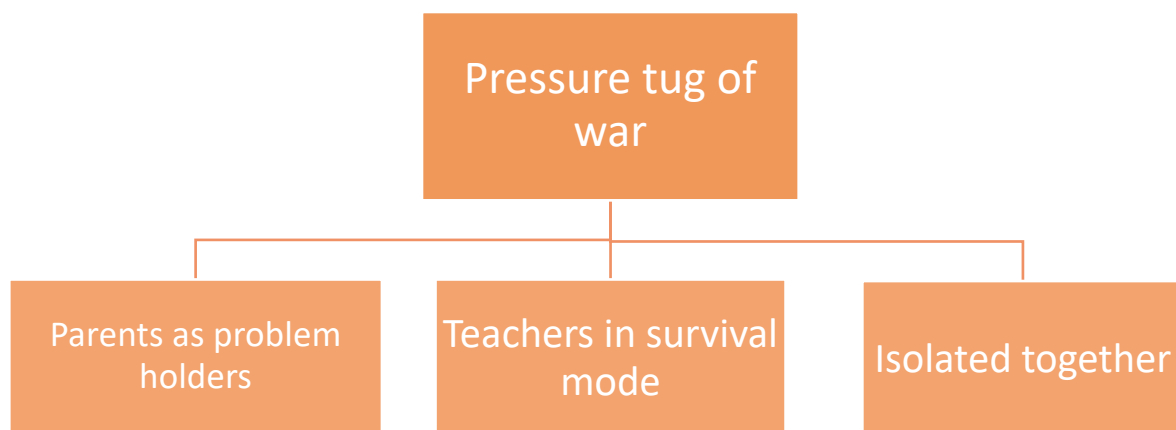


Figure 18

Theme 3 and subthemes

Subtheme 1: Parents as problem holders

When a school places a child on a reduced timetable, a parent is expected to accept responsibility for their child during school hours. This can leave parents feeling a sense of isolation, frustration and loneliness. The demands and expectations placed on parents seems to change when their child is placed on a reduced timetable. Participants reported an increase in phone calls, meetings and general expectations for parents to be available to discuss or pick up their child from school due to behaviour their child has presented with.

“I just don’t even have the words to explain how debilitating a reduced timetable is for parents.” Participant 7

“Parents, they are totally on their own with this. Even more than a teacher, even more than us (professionals). They’re absolutely exasperated. They’re really low, sad, stressed out, frustrated, intolerant. I don’t know if they’re given any consideration. It’s like well yea ok they need to be at home. You’ll need to provide care or be at home.”
– Participant 2

Participants discussed the impact of this pressure on parents. This can make daily life difficult when factoring in their working life, added pressure onto their relationship with their child, and understanding the expectation when they are at home with them. Is it to teach their child the curriculum, teach them life skills or to just keep them safe. With some parents being forced to leave their jobs, creating financial instability and leading to parent’s having a reduced ability to work with school and support their young person due to increased levels of stress.

“Reduced timetables actually normally lead to an escalation and a massive breakdown in communication. I’ve known parents to withdraw their child to home educate as a result of a reduced timetable. They then absolve school of any responsibility at that point.”
– Participant 3

“A lot of parents I have spoken to have left jobs so they can be there. You can’t leave the child in the house on their own. Or they get called into school so many times and now they can’t have a job anymore because their employer said you can’t be in and out like this all the time. It has huge financial and emotional impacts.” - Participant 7

Some participants highlighted that familial capacity and needs can be thought of differently by school staff, and this can influence whether professionals believe their child is suitable for a reduced timetable - based on their personal or work circumstances. This may highlight the inequities in the system, and also the level of autonomy schools can have in these decision making processes.

“Some parents have job roles that just don’t allow them to have children on a reduced timetable. If it’s not going to work for them, then we may have to think differently.” – Participant 1

“A lot of families are socially or economically deprived, so transport can be hard. They haven’t got time to walk home, come back, pick them up from a lesson and go home again I know at least 3 parents that have had to give up jobs because of the constant phone calls or constantly needing to pick up meetings for their child on a reduced timetable.” - Participant 2

Subtheme 2: Teachers in survival mode

The discourse around class teachers’ role in reduced timetables was generally related to teachers finding it difficult to work with yp in their class that present with socio-emotional differences. Participants wondered if this was because class teachers were so overstretched, they do not have time or capacity to be curious or empathetic towards their behaviour.

“When teachers can’t manage behaviour, they don’t understand what is going on for the child or young person when they present in a certain way. If staff feel like they can’t deal or manage their behaviour, so it’s easier for the child to not be there.” – Participant 6

Participants spoke about reduced timetables often being put in place to meet the needs of the teacher, rather than the young person. When class teachers feel stuck and do not feel confident in their abilities to support the young person, a reduced timetable is a means to reduce the pressure they face.

“In my experience, reduced timetables have always been for the teachers, but it’s been camouflaged as being for the students. They’re really helping themselves, because it’s stressful.” Participant 7

“Often a child would be removed from a certain teacher’s lessons because their teacher can’t deal with them or they don’t get on with the teacher for whatever reason. It’s easier to get rid of the child than a teacher.” Participant 4

Participants recognised this as something teachers or schools aren’t necessarily proud of. But in order to maintain their ability to teach the rest of the class and get through their day, pressure has to be released from somewhere. And often, this takes the shape of a reduced timetable.

“Sometimes I think (teachers) feel they are failing if it doesn’t go well. We’re (SLT) trying to reinforce that actually this isn’t about you. If we had more time to really reflect

with the wider staff on an individualised basis, it would make a massive impact on not just to their own well-being, but actually the practice in the classroom as well.” - Participant 1

“My headteacher said, he will no longer be accessing your lessons because he doesn’t deserve to be here when he speaks like that. In the moment it gave me some form of relief and thinking, oh my gosh, yeah. I don’t have to do the battle against him every single day. Rather than, I’m doing this to support the child, so sometimes it can be that, but other times, I think people don’t know what else to do.” - Participant 7

Subtheme 3: Isolated together

Parallels were drawn between those most impacted by reduced timetables, mainly the young person, parents and class teachers. The pressure appears to be being passed around these parties, some feeling the difficulty when the other is not, some feeling temporary relief when it’s not on them. However, all of this appears to be happening separately, without coming together in solidarity, collaboration or a shared comfort.

“A teacher’s experience day to day is very insular. Whenever there’s pressure, it feels personal, feels like you are the problem holder. So if they can just get a reduced timetable or something out there. But for me, I have supervision, I have peer conversations and unstructured times throughout my day where I can pick up the phone and get support.” - Participant 4

“How do you navigate that situation and it makes you more withdrawn and more likely to go back to the behaviour. I would often see children reengaging in the behaviour, back to where they were comfortable. Back to where they have social capital in the situation. - Participant 1

“With parents, I mean sobbing, in bits. To the point where they have needed to be referred to children’s services because of family breakdown. Sometimes they almost go into an acceptance that it will never be any different. They just give up.” Participant 5

Participants shared the view that relationships are key in making improvements in this area. Opportunities to communicate with people you feel comfortable with support those involved in reduced timetables to build capacity and feel like they are not alone.

“If a young person feels that they’ve got that connection with someone I think they are more likely to succeed. I think coming into school when you are one of these young people, you feel kind of pushed out and isolated, it’s not going to improve behaviour is it. They’re all triggering each other.” - Participant 3

5.0 Discussion

This exploratory research examined the use of reduced timetables for yp in Wales. The aim was to understand how and when they are used and explore the views of practitioners who support this group of yp. Analyses from the descriptive statistics and thematic analysis are detailed below in relation to each research question. Following this, implications for practice, strengths and limitations of the research and suggestions for future research are considered.

5.1 Research Question 1

How and when are local authorities using reduced timetables for young people?

Process

Responses to the questionnaire suggest that reduced timetables are being used differently across Wales. When considering the process of a young person being placed on a reduced timetable, there was a varied response in whether the LA was involved alongside the school in the decision making process. It is not clear whether for those who have school only decision making processes if this is a conscious decision to keep it within the school context, or if this has been brought to the attention of the LA to consider. The participants were asked if they had any meetings facilitated by LA practitioners to discuss reduced timetables, 46% did not.

Rationale

Participants selected yp 'at risk of exclusion' as many times as 'EBSA' for the reason reduced timetables are implemented. This may be perceived as surprising given the guidance and procedures around EBSA and medical need rationale for reduced timetables, in comparison to the absence of this for children who are seen as 'at risk of exclusion'. In Welsh Government's (2015) paper on exclusions, reduced timetables are not mentioned, but does outline using part time attendance combined with a pupil referral unit, voluntary organisation, college, work placement or home tuition offered by the LA. This could suggest the need for clear guidance on how schools can appropriately use reduced timetables, or to outline that reduced timetables should not be used as a gap or loophole, which may have developed the absence of such policy.

Efficacy

When asked how effective participants believe their LA is at the reduced timetable process, 70% chose 'slightly effective', 30% chose 'moderately effective' and 100% of participants selected 'yes' when asked if they would like things done differently. This could suggest a level of dissatisfaction of participants, with them offering practical and specific, context influenced ways of changing the way reduced timetables are used in their systems, as seen in Figure 13. Overall, there appears to be a desire

for a flexibility of opportunities wanted for yp, improved processes and tighter and more streamlined systems whereby reduced timetables are used rarely and reviewed closely by multi-agency systems (See Figure 14). Generally, participants appear to want a level of protection for professionals and yp that offers a process they can be confident in. It is clear that these suggestions are generally contextual / systems based, but there has not been clarity on who is best placed to enable such changes.

5.2 Research Question 2

What are practitioner perceptions and experiences of reduced timetables?

Resource or young person led?

The conceptualisation of this theme reflects the research surrounding informal exclusion (Done, Knowler & Armstrong, 2021; Power & Taylor, 2020). The idea of a young person feeling like they are on a tightrope appears to be a consequence of them feeling a sense of rejection and a lack of belonging. Reinforcing ideas from Pouwels et al.,'s (2016) paper, yp require provision to nurture their sense of belonging and how they would like to develop their sense of identity in their school, which may lead to a decrease in their externalising behaviours. Ways for staff to encourage this are often context dependent and need to shift within the norms and processes embedded within the school system and should include adult responses to these behaviours. This will be based on how they have made sense of the behaviour and their general feelings towards the young person (Holt, Bowlby & Lea, 2013).

Billington's (2018) paper highlighted the difficulties with viewing these difficulties as being a within child problem, and that it is more helpful to consider what is happening as a complex system of processes and interplay occurring that impacts how young people feel about themselves and school. This interplay may involve factors considered to be within child, such as age. Particularly considering the uniqueness of adolescence social cognitive factors. This group of yp may be more vulnerable to feelings of exclusion (Lambert & Miller, 2011), perceived risky decision making (Peake et al., 2013), and impulsive behaviours (Killen, Mulvery & Hitti, 2013) is not to be used as a way to blame the young person for their actions, rather the opposite. If these factors were considered in a way to evoke empathy and understanding of their needs, it may be easier for adults to link the behaviour to interactions and contexts around them. This is as opposed to the idea discussed regarding the binary notion of whether the young person cannot cope with school or if the school's systems cannot meet the child's needs. This is seen in the questionnaire of the present study. A question within the questionnaire (see Figure 10) found the most frequently chosen response was 'the child cannot cope with full time education in a mainstream school', followed by 'the school does not have the resources

to meet the child's needs'. Suggesting this binarisation is also present amongst those with responsibility for reduced timetables for the LA contexts.

Ambiguity around purpose and implications of the reduced timetables shone through in the dataset. There was a general sense that participants wondered if school's genuine aim was reintegration. Other participants felt inclusion meant that not all yp needed to be in school all of the time, as per their needs. Ideas around the relationship between reduced timetables and punishment and/or exclusion were considered as somewhat of an unspoken undercurrent of the practice. These ideas appeared to be developed and maintained through the norms and practices within different school contexts as all schools have freedom to apply reduced timetables how they see fit.

The LA policies on reduced timetables all outline reintegration as being the overarching aim (Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, 2018; Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, 2021; Neath Port Talbot Council, 2022). However, data from the present study found that once the child is placed on the reduced timetable, there appears to be a lack of urgency from schools to reintegrate the young person. Where reintegration is the aim, it is up to the young person to make the changes to 'prove' to school they can behave, rather than a coordinated approach involving those around the young person and school. This is likened to the theme 'lack of collaborative working' and lack of 'readiness and reintegration flexibility' in Owen, Woods and Stewart's (2021) paper as being a key barrier to reintegration. As mentioned, schools operate in a way where a reduction of exclusions is a measurement of inclusive practice. It appears that the lack of systems to enable reintegration plays into the 'inclusion enabling exclusion agenda' offered consistently in the literature by Done and Knowler (2020; 2021). This idea pays respect to the marginalising experiences that yp face based on systems and processes that perpetuate practices that see them left out and let down by school in a way that do not fit into formal exclusionary processes. This seems to be the case for the potential for reintegration when a young person is placed on a reduced timetable.

Searching for clarity

The theme 'Searching for clarity' is consistent with existing literature related to exclusionary practice and those at risk of exclusion. Particularly Denham's (2021) paper relating to the processes and systems that underpin these exclusionary practices, or rather, lack of processes. Analysis from the present study's data held similar ideas around formal guidance to protect yp, their families and schools. Participants made a number of references to the challenges of this. There was particular mention to the difficulty in working in a multi-agency way to support the young person and school to avoid a reduced timetable or to support with reintegration. Participants spoke positively about their experiences of multi-agency work in the area of exclusion as being encouraging, but getting the

‘invite in’ from schools was difficult. This is despite Welsh Government’s (2016) guidance stating that a LA officer responsible for monitoring exclusions, an EWO and relevant professionals should be involved and notified if a child is at risk of permanent exclusion. However, it could be queried what ‘at risk of permanent exclusion’ means, and if a young person on a reduced timetable falls in to this category. It could be considered there is further ambiguity on which professionals should be included in this multi-agency team. Thus highlighting the need for specificity in this area.

Participants alluded to the concept of a reduced timetable as being closely linked to exclusion, but falling short of what formally qualifies as exclusion. This view is shared in the research by Power and Taylor (2020), who suggest there is motivation for schools to engage in practices such as reduced timetables to avoid permanent exclusion. Maxwell et al., (2020) found these practices as not reaching statutory duties or policies, and therefore are not captured in national exclusion datasets. Participants spoke of this, suggesting this loophole allows yp to fall under the net, with no systems in place protecting them. This is reinforced by the questionnaire for the present study. Participants were asked if they collect data on reduced timetable use within their local authority, 67% selected yes, 33% selected no, highlighting difference between LAs. These discrepancies could suggest inequities within Wales for young people, how approaches to support them are monitored and what they do with this data.

This research offers an untold view, previously not discussed in the literature, on how practitioners believe these practices impact the yp. Suggesting, whilst the young person is not formally excluded, the feelings of exclusion are likely to be similar to those who are excluded. Participants spoke of this feeling of exclusion and isolation as an ongoing event as opposed to being defined by one incident, and the yp carry this emotionally, as per Boyle’s (2019) idea on exclusion continuum. They do not ‘do’ the exclusion once the day or two is over, it’s is an ongoing feeling and relationship they have with school and adults in it. These experiences have been cited in the literature for yp who have received fixed term exclusions or been permanently excluded from school (Parker et al., 2016). Parker et al., (2016) shared the view that the exclusions exacerbated feelings of isolation, low mood, lack of confidence and relationship struggles which increased externalising behaviours in school. These feelings are similar to those the present study’s participants felt yp on reduced timetables face. This may suggest that reduced timetables could be worsening the young person’s well-being and having a negative impact on their behaviour, rather than encouraging reintegration or supporting their ability to behave in the way schools want them to. This point is also reaffirming to the idea that we need to consider vulnerabilities of age and factors of secondary schools when placing a young person on a reduced timetable, as previously mentioned, adolescents are vulnerable to feelings of exclusion (Pouwels et al., 2016).

Pressure tug of war

This final theme has been conceptualised as something that occurs as a result of the previous two themes. This idea, illustrated by participant 3 in the analysis section, offers the view that because of the confusion around approach, constructions and lack of processes underpinning reduced timetables, pressure is passed around those involved. Those involved make attempts to pass on the pressure to maintain their ability to navigate their own individual difficulties. The link between ‘these young people are on a tightrope’ and isolated together’ highlights the continuous and perhaps progressively acute feelings of exclusion and isolation yp can potentially feel in the process. The analysis suggests this pressure is not limited to the yp, but also teachers and parents. The additional arrows added to the thematic map linking the subtheme ‘teachers in survival mode, ‘just because we can doesn’t mean we should’ and it’s in school’s hands’ link together these feelings of isolation, stuck-ness, lack of capacity across all layers of reduced timetable processes.

The impact exclusionary practices have on parents is somewhat documented in the literature. Done et al., (2021) note the lack of clarity around exclusionary practices and what they mean for yp and their families can result in families being coerced into elective home education. This is supported by Maxwell et al., (2021) suggested that parents were put under excessive pressure and let down by schools. Participants in the present study shared the impact reduced timetables has on families financially, emotionally and on their relationships with their child. Something that has not been mentioned in the previous literature that is present in the current study, was discussions around the varying impact reduced timetables have on families based on their circumstances. Participants spoke of access to transport, parental ability or confidence to advocate for their child and their own difficulties during their time at school as being factors that can make reduced timetables particularly stressful. An additional layer to these intersections are how school views families and how this may impact decisions relating to reduced timetables (Burnam, 2018). With participants noting they may be more or less likely to place a child on a reduced timetable based on their family situation i.e. less likely to place a young person on one if their parents worked. This way of thinking could have serious implications for potential discrimination against families who do not work or are from a vulnerable group.

The analysis suggests that teacher stress may be both a cause and an outcome of reduced timetables. Difficult relationships between yp and teachers, or teachers finding it difficult to manage the behaviour of yp were reasons participants linked to reduced timetables. However, if a reduced timetable was put in place, the absence and infrequency of their contact seemed to make the relationship more difficult and increase feelings of stress. Participants also noted the guilt and shame

teachers feel if they believe they have contributed to a young person's difficulties. A summary of this conceptualisation is not present in the literature on informal exclusion, however, it may be linked to the research on blocked care or compassion fatigue for teachers. Compassion fatigue is characterised by a reduced ability to feel compassion for others when you are experiencing difficulties or hopelessness in carrying out work effectively (Koenig, Rodger, & Specht, 2018). This often stems from a high workload, unsupportive working environment or prolonged feelings that one's efforts are making no difference. This is often exacerbated by prolonged secondary exposure to an extremely stressed person, in this case, this would be the young person. Yu et al., (2022) found that secondary school teachers experience a higher level of compassion fatigue compared to their primary school counterparts and go on to suggest this may be due to better teacher, student relationships in primary school. Whilst a recent report from the Department of Education (2023) found that teachers working in secondary schools were least likely of all education settings to agree that they felt supported with persistent disruptive behaviour effectively. If the assumption of compassion fatigue was adopted in the case of teachers of yp on reduced timetables, helpful ways forward may include appropriate training in ways to support teachers in how they are making sense of the behaviour of their pupils, consideration and thinking around how to create school structures that allow for positive relationships between staff and pupils and time and builds capacity for self-care for teachers.

5.3 Implications for practice

The analyses developed from the present study have implications for teachers, schools, EPs, as well as for LAs, Welsh Government and UK policy makers more broadly.

School staff in education require better emotional support. There is an absence of teacher supervision, opportunities to speak to colleagues or other professionals to ensure they can offer the best version of themselves each day. If this does not happen, teachers will continue to burn out, experience compassionate fatigue and be disaffected from teaching (Yu et al., 2022). They require supportive policies and procedures in their school that can support them, which do not involve removing yp from their classroom to offer a temporary relief. Training would support this need to a degree, but teachers may also benefit from supportive school structures which leave space for teachers to express feelings of vulnerability or stress. If this occurs, and teachers are able to feel like their own well-being is supported, only then will they be able to support their classes with feelings of exclusion, lack of belonging and who have experienced lengthy trauma periods related to exclusionary practice.

The present research also highlighted the lack of documented statistics and targets regarding the number of yp not accessing an education due to reduced timetables in Wales. Including how much school they are being offered or how long the reduced timetable has been in place. A national data

collection, carried out systematically, to establish these numbers and to offer appropriate support for these yp, whether this be through youth or vocational to 'top up' their timetables and to understand over time, the outcomes of reduced timetables should be conducted. The Estyn (2018) recommendations for Welsh Government in relation to managed moves should be extended to reduced timetables. This includes strengthening protection and protective measures for cyp at risk of exclusion and broadening performance measures to promote inclusive practice and reintegration (Estyn, 2018).

Reduced timetables are being understood, used and maintained in a variety of ways across schools and local authorities in Wales. LAs are making attempts to maintain their use through panels, policies and multi-agency working where they can, but support nationally could benefit them greatly. At LA level, it would be helpful to have clear and supportive processes for schools considering reduced timetables. An example / draft of this model has been developed based on the aforementioned information. This can be seen in Figures, 19, 20, and 21 respectively. This has been informed by key factors found in the present study in addition to Billington's (2018) 'person centred active listening model' and Owen, Woods and Stewart's (2021) facilitators of reintegration.

School Guidance – Considering a reduced timetable

What is our purpose for this reduced timetable?

A reduced timetable should only be considered if reintegration is the goal.

What feels difficult right now?

The child has been receiving fixed term exclusions

The child is finding particular classes difficult

What is the reason for the exclusions?
What on-site support can they receive?
What vocational offer is there?

Is this a learning need?
Is this a relational need?

What is happening for the young person

Has a key adult met with them to understand their views of school?
Have we considered difficulties related to adolescence or life experiences that may be influencing behaviour?
How might their previous exclusions be impacting the young person?
What lens are we using to make sense of their needs?

Relationships in school

Factors to consider:

The child's sense of belonging, potential feelings of exclusion, impact of previous exclusions on the young person

what are relationships with adults like?

What is their identity in school?

Do they have a key adult?

Are our staff finding it difficult to empathise/ maintain a relationship with this young person?

Communication with the young person's family

Is this decision being made in collaboration with the young person and their family?

What are the young person's wishes?

What would this mean for parent/carers?

What do we expect from parents?

What is our agreement with parents?

Do parents understand their rights?

Who can we signpost parents to i.e. SNAP Cymru, share reduced timetable policy.

Working with colleagues

Are we as a school working collaboratively with colleagues?

Consider: EWO, Advisory teachers, inclusion team, EPs, Youth Support, counselling, family support services. What would be a good fit for this young person?

Has the LA been consulted?

Is there a training need?

Have we consulted with the local authority reduced timetable policy?

(Weaver, 2023)

School reduced timetable implementation guidance

Who are we supporting in this process?

The young person

How are we maintaining positive relationships with the young person whilst they are on a reduced timetable?

How are we maintaining their sense of belonging?

How can we minimise feelings of exclusion?

How are we supporting peer relationships and social time for the young person?

Is the young person aware of their rights?

School staff

What are staff members' thoughts and feelings about the young person's reintegration?

How are we communicating with staff in how best to manage this reduced timetable to support confidence?

Would any staff members benefit from extra peer support?

Is there a training need?

What approaches are we trying whilst they are in school? Both in class and as targeted support outside of class.

Parent/carers

Do parent/carers have a clear understanding of what is expected of them whilst their child is at home?

What are the drop off, pick up arrangements?

Who is the contact person for the parents?

How will learning be accessed at home?

Does the parent/carer need extra support?

Collaborative working

Who are we working with and are there any other professionals we need to involve? Who is best placed to support?

Are we all working towards the same goals?

Have we been maintaining contact where appropriate?

Are we following local authority and legal guidance?

Plan should be reviewed every 2-6 weeks.

If the reduced timetable is going on for longer than a term, additional support from the local authority is to be sought.

Potential agenda items for review meetings:

- What's working well, what is not working well.
- How are staff and parent/carer relationships and communication?
- What does reintegration look like for the young person? Setting clear, positive and specific expectations.
- Consideration of young person's views.
- Discussion on sense of belonging and feelings of inclusion.
- Review of the young person's learning.

(Weaver, 2023)

Local authority reduced timetable preparation plans

Who in the LA is responsible for reduced timetables?
How are we ensuring equity across schools?
What if a school has a particularly high number of reduced timetables?
How do we support parents of young people on a reduced timetable?
How are we liaising with other LAs regarding reduced timetables?
What is our LA offer of training for staff members struggling to support young people with socio-emotional differences?
What is the maximum length of time we are allowing young people to be on a reduced timetable before other options need to be considered?
What do we think schools need to use reduced timetables in a helpful way?

Local authority potential processes/systems for reduced timetables

What is our offer for young people at risk of exclusion?
Do we have a reduced timetable panel to approve requests for schools to reduce a timetable – who is in attendance? E.g. advisory teachers, safeguarding, EWO, EPs, youth service, PRU.
What is the demographic of young people on reduced timetables? What are we doing with the data we collect?
What is our vocational offer for young people disengaged from academic aspect of school?
Are we considering the socio-emotional impact of exclusionary practices?
Where is young people's voice in our processes?
What language are we choosing to use for the needs of the children and the time table i.e. externalising/outward behaviour, reduced/reintegration timetable. Have we considered the implications of our choice?

When a school would like to place a young person on a reduced timetable

What is the purpose? Is it true reintegration?
What is already in place?
What relationships does the child have?
Is our thinking informed by adolescence?
How is school working collaboratively, and with who?
How are adults making sense of the young person's needs?
Are we doing everything we can to support school?
How are staff communicating with families?
What is the suggested length of time and how are school's deciding this?
What is the review period?
How are we safeguarding a young person while they are at home?
What are the academic and socio-emotional implications of the reduced timetable?

(Weaver, 2023)

5.4 Implications for Educational Psychologists

As demonstrated in the current study, yp placed on reduced timetables require support both before and when they are placed on them. This study suggests there is generally a gap in multi-agency involvement and that EPs are involved sometimes, but often at a point whereby the situation feels beyond repair. Overall, the factors involved in reduced timetable use and maintenance are complex and move beyond the systems within individual classrooms or schools. Yp and their families would benefit from developments from Welsh Government that focus on data and results based on meaningful reintegration. With that being said, EPs can support with such a change, and work within their role and existing relationships with colleagues and families to support a level of change. EPs can work with yp and their families at an individual level alongside relevant staff members (Thomson, 2020). However, due to the aforementioned points regarding the importance of contextual change, this section will focus on systemic based support EPs can be involved with. If LAs and schools did adopt an approach outlined in Figures 19/20/21, EPs could offer a unique view to panels and multi-agency groups making decisions and thinking about reduced timetables at multi-layered levels. EPs are well placed to start conversations with colleagues about training opportunities to understand the needs of yp at risk of or already placed on reduced timetables. This could include EPs providing training to their schools to help support staff supporting young people with socio-emotional differences or cognition in adolescence. This training package could be tailored to support teachers, LA based staff or headteachers, based on their role and responsibilities in supporting yp.

Another way that the present research has implications for EP practice is by maintaining the role of a critical friend. EPs can often be described as a critical friend anecdotally but this appears to be somewhat missing from literature (Patrick et al., 2011; Fallon, Woods & Rooney; 2010). The term is used more widely in education research and is described as the role that has the capacity to elicit positive change within a school by challenging and critiquing practice in a supportive way (Baskerville & Goldblatt, 2009). Baynton (2020) highlighted the importance of EPs taking up this role when it comes to off-rolling in schools. Suggesting that an increased awareness coming from recent research will support EPs to feel confident challenging off-rolling when they see it. The same is hoped for the present research around reduced timetables. The analyses from the present research may offer EPs an understanding and awareness of the complexities of reduced timetable use and encourage curiosity from them in how they can focus their support to schools in a targeted way to develop positive change. EPs must do this whilst advocating for yp, their families, alongside their close relationship with school staff. This relationship with school staff is key to schools feeling like they can raise a difficult issue, in the absence of processes that include EPs in the discussion.

A likely important element of the critical friend role is one of containment. Douglas (2007) offers containment as “when one person receives and understands the emotional communication of another without being overwhelmed by it, processes it and communicates understanding and recognition back to the other person” (Douglas, 2007, p.33 cited in Ellis, 2018). The aforementioned Department of Education statistics highlights a potential need for secondary school teacher support in the area of “disruptive behaviour” (Department of Education, 2023, p.67). EPs may be in a position to support teachers to manage these difficulties. This may take the shape of a supervision group, which could create a thoughtful and reflective environment to share experiences (Ellis, 2018). In the context of reduced timetables, helpful aspects of supervision for teachers may include reducing burnout or compassion fatigue through professional and personal engagement and containing uncomfortable feelings or unsettling experiences (Kennedy et al., 2018), which may relate to behaviours present with that can lead to reduced timetables. If a systemic lens was applied, group supervision may also consider systems of concern, which can spark conversations at the levels of the system that might be maintaining difficulties such as school processes or support opportunities (Kennedy et al., 2018). Such multi-layered approaches to supervision could offer a helpful space to dissect the complexities reduced timetables might bring up for teachers emotionally and professionally.

5.5 Strengths and limitations

The mixed methods design offered two datasets that were reflective of the epistemology, offering both a breadth and depth of the contextual conceptualisation of the data gathered. This allowed the data to be considered in a layered way.

The research is made up of small sample sizes. For phase A (n=13), a response rate from the majority of Welsh LAs was desired. However, exclusionary practices are not typically measures schools or practitioners feel good about and there can be a level of shame attached (Power & Taylor, 2020). The findings were not intended to be generalisable, and the number of respondents did allow for an understanding of the breadth of application of reduced timetables across Wales. On the other hand, the broad approach to the participation offered a dataset that was perhaps more reflective of the contexts reduced timetables are applied within (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

When researching an area where there is an absence of previous literature can be difficult. This meant the present research adopted a broad approach to the research questions and participants. This meant that there was a lot of nuance and varying perspectives to consider, which could have diluted the analyses, as opposed to a more focused group of participants. It would also have been extremely helpful to consider a single point of view, for example, ALNCOs, class teachers or EPs. Regardless of

the approach, developing research in a needed area offered a unique insight into a previously unexplored area of work for EPs in Wales.

The practice of reduced timetables and exclusionary practices is a new and developing field in the area of education, meaning there is wide ranging scope for further exploration of the topic. The findings of the research have hopefully offered a baseline understanding of reduced timetables and how they are used, which can be built upon, focusing on the experiences of other groups.

Table 8

Future Research
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Done and Knowler (2019) outline the importance of the views of senior school leaders' in the processes of off-rolling. This could be a helpful area to explore in relation to reduced timetables. This could adopt a view of exploring long term outcomes with senior leadership in relation to their school records for young people placed on reduced timetables, whether they reintegrated into mainstream, fell under the radar or were permanently excluded.- As the research mentions, the impact of reduced timetables on parents can be profound. Whilst parents were not participants in the present study, the impact of reduced timetables on them shone through the data. Baynton (2019) gathered information from parents on off-rolling practices which offered a helpful insight. But reduced timetables are a unique intervention due to young people being removed from the school site sporadically, therefore a separate study to explore impact and outcomes of reduced timetables would be very useful.- In order to understand the implications of reduced timetables, it is important to speak to those it happens to. A research project that includes the views and experiences of young people placed on reduced timetables could offer valuable information. This would need to be conducted with care and consideration, as they would be considered a vulnerable group (British Psychological Society, 2014).- Exploring the ability and capacity for EPs to be involved in the support of young people placed on reduced timetables. The present study offered a baseline understanding of potential of EPs involvement in their support. Further research could delve into the specific facilitators and barriers of EPS systems that impact helpful involvement from work EPs want to do versus the work they are told they need to do as per the model their service works.

5.6 Conclusion

The current study explored the use of reduced timetables for yp presenting with socio-emotional differences in Wales. Seven semi-structured interviews were conducted with professionals supporting yp on reduced timetables and thirteen LAs were represented in results from the questionnaire. Quantitative data highlighted differences in how reduced timetables are being used across Wales in terms of rationale, process and efficacy in their application and maintenance. There were 3 main themes developed from the qualitative analysis: “Resource or young person led?”; “Searching for clarity” and “Pressure tug of war”. These themes built on previous research in the field of informal exclusions in schools barriers to reintegration in education and illuminated the complicated relationship these concepts have. The analyses offers a unique contribution on relation to reduced timetables, which was previously an unresearched area.

The research raises important implications for schools, LAs, Welsh Government as well as EPs. Specifically in relation to equity, process and support for those impacted by reduced timetables. EPs are well placed in their role in as part of the system supporting schools and LAs and it is important EPs have a seat at the table as part of a multi-agency collaborative process. However, development in this area may continue to be limited in the absence of national policy and scrutiny. To encourage development in this field, three guidance models to support schools and LAs in consideration of reduced timetables were developed as a foundation of thought.

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“This is your last chance to prove to us you can be here, we’ve tried everything to help you.” – Exploring the use of reduced timetables as exclusionary practice for young people in Wales

Part C: Critical Review

Word count: 9,168

1. Introduction

This critical appraisal presents a narrative review of my research journey and offers the opportunity to analyse the research process, particularly concerning decision-making points, areas of reflexion and reflection. I have included diary entries to offer context to decisions relating to research design, ethical considerations and limitations of the research. I have chosen to write the appraisal in the first person, reflecting the personal journey and subjectivity throughout the research (Tang & John, 1999).

It is presented in two parts and aims to address the following areas:

- The development of the research and researcher
- Contribution of knowledge and dissemination

2. Critical account of the development of the research and researcher

2.1 Development of the research topic

To begin to explain my thesis, I need to offer context to my position and background. A large proportion of my professional career thus far has involved supporting vulnerable yp. I have witnessed them and their families being marginalised in education. I worked in an intensive service supporting yp on the edge of care. This meant I saw young people and their families suffer greatly, yp being criminally and sexually exploited, sofa surfing and addicted to substances. From my experience, things were always much worse when they didn't enjoy school. But if they did enjoy school, have a sense of belonging, a teacher that kept them in mind or a strong friendship group; it had the ability to be an anchor for them. I have attended too many meetings with schools at a loss and it felt like nothing was working to get the young person to manage their emotions/outward presentation in the way adults expect them to. This almost always exacerbated difficulties for these yp. In many of these cases, reduced timetables were implemented. I observed schools apply these very differently, and more often than not, timetables would get progressively shorter and young people were spending less time in school. I remember sending the LA guidance to a SENCo I was working with to outline that they were not following aspects of it. They told me it was not worth the paper it was written on. I realise this was an extreme example, but this experience sat with me and highlighted the potential for power imbalances in these processes.

Subsequently, I developed a strong sense of social justice for yp and their families, particularly those who do not have the means to advocate for themselves and can become victims of these loopholes and undercurrent practices that can occur in our education system. I knew for my thesis I wanted to focus on a topic that shone a light on education for young people who maybe do not 'behave' in the way our

education system expects them to. I wanted to approach this in a way that offered empathy and understanding for them, whilst acknowledging that schools are not to blame and staff also require support.

When narrowing topics down in my first and beginning of my second year as a TEP, I had already encountered instances of instances of reduced timetables where all parties involved felt stuck with no real aim or direction of support for the young person. These experiences brought me back to my social care role, and I realise these experiences went through still weigh heavily on me. I had to think hard about whether I wanted to focus on something that still provoked an emotional reaction from me. But, I believe I have waded through my TEP journey advocating for yp and I didn't want this to be an exception. I have also spoken repeatedly about the 'fire in my belly' this topic gives me and I was confident it would drive me through the difficult days and nights of thesis woes; And I was right.

2.2 Construction of the literature review

The process of conducting an in depth literature search was a daunting task. I was acutely aware I had limited experience in this area, so I sought support from the Cardiff University library service which I found extremely beneficial. During the initial wider searches for literature relating to reduced timetables, I was shocked to see there was next to no mention of it in the research. At this point I was worried about developing a literature review in such a scarce area. Initially, I thought this would mean I needed to carry out a narrative review. At first, this seemed like the most desirable option. It felt a bit more nuanced than a systematic review. I felt at the time that there were more places to 'go wrong' with a systematic review and that it was restricting. Thankfully I no longer hold these views and I can appreciate the transparency and coherence offered in a systematic review.

I was equally surprised to see the lack of government policy outlining how reduced timetables could or should be used in schools. This context made me feel like it was more important to offer the national positions and consequently, I chose to include a narrative review element. Green et al., (2006) note that narrative reviews are especially useful for providing a broad perspective of a topic. This was most certainly the case for this topic, as I knew I needed to piece together the 'story' of reduced timetables because it was largely untold up until this point and needed to be pieced together. I was also aware that each researcher takes their own personal approach to the review and this would offer an opportunity for me to carve out the 'upside down triangle' focus of topic development. Whilst this was helpful for me to communicate my view, there were limitations to this aspect. Green et al., (2006) discuss the lack of objectivity in narrative reviews if the researcher selects findings that support their held position. This was an interesting point in the write up for me, I could not ignore that topic selection was my own decision, but I tried my best to maintain neutrality in offering all views on

the topic area. It was useful to draw upon relevant psychological theories within the narrative aspect to offer circumstances that may lead to a reduced timetables. I attempted to draw a critical lens in this section whilst offering a positive and hopeful way forward, supported by psychology.

To add transparency to my review, I wanted to add a systematic element. These thoughts were reinforced by Siddaway et al.,'s (2019) recommendation that a systematic review should be undertaken where possible. I felt a bit more protected by a systematic review in a way, I thought it added an objectiveness to this aspect of thesis. However, this process presented with difficulties. My search criteria (see Appendix A) in the end was quite broad because there were so few studies which included the use of reduced timetables. This thankfully meant the sifting process was not so time consuming, but it felt exposing to think I needed to make a small number of papers 'work' for my review. Another consequence of the small number of papers meant that I made the decision to involve non-empirical papers if I believed they added insight to the topic. I recognised that over half of the papers came from snowballing (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), and I was worried that this might be a less effective source of papers. But I had to park this feeling and find reassurance in the measures I took to offer clarity in my processes such as the PRISMA (Page et al., 2021) and CASP (2018). Retrospectively, decisions made during the literature review process, coupled with the challenge of not having an abundance of significant research on the topic was quite stressful for me. It may be that this meant I was very focused on feeling confident the review was at least transparent and robust through the processes mentioned. The thought of having missed out a paper was a scary one. I did enjoy the narrative aspect more than the systematic, I believe it offered me creativity to carve and build the picture that was developing in my mind when considering reduced timetables. However, the systematic review offered an important lens that also helped to inform decisions and develop themes across the empirical paper.

On reflection, taking on two types of review was a big task. As mentioned, I believe I was craving a systematic element to make my work seem more transparent, qualified and offer quality. I had a bit of a fear of 'just' doing narrative, and it not being good enough, or being told I had done it wrong, because of the high degree of autonomy and flexibility involved. Looking back, I think my narrative review was the stronger section of the two, and I actually enjoyed developing it more so than my systematic. It does feel a bit like the two sections could possibly be taken as trying to do different things that were competing with one another. Although, I do not regret having both sections, especially when coming across papers such as Siddaway et al., (2019) that encourages systematic. I do think I could have carved out a comprehensive narrative review with a larger section of the paper, that offered depth and allowed me to have more space to tease out my thoughts. As I outline in a later section of this paper, confirmation bias is something I wrangled with throughout the thesis, and I

believe the systematic element offered comfort to those worries and allowed me freedom within the boundaries and safety of the searches.

2.3 Quality Appraisal

When carrying out my research, I sort of just ‘knew’ there were certain tools everyone just ‘did’ to support with the transparency and robustness of the thesis. One being the CASP. I decided to do the CASP because we were told it was a commonly used tool that supported with being systematic and clear about our approach. On their website, CASP is also linked to consistency, making a complex task easier and accountability in auditing (CASP, 2023). I used this tool and I understood and appreciated that it did encourage consistency in my approach and supported my understanding of how to spot a ‘good’ paper, however, I would not say I found it particularly helpful as I moved into my wider thesis. From my point of view, there was not enough focus on perspective, content and it did not outwardly tell me if not having certain aspects meant it was a ‘bad’ paper. I also found that the ‘hints’ didn’t really resonate with where I thought the purpose of the questions landed, similarly to Long, French and Brooks (2020). Moving forward on my research journey, I am open to using other quality appraisal tools as well as the CASP.

2.3 Research aims and research questions

With my research questions, I felt fairly confident that these needed to be broad and not to be overcomplicated. I thought it unwise to try and design a study that was quite specific, which came with too many assumptions, when there was no substantial rationale coming from any other research that would justify a very specific hypothesis or query on reduced timetables. From the previous research exploring exclusionary practice, there was quite a leap from the small mentions of reduced timetables, to my research, where they are the main focus. At this point my supervisor guided me to carefully consider my research questions, and the directions of the study would spout from them. I wanted to be foundational and offer a broad perspective of what is going on in school and LA spaces in relation to reduced timetables. They couldn’t be too leading because the rationale for specificity in this topic was not present. I thought that if I went broad with them, as I did, I would be able to gather as much nuance from my participants as possible. I also didn’t want to get too preoccupied with them as I knew they could remain flexible and evolve authentically throughout the research (Willig, 2019).

2.4 Epistemological and ontological stance

When considering ontological positions, I did not give it much thought initially. We had learned in depth about a relativist ontology and thought it would be the one for me. I had used this ontology in both of my other doctoral research projects and sort of felt it was ‘good enough’ for any type of

qualitative study as it adopts the belief that there are multiple truths and reality is a subjective experience (Levers, 2013). Whilst I probably could have made this fit, I went on to wonder if a quantitative element may be added to my research and I knew I did not want to settle for what felt like the easier option. I had previously read about and explored critical realism as an epistemological stance, but as I came across it as an ontological position, I did more reading in this area.

I would have found it difficult to adopt a position that did not ring true to my own personal beliefs about how knowledge is constructed, can we separate ourselves from the research in this way? I do not know, especially with something that is as close and personal as a thesis. Berger (2020) argues that a researcher's understanding of their own personal epistemology and ontology is crucial as it significantly influences how we choose to investigate knowledge. I read about critical realism, something clicked. It requires understanding at multiple levels to generate the full picture. It compliments interdisciplinary, multi-method work as critical realism, essentialises attending to systems at multiple levels of reality (Campbell et al., 2017). This was the citation that made me think, ah this is the one. Then I thankfully stumbled across Tom Fryers' (2020) guide to ontology and epistemology, which humorously guided my thinking. He shared the key aspects of critical realism, one central point was the relationship between structure and agency, he offers:

“In terms of the relation between structure and agency, Archer argues that we should conceptualise this relation through a three-step process that considers:

1. The situations in which people act, and how these are shaped by social structures.
2. The concerns of agents and how they reflect on their situations.
3. The projects agents undertake in these situations, and their impacts”

Fryer (2020, p.24)

It made me realise that social structures and individual agency exists together, and it is important to consider them together in this research when thinking about systems in relation to reduced timetables and individual practitioners, families and yp having agency in these processes within the parameters of the structures created around them.

When moving onto my epistemological position, I stumbled across contextualism in the Braun and Clarke (2013) ‘successful qualitative research book’. Upon further research, I found that contextualism, in essence, is the ongoing purposeful act in context. The actions and decisions around reduced timetables is intimately connected to history, systems, points in time and social factors that also influence an individual. A contextualist paradigm guided my thesis, as it aligned with the approach and questions which sought to obtain a rich understanding of participant relationships with

reduced timetables and gain multiple perspectives and contexts in this singular piece of research (Jaeger & Rosnow, 1988). It also considered participant perceptions to be a true account of how they perceived reduced timetables that is ‘true’ in their corner or angle of the context (Madill, Jordan & Shirley, 2000).

Looking back, it seemed that I already knew how I felt about reduced timetables and how I wanted to approach my research. And when I researched epistemological and ontological positions, the two I went with seemed to offer me more language to explain how I already thought and felt about the topic. This gut feeling, intuition type decision making often guided me through my thesis.

2.5 Methodology and design

The literature highlighted seemingly ‘dirty’ informal exclusion practices going on in a way that was never spoken of, as if it was Voldemort in Harry Potter. Never say its name and we can pretend it’s not happening! I took issue with this. I believed it was important to first of all understand ‘if’ reduced timetables were going on for yp. Once I did this, I wanted to understand what this meant for yp. My personal and informal aims of the study were; firstly, to show the breadth of reduced timetables via numerical data. It seemed that there was a discrepancy regarding what people see on the ground, and what data is collected when it comes to reduced timetables and offer some evidence that they actually happen. Secondly, to show the depth of the experience of reduced timetables via verbal data. I knew I wanted to do both of those things, so the next steps were to carve out the details.

Once I had decided I would go ahead with the mixed methods approach, I began with what I wanted to explore and why this was the most appropriate method to use. For example, as discussed above, I felt it was important to explore both the breadth and depth of reduced timetables, but one did not necessarily depend on the other. This is when I began my journey of understanding the language and terminology for such an approach, and understood this would be a convergent strategy with a triangulation rationale (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004), as I would be collecting the datasets concurrently and they would be analysed independently using quantitative and qualitative analytical approaches. Dawadi, Shrestha and Giri (2021) offer this approach as helping a researcher gain a complete understanding of an issue by combining the two datasets which may validate each other. This is as opposed to a complementarity or sequential design, whereby the results from one method are used to enhance, elaborate or clarify results from another method (Wedawatta et al., 2011). Whilst this approach was considered, due to the research questions developed and focusing on different areas of reduced timetables, a convergent approach was firmly seen as the most helpful way of collecting the data. This is despite the potential risk of finding divergence amongst the two datasets if common

concepts were not found amongst the datasets, which would have added an additional layer of complexity to the analysis (Dawadi et al., 2021). However, the appropriateness of both datasets having equal importance, being helpful for researchers with time limitations and the ability to triangulate the datasets, meant that this risk was a carefully considered one.

Reflecting on my decision to essentially give myself more work by adopting a mixed methods approach, I do not regret it. I knew that you do not get recognition or better marks for choosing mixed methods for the project, despite it probably being more work. But I could not rationalise interviewing people about reduced timetables when there was essentially no evidence they occur. There was no available information on their use in schools and I wanted a strong base for my own research and future research. The rationale for the quantitative element was interesting, because this was something that was not really present in this research area, but the lack of rationale, in a way, gave me rationale, as the gap was so big. This was not only because there is no statutory need for schools to report these; but other research suggested there is a lot more informal exclusion occurring than perhaps realised (Parsons, 2017). I wanted to highlight the differences in how reduced timetables are being managed and hopefully prompt a level of process or structure from Welsh Government to develop a best practice or guidance. I also think developments in my literature review highlighted the need for transparency and clarity in this area overall (Power & Taylor, 2020; Denham, 2021). I believe the quantitative element elevated this level of transparency in an otherwise quite opaque field.

I did have some predicaments in relation to language used in my research. I had spent a great deal of time in my literature review highlighting the importance of language used when considering this particular group of yp. This left me uneasy about what term I should use to describe them. Yp with 'behavioural needs' felt uncomfortable. It didn't seem like I had rationale to use 'at risk of exclusion'. When I was constructing my literature review and I came across 'socio-emotional differences' (Holt, Bowlby & Lea, 2013), it felt more aligned with my values. However, I wondered if it would resonate with participants. I recognised that this term may have lent itself with emotionally based school avoidance, which to many practitioners was very different. In my interviews, I chose to use to describe the yp by their presentation i.e. 'externalising behaviours'. This was to avoid confusion with emotionally based school avoidance, and to ensure we had a shared view. I think this was an important decision and if I chose a term such as behavioural, it may have had implications on the data gathered and could have seemed less neutral to participants.

Long, hard deliberations on language bled into my consideration of what to call the group of people the research related to. Most of the research of the age group talks about 'adolescents' (Brizo et al., 2015; Sawyer et al., 2018). However, this language and conceptualisation of the people did not sit

well and felt quite within child. ‘Young people’ is what I have come across in my practice as a TEP, and the McDonagh (2018) paper reinforced this thinking. There was some consideration of the term ‘young adults’ or ‘emerging adulthood’, but I wanted to veer away from potential early adultification of this group (Schmitz & Tyler, 2016).

2.6 Participant selection and recruitment

I spent a considerable amount of personal and supervision time considering participants for my thesis. Hearing the voices of those impacted by reduced timetables felt incredibly important to me. This is particularly because they are the voices, who in my experience, often go unheard. Initially, I wanted to speak to parents of yp on reduced timetables. This was the group, in my experience, who were completely paralysed by reduced timetables in my previous role, often taken advantage of, especially those who didn’t have the means to advocate for themselves or their child. I went back on forth on this for a long time (see Figure 22). However, there was no robust rationale coming from the research to focus specifically on any group, and definitely not parents. Another reason that swayed me away from this would be the ethical implications of their participation. As a researcher, I had a responsibility to my participants to minimise harm. I knew this would be a sensitive topic for parents and taking part in the research would not necessarily benefit them or their child and they may be very far from a resolution. I also acknowledged that these parents may have been told or believed the reduced timetable is a temporary measure and the overall aim was to reintegrate the child. Whilst some of the focus of my research was around reduced timetable links to exclusion, I did not want to introduce these links to parents and possibly increase stress for them.

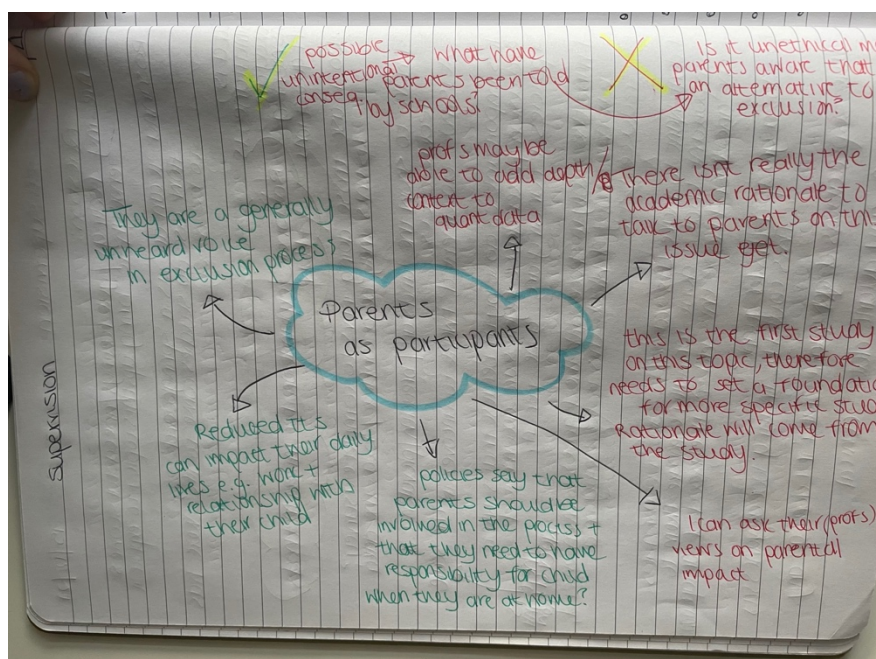


Figure 22

Consideration of parents as participants

Who should ~~be~~^{my} participants be? 7/12/21

Group	Pros	Cons
parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they are an unheard voice • reduced it's greatly impact parents • give them a space to share the impact this has on them! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to recruit • can be vulnerable
children/ young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • it's happening to them • there is no research on this 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to recruit • perhaps seemed new • happy about being off • ethical considerations • stranger talking to them about this • research says they are harder to recruit • time scale? • ethics?
teachers/ professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have an interesting prof angle of this • able to compare views of those in diff roles • could also collect schools reduced it data • highlight systemic needs • highlight their knowledge (diffs of the places) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivation to talk about this topic? • variance in responses

Figure 23

Who should my participants be?

believed building relationships with yp in these circumstances is fundamental to honesty and trust in sharing personal experiences. I also felt that the epistemology helpfully shone a light on the systems, rather than the child and would remove within child thinking from the approach, which is very much in line with my own values.

When I came to the conclusion that I would include practitioners as my participants, I was somewhat overwhelmed at how to get the 'reach out' to potential participants, and who would be most suitable. I knew it was important for thesis based decisions to be driven through evidenced based rationale, so I took inspiration from the Welsh Government (2015) document on what professionals could be involved when considering exclusion and from my own experience (see Figure 24). I also believed that exploring the views of practitioners from a variety of backgrounds i.e. Youth, charity sector, schools or children's services perspectives was in line with my epistemology as it would hopefully lead to a contextual birds eye view, incorporating views from professionals in a variety of roles. Again, linking back to the 'foundational' aspect of my thesis on the topic, I thought it would be a good foundation for future research to build on.

It was also important for me to consider whether I should have yp placed on reduced timetables as participants (see Figure 23). I felt they were also an unheard voice and were generally not included in decision making processes relating to their education. However, when considering my previous experiences and consulting the literature on feelings of exclusion in adolescence (Lambert & Miller, 2011), I wondered if yp would feel comfortable sharing with a stranger their honest experiences of reduced timetables. They may be spending long periods at home, not socialising with peers etc, so I did not want to take up their time speaking to a stranger about something that was potentially upsetting for them. That is not to say research of this nature is not important, but a thesis is so time sensitive and I

Presumably, it would have been acceptable to focus on school specific staff, particularly when that is where the directive of reduced timetables come from. With all things considered, if I did go down this route, I probably would have lent into those previously mentioned frustrations I often had with school staff members. Also, with my epistemology in mind, solely focusing on teachers or school staff may have offered a skewed view of the context I was seeking to understand. However, this is most certainly an area that deserves to be explored in future research, as the role of school staff in exclusionary practices can be a complicated one.

My choice of approaching my qualitative research with an individual interview method was both theoretical and practical based. I did consider collecting my qualitative data through focus groups. From the literature, I learned that often professionals do not like discussing or ‘admitting to’ exclusionary practices (i.e. He who shall not be named). Therefore, I wondered if it would be possible to get true views from participants. I was also concerned about the logistics of getting multiple participants together. I was drawn to this idea when initially considering the context I could create within the space. However, I did not want to claim that a manufactured group/space, brought together by my individual aim could create an authentic ‘truth’ informed by social and cultural history. If I was to take this approach, perhaps a social constructionist epistemology would have been a better fit. I am not sure if I would have received such vulnerable and honest views, with participants being in a group with people they don’t know.

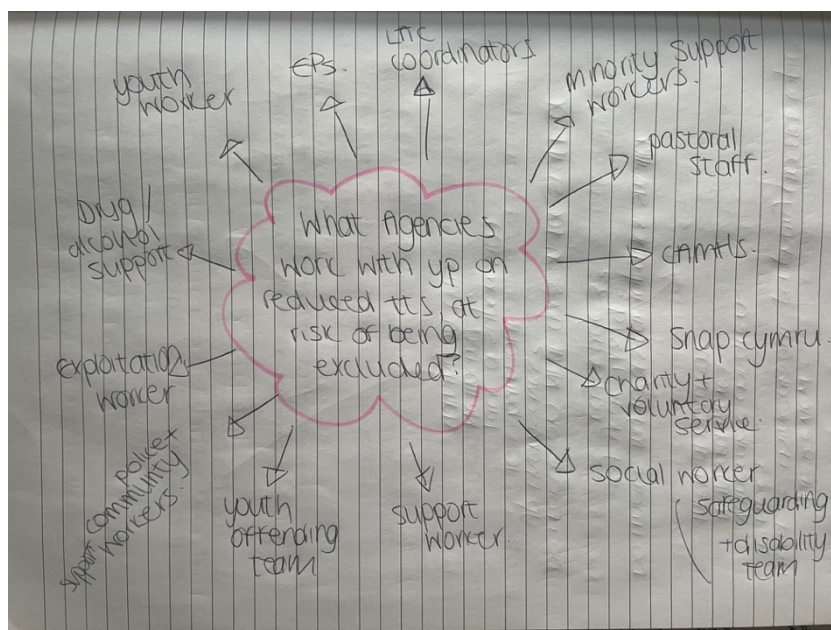


Figure 24

What agencies work with young people on reduced timetables?

2.7 Data collection

I really believed in my epistemology and ontology choices and knew they would inform my methods and design. I came to a cross roads when considering where I would collect data from. I had relationships with potential participants in England, but having looked at the different ways exclusions are understood, applied and data measured across the UK (Cole et al., 2019) – the appropriate decision felt to make my study Wales specific. When further considering qualitative participants, I wanted contextualism to remain at the centre, which is why I chose one consortia. The chosen consortia shares a health board and some other education based services. From some pre-thesis information gathering I also learned that senior leaders in education meet up throughout the year to discuss trends, themes and the consortia.

When I sat down to develop my interview schedule and questionnaire, at the beginning I did have to ask myself, how am I supposed to know what to ask? As always, the research guided me through. For the questionnaire aspect, I leaned heavily on national and local policies to guide my thinking. For example, the national policy on Inclusion and Pupil Support and how they outline the use of PSPs (2016). Within this policy, timelines, multi-agency working, reasons for the PSP, how they are implemented and review periods. I also included sections that were specific to data collection across the context, as lack of data collection was an area that came through when considering exclusionary practice in the systematic element of literature review (Power & Taylor, 2020; Done & Knowler, 2021). Moving on to my interview schedule, this felt like a bigger task to tackle as there were many avenues I could go down. For the structure, I was supported by Braun and Clarke's guide to successful qualitative research (2013), which talks about rapport, opening and closing questions and how to construct questions informed by epistemology; I found this section of their book incredibly helpful. Fundamentally, I wanted to find out what the context of reduced timetables is like for those who support the yp placed on them, and I wanted to develop context based questions, informed by research to understand this. With the lack of reduced timetables research, I leaned on exclusionary practice research that discussed themes of belonging (Raufelder & Kulakow, 2021), unclear processes (Maxwell et al., 2021), parental support (Baynton, 2020), adolescence (Blakemore, 2008), and again, national policy (Welsh Government, 2019).

As I came to firm up the questions, it was difficult to understand whether they would answer my research questions or send me off on a tangent. This is where the importance of my pilot interview lay. This opportunity allowed me to move around my questions, fine tune them slightly or really consider what am I trying to find out with this question (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Whilst I understood an interview guide needed to be treated as fixed, as it can evolve across the data process (Braun &

Clarke, 2013), it felt ethical to remain on a consistent and fair thread throughout the interviews (see Diary Entry 1).

When reflecting on my questionnaire, it was the more difficult half of the data collection. When discussing the possibility of understanding, the prevalence of reduced timetables across LAs, and how I might gather this information, it did not seem clear and I was not confident. I considered how to stay 'true' to my epistemology with an approach that extracted the information I sought. On reflection, there was a battle between practicality and integrity. I wondered about asking PEPs to complete the questionnaire because they were fairly accessible and possibly easy to recruit. But whilst I was on placement and speaking to the EP and PEPs in the service, I came to understand that EPs are not as involved in these processes as much as I had assumed (or hoped). Through some more conversations with colleagues, I learned that each LA was obliged to have someone responsible for exclusions (Welsh Government, 2015). I was very aware that this was likely to be someone in a different role in every county. So the decision was, to ask PEPs to act as gatekeepers for the questionnaire, or seek to recruit those perhaps 'best placed' in each LA, and probably live in fear that I would get no responses. The latter was of course, the option I went with. I'm glad I did this and I believe I did get a transparent and nuanced view of reduced timetables across counties but it was nerve-wracking. It is fair to reflect that gatekeepers were heavily relied on for recruitment. This often felt uncomfortable (now I know what they mean when tutors say we should 'sit' in the discomfort), but I could not see appropriate or ethical alternatives to gaining participants.

2.8 Data analysis

I chose Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2013, 2022) six stage RTA to analyse the data. The primary reason I chose this method was due to its flexibility and exploratory nature, particularly in relation to research questions and analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Linking back to my previous point about my research being foundational in the topic area, I wanted to allow for nuance, breadth and depth to be developed through analysis and not feel too constrained, as the literature was not building a strong direction for me. To ensure the process was reflexive, I kept a research diary and wrote reflections following each interview, in addition to various parts of research development and discussion of key areas in supervision.

I found it interesting in Braun and Clarke's (2022) book (which I used as my bible), that they said analysis starts during data collection. This is something that resonated with me through my data collection. Because we are only human, I think it is important to acknowledge that I was a different

researcher at the beginning of the research than the end. By that, I mean that I cannot separate myself from the information I gathered and views I constructed via the first few interviews by the time I got to my final few. See research diary entry below:

Diary Entry 1

“I’m not quite sure if I’m having an ethical dilemma or just a human reality experience. During my most recent interview with my 6th participant. When the interview began to go slightly in a particular direction, I couldn’t help but feel that my responses were being influenced by what my previous participants shared. Of course not in relation to confidential topics, but around the nuance experienced in reduced timetables. I can’t help but think this cannot be equitable or if I’m not doing a good enough job at remaining the independent researcher.”

I took these thoughts and feelings to supervision. I was glad to be reassured that we as researchers are human, we are flawed and there is no such thing as the ‘perfect’ piece of research. If we subscribe to social constructionism or contextualism, we must accept that our views will be impacted by our interactions with others (Braun & Clarke, 2022). This is the power of communication and we as researchers cannot suppress this as we go through the motions of research.

The outline of my data analysis is detailed in Appendix O. I completed the data coding by hand, as opposed to using computer software. I was confident from the beginning of my research that this was the approach I wanted to take. I genuinely felt completely immersed in my data in a way that I cannot describe. It was as if I knew a formula to something that I could not explain to anyone. Holding such an amount of nuanced information in my mind was exhausting but felt like a privilege.

Throughout the analysis, I found myself becoming a bit obsessed with the idea that ‘summaries are not themes’ (Braun & Clarke, 2022). This feels like quite the topic of conversation amongst researching EPs I have spoken to. Particularly after Braun and Clarke’s paper outlining how people can go so wrong with TA (Braun & Clarke, 2020). I do not blame them for being frustrated, but it made it feel scary. I thought long and hard about my themes and how they were actually themes, but also accessible. I wanted someone to pick it up, understand the theme and its layers. This is no small task to complete in our time constraints, but I am happy with where I got to. But that does not mean I would not have happily spent another two months developing them. I do not know if they can ever feel completely finished, but I am confident I applied myself to each stage of the analysis.

I wanted to communicate my qualitative analysis in an accessible and clear format, whilst being clear that all themes are woven together with different strands to develop a singular whole (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Within the analysis section, Braun and Clarke (2022) state that the analysis section is for me to offer evidence to what I think the patternings mean, but the discussion offers opportunity to link to the research fields. However, there is little in the area of how to present your thematic map in their writings. I thought it was important for this map to be able to be taken discreetly by a reader and applied across contexts. Whilst there was plenty of depth and many layers to my themes, I felt the place to offer and discuss these layers were in the analysis and discussion. This is why I went for what I hope is an accessible thematic map (see Figure 15). I did consider a more complicated and perhaps comprehensive version, but with the addition of my guides, I thought this offered perhaps a more ready to use document.

2.9 Emotional impact of research and confirmation bias

An important consideration of the research is the emotional impact you bring to the research and also the emotional impact the research has on you throughout the process. I sought supervision to discuss the emotional experiences I had supporting yp and families impacted by reduced timetables. I also acknowledged this meant I cannot separate myself, my thoughts or my feelings from these experiences. When I felt this creeping in, I looked to the research for guidance. I came across information on insider and outsider positions. I did not feel 'at home' with either of these terms. This was until I found papers on the space between this binarised way of thinking (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). This way of thinking relates to our interactions with people impacted by our research topic, meaning it might be that we can never truly be an outsider when discussing emotive topics. Our perspective is shaped by our positions, it would not be right to say we occupy either an insider or an outsider identity (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). I believe this way of thinking resonated with how I wanted to maintain integrity and responsibility to the processes and ethical underpinnings of my role. At this point, I wanted to embrace this position and role, whilst maintaining awareness throughout the process.

An element of realisation hit me following my first interview, when I felt an internal emotional response. The participant spoke a lot about the benefits of reduced timetables for the yp they supported in some circumstances. During the interview, I could feel myself becoming stressed.

Diary Entry 2

"I left the interview feeling overwhelmed. I have to be honest with myself and admit when she talked positively about reduced timetables I felt disheartened. Why is this? It's not up

for me to decide the opinion of the participants or what my data says. I guess when you pick a topic you are passionate about, you carry around the experiences that drove the passion.”

I reflected on my responses and interactions with the participant in supervision and this interview guided my presentation in the rest of my data collection. I did some research on confirmation bias in research. This means “defining, seeking, constructing, remembering, judging or interpreting evidence in ways that give priority to confirming a pre-established attitude, belief or claim” (McSweeney, 2021, p.1064). McSweeney goes on to say that these biases are largely unconscious. When specifically considering qualitative research, such biases can seep into a failure to consider alternative plausible or possible explanations throughout the research (McSweeney, 2021). Schumm (2021) explored ways to conduct research with less bias; results included using more than one theory to underpin the research, using transparent literature reviews and working with co-researchers. I found this reassuring and I took seriously the importance of using these methods to inform my practice (See Table 9). Within my year group, we developed a TEP Social Justice interest group. Within this group we discussed factors such as working with vulnerable groups and ethical practice which offered me a safe space to share things such as unconscious bias. These factors, coupled with the nuanced views my participants imparted on me, helped to form a new view I have not only for reduced timetables, but ethical practice in research more generally.

Table 9

Outline of measures taken to mediate confirmation bias (Schumm, 2021)

Potential area for consideration	Approach used
Concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used more than one concept to interpret research i.e., social cognition in adolescence, Ecological Systems Theory, use of language for exclusionary practice and containment. • Included concepts that offer alternative explanations to related concepts i.e., conflicting pressures on schools to support cyp and to be ‘inclusive’.
Co-researchers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although the thesis research was and needed to be conducted independently, I sought supervision at every opportunity. This took the shape of research supervision, peer supervision with fellow TEPs, and informal discussions with other EPs and colleagues working within the education sector. This helped to shape and solidify my

	understanding of anecdotal experience, in the absence of a clear research base.
Literature review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sought to contribute something new to the literature rather than repeating on what previous reviews have already discussed. • Approached the literature reviews with two strands, by completing both a narrative and systematic literature element.
Methodology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used methodologies that involved different sources (participants). • Participants were relevant to parties outlined in research. • Used research to ensure analyses fit research questions.
Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results / analyses were reported regardless of whether they favoured or did not favour my expected outcomes or personal views. • Reflected on concerns regarding confirmation bias during data collection process.
Implications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limitations of research detailed in discussion. • Not claimed generalisation for population based on analyses.

Braun and Clarke (2013) describe the importance of awareness of one’s own assumptions and to “step outside your cultural membership to become a cultural commentator” (p.9). They go on to say that we need to see and question our own shared values and assumptions that are developed from being a member of a particular society. But we do have the ability to identify them, and try to bracket them off. I worked to achieve this through regular supervision to ensure reflection and reflexivity was maintained throughout data collection and analysis. As I look back on the interviews and analysis, there were areas I had to dig deep on in supervision. One being the potential biases I was holding for participants based on their profession. I think this was in relation to assumptions I may have made of people based on profession (see Diary Entry 3) i.e. School based participants having school interests at heart, or non-school based staff probably thinking reduced timetables were a negative approach.

Diary Entry 3

“Is the different roles participants have, a barrier to reflexivity in my codes? I know which quotes came from teachers and school staff and which weren’t.”

I tried my best to utilise Braun and Clarke’s (2022) offerings, always wanting to remain curious about my reasonings and development to mitigate my bias worries. They note questions to ask yourself to facilitate critical engagement with the data “Why might I be reacting to the data in this way? What ideas does my interpretation rely on? What different ways could I make sense of the data?” (p.44). These questions allowed me to almost analyse my analysis. Offering layers of thinking that I had not

explored previously. The book was a comfort that allowed me to feel guided, reassured and clear. When I was feeling stuck with my analysis, the book always guided me back to sanity (of sorts) (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

It feels important to acknowledge that whilst I was holding potential biases towards particular views or job roles within both my topic area and participants, I have experienced such a shift in my own thinking over this process. As it may be clear from the development of the research topic section, I came in to this research somewhat angry and annoyed at school staff members. If I am being honest, my overall ‘blue sky thinking’ goal at the beginning of this process, was for there to no longer be reduced timetables in our education system. I am not necessarily saying that I want them thrown out the window tomorrow, but my research does suggest there are areas of concern in when or how they are done. What has changed for me personally is where I am punctuating the areas of concern. I am not sure if this is completely through the research, or to do with my doctoral training, but I feel more confident in applying systemic thinking, in a context dependent way to explain why reduced timetables are not at times appropriate for yp. I have so much empathy for teachers and school staff, particularly with the pressures they face, but also on the dyad between them and the yp. This allows me to enter every interaction with a teacher with curiosity and empathy, no frustration, only understanding. I can also apply these principles to the systems, whilst having some ideas on how we can move forward in a helpful way. Moving forward, I will be applying this in practice and using the skills I have developed to embed this way of thinking to all things reduced timetables.

3.0 Contribution to knowledge

3.1 Unique contributions of the research

As mentioned previously, there is an overall absence of research in this area. The literature review offered the opportunity to link reduced timetables to historical, political and psychological context that hadn't been considered in the research previously (to my knowledge). There were related themes in the analyses and literature review, in addition to new avenues of consideration relevant specifically to reduced timetables. The research is unique in that it has put reduced timetables at the centre, as its own entity that may be within the continuum of exclusionary practices. Whilst acknowledging it is different to other approaches both practically and psychologically, as outlined in the empirical paper. The research also builds upon the small body of literature exploring exclusionary practices in Wales, being informed by papers by Power and Taylor (2020) and Maxwell et al., (2020).

The use of mixed methods in the research allowed for an integration of a breadth and depth in understanding of reduced timetables across Wales. The exploratory nature and approach of both the

datasets was not for generalisability, but transferability to readers (Braun and Clarke, 2022) . By inviting the participation of all practitioners that support yp accessing reduced timetables, my research highlighted a variety of practice, views and positions of how reduced timetables are applied. This approach reflected the potential for collaborative, multi-agency practice informed by the contexts the yp find themselves in.

Using the lens of Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory (2005) helped to explore the layers of considerations within the application of reduced timetables. It helped to highlight the aspects that currently contribute to their use and consider areas of opportunity for further development of reduced timetable processes. It also helped to highlight the limited application of contextual understanding the currently takes place to inform these processes.

3.2 Implications for Educational Psychology practice and wider systems

The relevance of the present research to both educational psychology, LA and school-based practice is considered explicitly in both part A and B of the research.

The primary hope for application of the research findings is to support contexts to consider in depth their use and maintenance of reduced timetables and to develop a practical set of principles to consider in these processes. The analyses, particularly the models detailed in Figures 19, 20 and 21, could be used as a broad tool when writing policy on reduced timetables, considering a strategic school direction or process for them, or when considering them for an individual child or young person. For EPs, the analysis overall draws attention to topics of discussion which I have anecdotally had with colleagues relating to EPs having a true understanding of what ‘goes on’ in their schools. In the limited experience I have had in practice, EPs have shared that the lever for mitigating these barriers is the relationships we have with school colleagues. Schools hold a level of power and agency in relation to what information they share with us, in the absence of local authority or national processes that include information sharing, referral or panel based mechanisms. Once staff, particularly ALNCos, feel comfortable and confident in the relationship, I am told they are much more likely to give an honest account of what school is finding difficult. This is of course a more prevalent barrier for trainee EPs, who do not know their schools well and there is an impending ending of the relationship. I hope I am able to develop such relationships when I do qualify.

3.3 Considerations for future research

As discussed in the previous sections of this critical appraisal, I believe there are several important areas future research could develop on when considering reduced timetables. I think it is important for future research to use a different methodology to the present study. I am glad I approached the research with a contextual lens, however, I believe each sector or service deserves a deeper dive into their role in reduced timetables. It is likely that school is the best place to start the next piece of research in. For example, understanding how staff make sense of who should be on reduced timetables and what their rationale is for reduced timetables. There really seems to be a discrepancy between what the goal is for the child or young person, and the approaches that are being used.

In consideration of Baynton's (2020) research, and my previous experiences; parents deserve a voice in research when exploring the use of reduced timetables. Reduced timetables are an approach or intervention like no other type of exclusionary practice when considering the shape they take and the pressure they have on the young person. As discussed in part B, parents are likely to be impacted by this differently, and it was gathered in the data that school decisions on them may be informed by their view of family suitability for a reduced timetable. If this is the case, there may be a serious degree of discriminatory practice occurring. Therefore, a nuanced analysis based on parental experience which gathers demographic data could be a helpful next step.

3.4 Dissemination of findings

I feel a sense of pride and duty to share the results of this research. Therefore, a dissemination plan is outlined in Table 10. I knew that I wanted my analysis and implications to be shared far and wide and I realised that right now, EPs are not at the centre of these processes, and maybe they will never be, but I believe they have a unique set of skills and positioning to play a part. When I finished writing the discussion and implications in part B, I felt unsatisfied with the final product, I knew it was not finished. Multiple participants of my questionnaire contacted me via email asking to discuss reduced timetables. Some of them had recently been given responsibility of reduced timetables within their local authority and they were not sure what to do or even where to begin. Once I considered this, I had a deep realisation of the importance of my work being accessible and tangible for LA or school staff. I wondered if these practitioners had time, energy or capacity to pick up a long thesis and depict parts of it they could apply to their setting. This is what led to me developing the reduced timetable models/guides (Figures 19, 20 & 21). I consciously designed these to be quite plain in presentation, rather than using striking visuals as I wanted them to be treated as a serious document that could be applied to policy. I recognise these are an unfinished article but I hope they can be a starting point.

The research is arguably a timely contribution. In between my submission date and VIVA, Welsh Government released a policy that discusses reduced timetables into a consultation period (Welsh Government, 2023). It is noteworthy that there are some similarities between what came through in my research and the focus of Welsh Government’s approach to them, but also some important points I think that could be developed in the policy. In addition, Welsh Government are going to be rewriting their exclusion policy/guidance in the near future. I hope the guidance will include exclusionary practices that fall short of formal exclusion and that reduced timetables is discussed in detail. I have also recently been put in contact with Welsh Government exclusion policy researchers who have expressed interest in my thesis and how reduced timetables can be considered helpfully in Wales and I am keen to work alongside them.

I will also take what I have learned throughout this process and the findings from my research into my practice as an EP. I will discuss it at any given opportunity and will be keen to take up any opportunity to share my work. I realise at the time of writing I am very deep into a busy period, but I am confident that I want to publish my research. I believe it is valuable to not only EPs but to professionals supporting yp in schools.

Table 10

Dissemination plan

Action(s):	First steps	Timescale
Share findings with participants.	Contact participants of this study.	September 2023
Share findings with EPS I am working in from September.	Develop training package before starting job to be ready to present to my Principal EP.	Begin package in August 2023
Collaborate with Welsh Government research on exclusions / exclusion policy development	Attend meeting with researchers	Ongoing
Develop regional steering group on reduced timetables	Make contact with colleagues who reached out after questionnaire completion	October 2023
Publish research in a peer-reviewed journal.	Contact editors of relevant journals	January 2024

Share findings with Excluded Lives Project via WISERD seminar	Attend meeting with WISERD Research Associate	Summer 2023
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3.5 Personal reflections and closing comments

I am incredibly grateful to have been able to carry out this research as my thesis. I am particularly grateful to my participants who were honest, vulnerable, reflective. They taught me so much, not only about reduced timetables, but about the fantastic practitioners we have in Wales supporting vulnerable young people. I will forever be appreciative of their generous offerings. It is difficult to feel like you have done your research and participants justice, but I know I worked very hard to do so.

Completing this thesis helped me to develop several skills in the research process and there are many aspects I have enjoyed. Each stage brought its own challenges, lessons and sense of achievement and all were so important. I have thought so deeply about each element and challenged myself to consider details in ways that I never have before and this taught me a lot about ethics, philosophies and their implications, not only in research but in the world around me. I am a trainee who has found academic writing difficult and it is an area I struggle with confidence. However, there have been so many levels of work that have gone into this before the write up and my confidence in my knowledge encouraged me through difficult writing days.

The DEdPsy is a consuming process. Balancing being a TEP with writing a thesis takes up every ounce of time and energy you have. Before I started the course, I had one idea of what my thesis would be, a perfect document that I would tie up with a bow and be sending off exactly how I wanted it. I wish I could say that is how I felt, although I no longer believe there is such thing as a perfect piece of research. The ‘truth’ for me is that writing a thesis on evenings and weekends has not been ideal. It feels wrong for me to suggest I have offered my thesis from the best version of myself, because being on the course is exhausting and sometimes it feels like you are running on fumes. It has been difficult to accept that there are many aspects of the course, some in my control, many beyond my control, that have meant the thesis being ‘good enough’, is good enough. As I write this, I have just been allocated my third thesis supervisor and I have not accessed research supervision in a couple of months. This is not anyone’s fault, but it is the way this journey has ended up for me and it is daunting to worry that the thesis may be impacted by this. Nevertheless, I am proud of what I have produced and I am proud of the EP I will (hopefully) soon be. I love what I do and have worked hard on a topic that I am truly passionate about and I hope my work in some way, helps young people, their families and schools who are working hard to offer the best every day.

3.6 Summary

This critical appraisal explored the choices I made throughout my research journey and detailed my research's contribution to knowledge. I hope the details included in this section of the report offer a different layer of transparency to the process of the research. Writing this section has brought me joy in reflecting on how far I have come, how much I have learned and if I am honest, wonderings on if I did my data justice. Revisiting diary entries offered a familiar version of myself and hopefully offered reflexive moments in this process wrangling with ethical and research based dilemmas.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Full list of search terms for systematic literature review

Systematic searches were performed in July 2022 and again, in March 2023 using the following electronic databases: PsycInfo, Applied Social Science Index, Education Resources Index Centre, British Education Index, Scopus and Web of Science

The search terms used in all databases were: "reduced timetable*" OR "reintegration timetable*" OR "part-time timetable*" AND "inclusive education" OR "inclusion" AND "off-rolling" OR "unofficial exclusion" OR "informal exclusion" AND "educational psycholog*" OR "school psycholog*"

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Appendix A (i) – Extract of CASP Quality Appraisal Framework



Maxwell, N., Slater, T., Forrester, D + Rhodes, K (2020) Home education for children with ALN - a better choice or the only option? Educational Review 72(4) 427-442.
 Maxwell et al, 2020)

Paper for appraisal and reference: Maxwell et al, 2020

Section A: Are the results valid?

1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?

Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Can't Tell	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

HINT: Consider

- what was the goal of the research
- why it was thought important
- its relevance

Comments: to explore the reasons for home edu + safeg of the children in Wales
 Res sugg it's important as there is lacking data + 1/3 of this group have ALN + are vulnerable often

2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?

partly qual.

Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Can't Tell	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

HINT: Consider

- If the research seeks to interpret or illuminate the actions and/or subjective experiences of research participants
- Is qualitative research the right methodology for addressing the research goal

Comments: Qual section is approp. - this had not been explored prev + argument for importance of this data being collected. Other elements of res goal reached in other elements of the paper. Seeks to illuminate experiences of people involved in the.

Is it worth continuing?

3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?

Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Can't Tell	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

HINT: Consider

- if the researcher has justified the research design (e.g. have they discussed how they decided which method to use)

Comments: Method was comprehensive. Researchers didn't justify the design ie discuss how + why they chose it. But rationale was discussed ie reasons for telephone interviews to meet participant needs

4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?

Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Can't Tell	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

HINT: Consider

- If the researcher has explained how the participants were selected
- If they explained why the participants they selected were the most appropriate to provide access to the type of knowledge sought by the study
- If there are any discussions around recruitment (e.g. why some people chose not to take part)

Comments: Researchers conducted data collection in a layered way that resulted in a multi methods approach where they identified gaps. Where there were gaps they used purposeful sampling to recruit.

5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?

Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Can't Tell	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

HINT: Consider

- If the setting for the data collection was justified
- If it is clear how data were collected (e.g. focus group, semi-structured interview etc.)
- If the researcher has justified the methods chosen
- If the researcher has made the methods explicit (e.g. for interview method, is there an indication of how interviews are conducted, or did they use a topic guide)
- If methods were modified during the study. If so, has the researcher explained how and why
- If the form of data is clear (e.g. tape recordings, video material, notes etc.)
- If the researcher has discussed saturation of data

Comments: Data was collected via interviews, 44 interviews + 1 email. All 22 LAs took part in phone interviews. Detailed job roles of participants listed + explanation offered to why some sectors were better or worse represented (page 432). Details of how long they had been home educating was listed, ethnicity + gender. How interviews were recorded is not clear.

55% response

Appendix B – Excluded studies (at screening point) from the Systematic Literature Review with reasons

Reference	Reason for exclusion
Hayden, C. (1997). <i>Children excluded from primary school: debates, evidence, responses</i> . Open University Press.	Did not meet inclusion criteria – does not discuss reduced timetables.
Howard, J., & Rabie, G. (2013). Are the rights of children and young people to reach their potential severely compromised by school exclusion? <i>Community practitioner : the journal of the Community Practitioners' & Health Visitors' Association</i> , 86(4), 31–35.	Did not meet inclusion criteria - does not discuss reduced timetables.
McShane, J. (2020). We know off-rolling happens. Why are we still doing nothing? <i>Support for Learning</i> , 25 (3), 259-275.	Did not meet inclusion criteria - does not discuss reduced timetables.
Done, E. J., & Andrews, M. J. (2019). How inclusion became exclusion: Policy, teachers and inclusive education. <i>Journal of Education Policy</i> . Advance online publication	Did not meet inclusion criteria - does not discuss reduced timetables.

Reference	Reason for exclusion
Done, E. J. (2022). Researching ‘off-rolling’ as a sensitive topic: ‘Hard’ evidence and experiential accounts, <i>Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties</i> , 27(3), 243-253.	Did not meet inclusion criteria - does not discuss reduced timetables.
Bei, Z. & Knowler, H. (2022). Disrupting unlawful exclusion from school of minoritized children and young people racialized as Black: using Critical Race Theory composite counter-storytelling, <i>Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties</i> , 27(3), 231-242.	Did not meet inclusion criteria - does not discuss reduced timetables.
Done, E. J. & Knowler, H. (2022). A tension between rationalities: “off-rolling” as gaming and the implications for head teachers and the inclusion agenda, <i>Educational Review</i> , 74(7), 1322-1341.	Did not meet inclusion criteria - does not discuss reduced timetables.

Appendix C – Quantitative Questionnaire

Q1. Please state which local authority you work in

Q2. Does your local authority have a policy on reduced timetables?

- Yes
- Yes – it is covered as part of another policy
- No

Q3 If a school wants to place a child on a reduced timetable, is this an internal process or does it require input from the local authority (e.g. Inclusion Manager)?

- Within school decision
- Local authority and school joint decision
- Panel decision

Q4 Are Educational Psychologists involved in the support of young people on reduced timetables?

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

Q5 What reasons may lead to a young person in your local authority being placed on a reduced timetable?

- Medical needs
- Emotionally based school avoidance
- The child is at risk of exclusion
- Informal exclusion
- Lack of resources or staff to support the young person
- Other (please specify)_____

Q6 Which statement do you believe best describes the use of reduced timetables for young people with social and emotional needs who present with externalising behaviours?

- Informal exclusion
- The child cannot cope with a full time education in a mainstream school
- Avoiding permanent exclusion
- The school does not have the resources to meet the child's needs
- None of these

Q7 How often are reduced timetables reviewed?

- Fortnightly
- Monthly
- Termly
- They are not reviewed (go to question 10)
- Other (please specify) _____

Q9. Who are they reviewed by?

- School
- Local Authority representative
- Other (Please specify)_____

Q10. Do you have any processes/meetings within the Local Authority and schools where you discuss reduced timetables?

- Yes (please specify)____
- No

Q11. Does your Local Authority collect data on reduced timetables? (I.e. How many children, demographic of children, how long they are on the reduced timetable, number of children with Statement/IDP/LAC/Minority group on reduced timetable?)

- Yes
- No

If “yes” is selected, go to: Question 12

If “no” is selected, go to: Question 15

Q12. Please share what data you collect on reduced timetables:

- How many children per school are on reduced timetables.
- Demographic of children on reduced timetables.
- How long they have been on reduced timetables.
- How many children on reduced timetables have a statement/IDP/LAC/Child Protection/Minority Group.
- Other (please specify) _____

Q13. How often do you collect this data?

- Monthly
- Termly
- Annually
- Other (please specify) _____

Q14. Do you share this data?

- Yes – please share who with (i.e. Regionally, nationally):
- No

Q15. Do you think more is needed to support children who are on reduced timetables or at risk of reduced timetables?

- Yes – (please specify)____
- No

Q16. How effective do you think your Local Authority is at implementing, maintaining and reviewing reduced timetables?

- Not effective at all
- Slightly effective
- Moderately effective
- Very effective
- Extremely effective

**Thank you for your time spent taking this survey.
Your response has been recorded.**

For your information, please see attached the debrief form

Appendix D – Qualitative Interview Schedule

Introduction – Background information

1. Please tell me a bit about your role?
2. What is your current experience of working with young people who are on reduced timetables?

Process

3. In your experience, in what circumstance is a young person placed on a reduced timetable? Why are they used? Are they used as an approach for those at risk of exclusion?
4. To your knowledge, what policies or procedures inform this process?
Are the children part of the decision? How do the children feel about it?

Experience

5. What do you think it is like for young people to be on reduced timetables?
Where is the child when they're not in lessons? How often are they normally in school? (Length of time, how many days etc).
6. What do you think these young peoples' sense of belonging in school is like?
7. What are relationships for young people on reduced timetables like in school?
i.e., with peers and adults
8. What do you think the experience of parents of young people on reduced timetables is?
9. Can you tell me about what these children do when they're not at school?
Do they access any additional education support?

Efficacy

10. What are your best hopes for these children?
If you could change the support young people on reduced timetables receive, what would this be and why?
11. Do you think Educational Psychologists could contribute to this area?
Why?

(Italics = prompts)

Further Prompts

Why do you think...?

It was really interesting when you said, could you tell me a bit more about that please

Appendix E - Quantitative Gatekeepers letter

RE: Thesis research- *Exploring the use of reduced timetables for young people in Wales*

My name is Chloe Weaver and I am a second year Trainee Educational Psychologist, currently completing the Doctorate in Educational Psychology (DEdPsy) at Cardiff University.

I am undertaking research, as part of my training, where I hope to carry out research to inform my thesis. For this project, I am hoping to explore the use of reduced timetables for secondary school aged children.

The purpose of this research project is to explore the use of reduced timetables as an alternative to exclusions in secondary schools in Wales. There are two elements to my research; the first will involve asking a relevant professional within Local Authorities to complete an online questionnaire about the use of reduced timetables within their Local authority. The second part involves completing interviews with professionals who support children placed on reduced timetables.

I am inviting all Local Authorities in Wales to take part in this research and would be very grateful if you would consider participating. Participation would involve the person best placed within your Local Authority completing the attached questionnaire. It is recognised that the role of the person best placed to complete the questionnaire may vary across LAs and could include: Inclusion Manager, ALN Manager, or someone who has a role with responsibilities for overseeing exclusions and/or attendance.

If you are happy for your Local Authority to take part in this research, please could you share the participant information sheet within your organisation with the person best placed to complete the questionnaire. This person will need to complete the consent form and online questionnaire (link attached) once they have read the information sheet. Relevant ethical considerations, including confidentiality, are included within the participant information sheet.

Please do not hesitate to email me if you have any questions.

Many thanks for your time in considering participating in this research.

Best wishes,
Chloe Weaver
Trainee Educational Psychologist

Appendix F – Quantitative Participant Information Sheet

Doctorate in Educational Psychology
70 Park Place,
Cardiff,
CF10 3AT

(Date)

FAO: Principal Educational Psychologist / Head of Education / Inclusion

RE: Thesis research- Exploring the use of reduced timetables for young people in Wales

My name is Chloe Weaver and I am a second year Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP), currently completing the Doctorate in Educational Psychology (DEdPsy) at Cardiff University.

I am undertaking research, as part of my training, where I hope to carry out research to inform my thesis. For this project, I am hoping to explore the use of reduced timetables for secondary school aged children.

The purpose of this research project is to explore the use of reduced timetables as an alternative to exclusions in secondary schools in Wales. There are two elements to my research; the first will involve asking a relevant professional within Local Authorities to complete an online questionnaire about the use of reduced timetables within their Local Authority. The second part involves completing interviews with professionals who support children who placed on reduced timetables.

I am inviting all Local Authorities in Wales to take part in this research and would be very grateful if you would consider participating. Participation would involve the person best placed within your LA completing the attached questionnaire. It is recognised that the role of the person best placed to complete the questionnaire may vary across LAs and could include: Inclusion Manager, ALN Manager, or someone who has a role with responsibilities for overseeing exclusions and/or attendance.

If this is you and you would like to take part, you will need to complete the consent form and online questionnaire (link attached).

The more responses I have, the more likely the data will reflect the use of reduced timetables as an alternative to exclusions across Wales. If you would be willing to participate in completing a questionnaire on this topic I would be very grateful.

- The questionnaire will take approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete and can be accessed via the web link below.
- All responses will be recorded anonymously and cannot be linked back to respondents. A list of job titles of participants will be listed, but will not be connected to the data you have shared.
- Participation is voluntary and you are under no obligation to take part.
- Findings will be written up as a doctoral thesis and shared with the university. The anonymised data obtained from this study may be shared with other researchers, staff and students at Cardiff University. Data may be used for further research projects within Cardiff

University. Should the findings be of interest, they may also be shared through publication of the research and discussed in conferences.

Please click on the link below to access the questionnaire.

[-----web link-----]

If you have any questions regarding the research or questionnaire, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me or my research supervisor.

Kind regards,

Chloe Weaver

Trainee Educational Psychologist

Researcher:

Chloe Weaver

School of Psychology,

Cardiff University,

Tower Building,

30 Park Place,

Cardiff,

CF10 3AT

Email: weaverc5@cardiff.ac.uk

Research Supervisor:

Rosanna Stenner

School of Psychology,

Cardiff University,

Tower Building,

30 Park Place,

Cardiff,

CF10 3AT

stennerr@cardiff.ac.uk

Details of further contact for complaints:

Secretary of the Ethics Committee

School of Psychology

Cardiff University

Tower Building

Park Place

Cardiff

CF10 3AT

Tel: 029 2087 0360

Email: psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk

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Appendix G - Online Questionnaire Consent Form

Exploring the use of reduced timetables for young people in Wales

Purpose of the research:

The purpose of this research project is to explore the use of reduced timetables as an alternative to exclusions in secondary schools in Wales. There are two elements to my research; the first will involve asking a relevant professional within Local Authorities to complete an online questionnaire about the use of reduced timetables within their Local Authority. The second part involves completing interviews with professionals who support children placed on reduced timetables.

There are a series of questions below, and an opportunity for you to provide further information if you wish to. Please remember the more information you give; the more detailed the findings will be.

The following research is being carried out as part of the course requirements for completion of the Doctorate in Educational Psychology at Cardiff University. This research is being supervised by Dr Rosanna Stenner and has been approved by the Ethics Committee at Cardiff University's School of Psychology.

- I understand that my participation in this research will involve completing a questionnaire about data on reduced timetables for children in the Local Authority I work in, and where appropriate, sharing the data my Local Authority collects on reduced timetables. This will take approximately 10 minutes of my time.
- I understand that participation in this study is voluntary and I can withdraw during the completion of the questionnaire at any time without giving a reason.
- I understand that I am free to ask questions at any time. I am free to discuss my concerns with the researcher, Chloe Weaver, or the supervisor, Rosanna Stenner.
- I understand that at the end of the study I will be provided with additional information and feedback about the purpose of the study.
- I understand that the research information I provide will be held anonymously so that it will be impossible to trace this information back to me individually.
- I understand that because of the anonymity of my response it will not be possible to withdraw my responses after submitting the questionnaire and that my I.P. address will not be collected by the questionnaire software, Qualtrics.

Please indicate your consent to participate in the study below.

Name: _____

Signed: _____

Thank you,
Chloe Weaver (Trainee Educational Psychologist)

Researcher:
Chloe Weaver
School of Psychology,
Cardiff University,
Tower Building,
30 Park Place,
Cardiff,
CF10 3AT
Email: weaverc5@cardiff.ac.uk

Research Supervisor:
Rosanna Stenner
School of Psychology,
Cardiff University,
Tower Building,
30 Park Place,
Cardiff,
CF10 3AT
stennerr@cardiff.ac.uk

Details of further contact for complaints:
Secretary of the Ethics Committee
School of Psychology
Cardiff University
Tower Building
Park Place
Cardiff
CF10 3AT

Tel: 029 2087 0360

Email: psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk

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Appendix H – Quantitative Debrief Form

Thank you for your participation in this study.

The purpose of this research project is to explore the use of reduced timetables as an alternative to exclusions in secondary schools in Wales. There are two elements to my research; the first will involve asking a relevant professional within Local Authorities to complete an online questionnaire about the use of reduced timetables within their Local Authority. The second part involves completing interviews with professionals who support children placed on reduced timetables.

I hope the information gathered will contribute towards a wider understanding of how reduced timetables are implemented and maintained. The information you have provided will not be traceable to you and all information will be published anonymously. The personal data will be processed in accordance with GDPR regulations (see privacy statement below). The findings will be written up and submitted to Cardiff University as part of my doctoral thesis and may be used in future presentations or publications.

If you would like a summary of the findings this can be made available to you. You are free to discuss any concerns or queries with the researcher, Chloe Weaver, or the supervisor, Rosanna Stenner.

Many thanks for your involvement,
Chloe Weaver
Trainee Educational Psychologist

Researcher:
Chloe Weaver
School of Psychology,
Cardiff University,
Tower Building,
30 Park Place,
Cardiff,
CF10 3AT
Email: weaverc5@cardiff.ac.uk

Research Supervisor:
Rosanna Stenner
School of Psychology,
Cardiff University,
Tower Building,
30 Park Place,
Cardiff,
CF10 3AT
stennerr@cardiff.ac.uk

Privacy Notice:

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

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 10 years.

The research information you provide will be used for the purposes of research only and will be stored securely. Only Chloe Weaver will have access to this information. The data will be confidentially stored using online questionnaire software and may be kept for a minimum of 10 years by Cardiff University once the study has been completed (as recommended by the Medical Research Council).

Tel: 029 2087 0360

Email: psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk

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Appendix I – Qualitative Gatekeeper Letter

RE: Thesis research– *Exploring the use of reduced timetables for young people in Wales*

My name is Chloe Weaver and I am a second year Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP), currently completing the Doctorate in Educational Psychology (DedPsy) at Cardiff University.

I am undertaking research, as part of my training, where I hope to carry out research to inform my thesis. For this project, I am hoping to explore the use of reduced timetables for secondary school aged children.

The purpose of this research project is to explore the use of reduced timetables as an alternative to exclusions in secondary schools in Wales. There are two elements to my research; the first will involve asking a relevant professional within Local Authorities to complete an online questionnaire about the use of reduced timetables within their Local Authority. The second part involves completing interviews with professionals who support children placed on reduced timetables.

The second element of the research involves inviting professionals who support children who have been placed on reduced timetables to share their views and experiences. These professionals can be based in schools, Local Authorities, charities etc. I would be grateful if you, or a colleague you think would be better placed, would consider participating in this research. I would be grateful if you could forward this email to members of your team that you believe have experience of supporting children who have been placed on reduced timetables and/or would be willing to discuss participating in this research in a team meeting. Participating in this research would involve taking part in an interview which would take up to one hour of your time.

Any prospective participants can contact me directly on the email address below. I have attached copies of the information sheet and a consent form to complete and send back to me if you/a colleague(s) do wish to take part. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

Many thanks in advance for your consideration of this project.

Kind regards,

Chloe Weaver

Trainee Educational Psychologist

Ethical approval has been granted by the School of Psychology ethics committee at Cardiff University. I will also be closely supervised by Dr Rosanna Stenner, throughout the duration of the research, her contact details are outlined below should you wish to speak to her about this.

Researcher:
Chloe Weaver
School of Psychology,
Cardiff University,
Tower Building,
30 Park Place,
Cardiff,
CF10 3AT
Email: weaverc5@cardiff.ac.uk

Research Supervisor:
Rosanna Stenner
School of Psychology,
Cardiff University,
Tower Building,
30 Park Place,
Cardiff,
CF10 3AT
stennerr@cardiff.ac.uk

Details of further contact for complaints:
Secretary of the Ethics Committee
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Tel: 029 2087 0360

Email: psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk

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Appendix J – Qualitative Participant Information Sheet

Dear potential participant,

I am a trainee Educational Psychologist who is conducting research on reduced timetables for secondary school aged children in Wales.

Title of the research:

Exploring the use of reduced timetables for young people in Wales

Purpose of the research:

The purpose of this research project is to explore the use of reduced timetables as an alternative to exclusions in secondary schools in Wales. There are two elements to my research; the first will involve asking a relevant professional within Local Authorities to complete an online questionnaire about the use of reduced timetables within their Local Authority. The second part involves completing interviews with professionals who support children placed on reduced timetables.

Why have you been asked to participate?

You work with young people placed on reduced timetables and I am interested in hearing your views and experiences of the use of reduced timetables. In order to participate you need to have been in your role for at least six months.

What is involved if you agree to participate?

You will be asked to participate in an interview with the researcher. This interview should last no longer than 1 hour, the researcher hopes that interviews will take place face to face and will be voice recorded. If this is not possible due to COVID-19 restrictions, the interview will take place via Microsoft Teams and video recorded (as Microsoft Teams only has a screen recording function). You will be asked to reflect on your role when working with young people on reduced timetables. It may be helpful to think about what is normally going on for the young person that means they are on a reduced timetable, your hopes for these young people and how you think professionals, including Educational Psychologists, may be able to assist you in this.

What are the possible benefits and risks?

There are no perceived risks involved with this research. If any discomfort was to be experienced during the process, the interview can be paused. At this point, I will check in with you to ascertain whether you feel comfortable finishing the interview or not. Information regarding support will be provided in the debrief sheet. It is hoped that your information will contribute to offering a better understanding of the use and experience of reduced timetables.

Will my information be kept confidential?

The researcher will use a coding scheme to label your data, the link between the code and your name will be kept separately from the data in a locked online space to which only the researcher and supervisor will have access. This list will then be destroyed when data collection is complete so that the data is then anonymous. If you return consent forms by email, it will be saved confidentially, until transcription, when all data will be anonymised. At this point, the original email will be deleted.

Right to withdraw

Participants are free to withdraw from the study up to two weeks after the interview has taken place. After this time, data will have been anonymised two weeks after the interview takes place and it would therefore be impossible to link the data to participants once this has been done.

What will happen to the results of the research project?

The aim is for the data to be used to inform the researcher's thesis. This will be submitted to the University as partial fulfilment of the course requirement. It will also be shared in group presentations at the University during 2023, with students on the DEdPsy programme, their lecturers and Educational Psychologists. The anonymised data obtained from this study may be shared with other researchers, staff and students at Cardiff University. Data may be used for further research projects within Cardiff University. Should the findings be of interest, they may also be shared through publication of the research and discussed in conferences. Participants will not be identifiable in any publication.

Who can I contact if I want further information?

You can contact either myself or my supervisor. Our contact information is below.

Thank you for your consideration

Chloe Weaver, Trainee Educational Psychologist

Researcher:

Chloe Weaver
School of Psychology,
Cardiff University,
Tower Building,
30 Park Place,
Cardiff,
CF10 3AT

Email: weaverc5@cardiff.ac.uk

Research Supervisor:

Rosanna Stenner
School of Psychology,
Cardiff University,
Tower Building,
30 Park Place,
Cardiff,
CF10 3AT

Email: stennerr@cardiff.ac.uk

Details of further contact for complaints:

Secretary of the Ethics Committee
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Tel: 029 2087 0360

Email: psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk

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Appendix K – Qualitative Consent Form

Exploring the use of reduced timetables for young people in Wales

Name of participant _____

Job Title/ Position held _____

Local Authority _____

After reading the Participant Information Sheet, please read the following statements carefully. If you have any questions, please ask the researcher who gave you this form. You are under no pressure to give your consent.

1.	I confirm that I have read and understand the Participant Information Sheet for the study named above. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
2.	I understand what will happen during the interview.
3.	I understand the activity will be voice recorded if it is in person and video recorded if it is via Microsoft Teams, it will then be transcribed by the researcher.
4.	I understand my participation is voluntary.
5.	I understand that I am free to withdraw my participation at any point (up until the video-recording is deleted), without the need to provide an explanation.
6.	I understand that if I want to withdraw, I can inform the researcher in person or via email.
7.	I understand that the recording will be deleted two weeks after the interview.
8.	I understand that I will be assigned a participant code to ensure anonymity of both myself and the setting of which I am an employee.
9.	I understand that the information I provide will be held confidentially within Cardiff University. Data from all parts of this study will be accessible to the researcher and their supervisor only. The data will be password protected so that only the researcher can trace the information back to me individually. The data will be retained for no longer than the end of the research project plus 5 years, or at least 2 years post publication, in accordance with the University's Record Retention Policy.
10.	I consent to the anonymised data obtained from this study being shared with other researchers, staff and students at Cardiff University. Data may be used for further research projects within Cardiff University without the need for additional consent procedures.
11.	I consent to the findings from this research being shared with individuals in other organisations outside of Cardiff University for the purpose of potential publication.
12.	I understand that the personal data will be processed in accordance with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).
13.	I understand that at the end of the study I will be provided with additional information about the study.
14.	I have read the above statements carefully and I consent to partake in this study.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

For queries relating to the research, please contact the researchers via the below email address:

Many thanks,
Chloe Weaver

Researcher:
Chloe Weaver
School of Psychology,
Cardiff University,
Tower Building,
30 Park Place,
Cardiff,
CF10 3AT
Email: weaverc5@cardiff.ac.uk

Research Supervisor:
Rosanna Stenner
School of Psychology,
Cardiff University,
Tower Building,
30 Park Place,
Cardiff,
CF10 3AT
stennerr@cardiff.ac.uk

Details of further contact for complaints:
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Tel: 029 2087 0360

Email: psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk

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School of Psychology
Ysgol Seicoleg

Do you work with young people on reduced timetables?

Hello, my name is Chloe Weaver (that's me in the picture to the right). I am a trainee Educational Psychologist and I would like to speak to professionals who work with children who are on reduced timetables



Why?

I want to help share experiences of supporting children on reduced timetables and offer opportunity to reflect on the process and what it was like for them.

So, if you support young people who are...

- Secondary school aged.
- On a reduced timetable in a mainstream school

Please get in touch

To express interest or request further information, contact me on weaverc5@cardiff.ac.uk to have a chat

Thank you very much

Appendix M – Qualitative Debrief Form

Title of the research:

Exploring the use of reduced timetables for young people in Wales

Thank you for participating in this research project.

The aim of this study was to explore the use of reduced timetables and to better understand the views and experiences of professionals supporting young people placed on reduced timetables. It sought to better understand what circumstance led to reduced timetables and what this was like for those supporting this group young people.

In order to explore this, you were asked to take part in an interview. Information from the interview will be analysed using thematic analysis to identify and draw themes.

Before participating in this research, you were provided with an information sheet and were asked to provide signed informed consent. All the responses given by yourself will be anonymised, and no personal or identifiable information will be in the results. All data will be kept securely and confidentially, before being submitted to Cardiff University.

Please remember that you can withdraw at any point over the next 2 weeks, after this the data will be anonymised and your contribution will be unidentifiable.

The information you have provided will help to form the researcher's thesis. This will be submitted to the University as partial fulfilment of the course requirement. It will also be shared in group presentations at the University during 2023, with students on the DEdPsy programme, their lecturers and Educational Psychologists. The anonymised data obtained from this study may be shared with other researchers, staff and students at Cardiff University. Data may be used for further research projects within Cardiff University. Should the findings be of interest, they may also be shared through publication of the research and discussed in conferences.

Please contact the researcher if you have any concerns or questions about the research you have been a part of.

Thank you very much for your participation.

Chloe Weaver,
Trainee Educational Psychologist

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Details of further contact for complaints:
Secretary of the Ethics Committee
School of Psychology
Cardiff University
Tower Building
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Tel: 029 2087 0360

Email: psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk

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Appendix N – Personal Data Research Form

Researcher responsible for the data: Chloe Weaver, supervised by Rosanna Stenner

Research project name or SREC code: *Exploring the use of reduced timetables for young people in Wales*

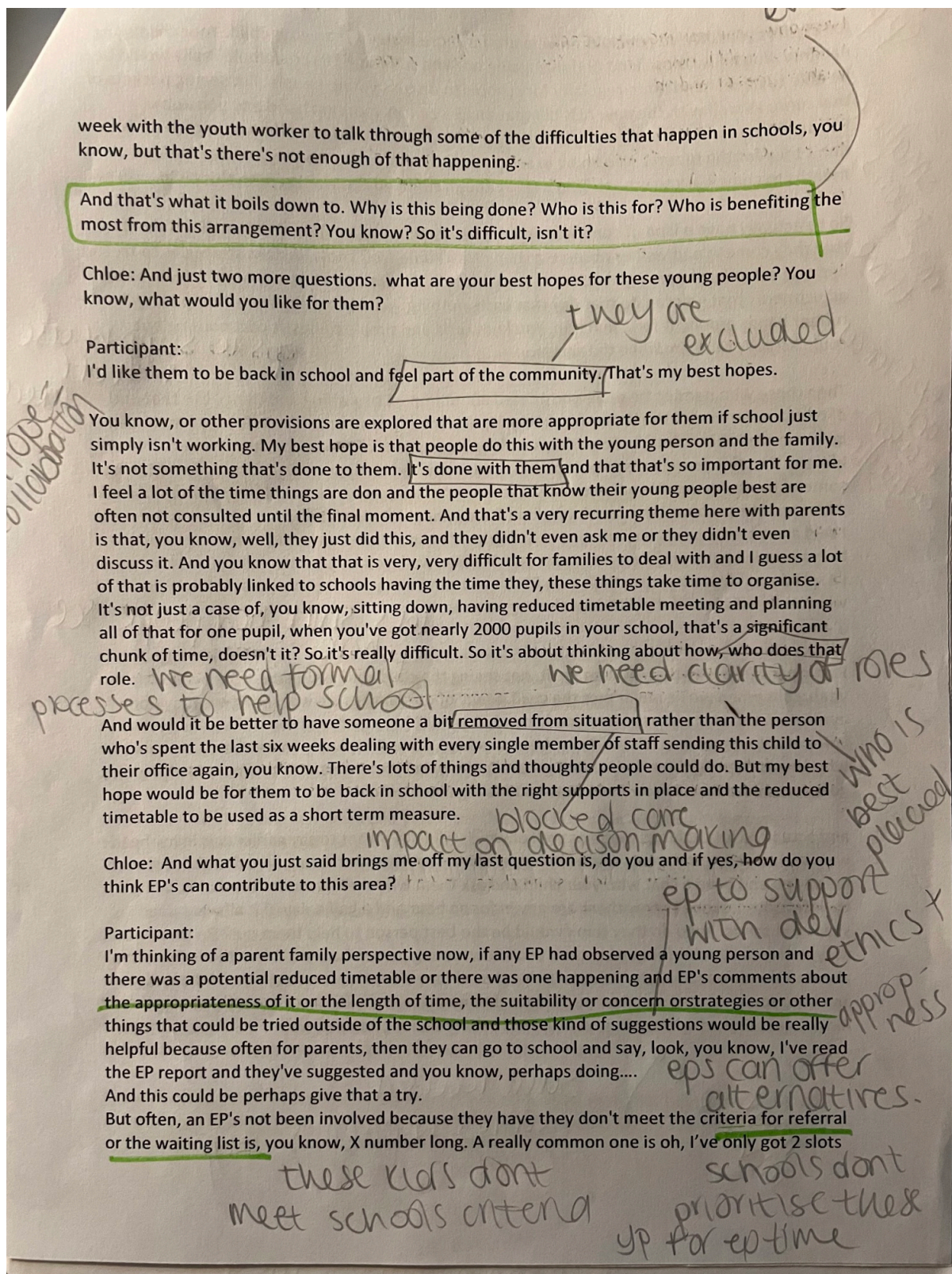
Date: 03/02/2022

<p>Description of personal data held or processed. Provide a narrative description of what the data are.</p>	<p>The study involves participants sharing quantitative data on reduced timetables within their local authority or engaging in an interview to discuss their experiences of supporting young people placed on reduced timetables in school.</p>
<p>Information that is being held or processed. Indicate the nature of the data: how could the person be identified and what information is stored alongside that identity.</p>	<p>Participants' names and email will be held on consent forms, which will be saved under password protect. Once the interview has been transcribed the recording will be deleted. Responses will be anonymized using unidentifiable numbers (e.g. participant 1) and all identifying features such as names, name of schools or pupils will be removed.</p>
<p>When is data collection likely to begin and be completed?</p>	<p>The researcher is aiming for data collection to begin in June 2022 and finish by October 2022.</p>
<p>Number of individuals for whom information will be held.</p>	<p>6-10 for qualitative data. Up to 22 for quantitative data.</p>
<p>Lawful basis for processing. This will probably be 'Public Interest' or 'Consent'.</p>	<p>Informed consent will be given. Participants will need to sign and return a consent form before the interview takes place and the researcher will read out the consent form verbally at the beginning of the interview to reconfirm consent.</p>
<p>Does the data include special category data (or Criminal offence data)? Special categories include: race, ethnicity, politics, religion, trade union membership, genetics, biometrics, health, sex life or sexual orientation. If yes then is specific consent used to process this information?</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Length of time personal data will be kept. Personal data should only be kept for as long as necessary. Research data should be anonymised as soon as possible and the length of time before this happens should be communicated to the participant.</p>	<p>The data will be anonymised at latest, two weeks after interviews. This is communicated on the participant information sheet.</p>
<p>What are the data security procedures? Ensure all personal data is kept secure.</p>	<p>All personal data will be kept under a password protected document that only the researcher and their supervisor will have access to.</p>
<p>List CU (Cardiff University) staff who have access to the personal data.</p>	<p>Rosanna Stenner</p>
<p>Indicate whether all people listed above have completed their mandatory information security training. Available here: https://intranet.cardiff.ac.uk/staff/news/view/211993-information-security-training-when-will-you-complete-yours</p>	<p>Yes</p>

List CU students who have access to the personal data.	Chloe Weaver
What guidance or training have/will the students receive concerning data security?	Research Integrity Online Training (Postgraduate)
List people external to CU who have access to the personal data. Provide their affiliation	None
What agreements are in place for data security outside of CU?	N/A
Justification for not anonymising these data. Explain why the data are not or cannot be anonymised.	N/A

Appendix O – Data analysis

(i) Extract of coded data



(ii) Extract of coded data

families so stressed that childrens sons recalled

breakdown, children moving out and living with nans and aunties. And obviously not knowing what their child is doing when they're at work. Because they have to go to work. And yeah, just yeah, it goes on and on.

Sometimes, they almost go into an acceptance that will never be any different as well. So if it's gone on for a particularly long time, it just be like, oh, there's only another year now and then and then the year 11 and they can leave. So there's definitely that's been a factor as well. I've just giving up. Yeah. So yeah, lots of times. It's horrendous.

Chloe: And do you think at the point of decision, at reduced timetables timetable, Do you think it's more of a told by school or more of a coordinated approach?

Participant:
A mixture I would say many families who come to us have been told and haven't understood that they have the right to refuse.

Many families are told so the use of language by school is really important. Yeah, so you know, if you don't do this, they're gonna be permanently excluded. And that's really difficult. First of all, because this may be a parent who was excluded themselves or had a very difficult time in school themselves. And the secondly, the threat of that perm exclusions is horrendous because they don't know what happens and immediately go ok stop. OK, if a pem exclusion happens, we will deal with it.

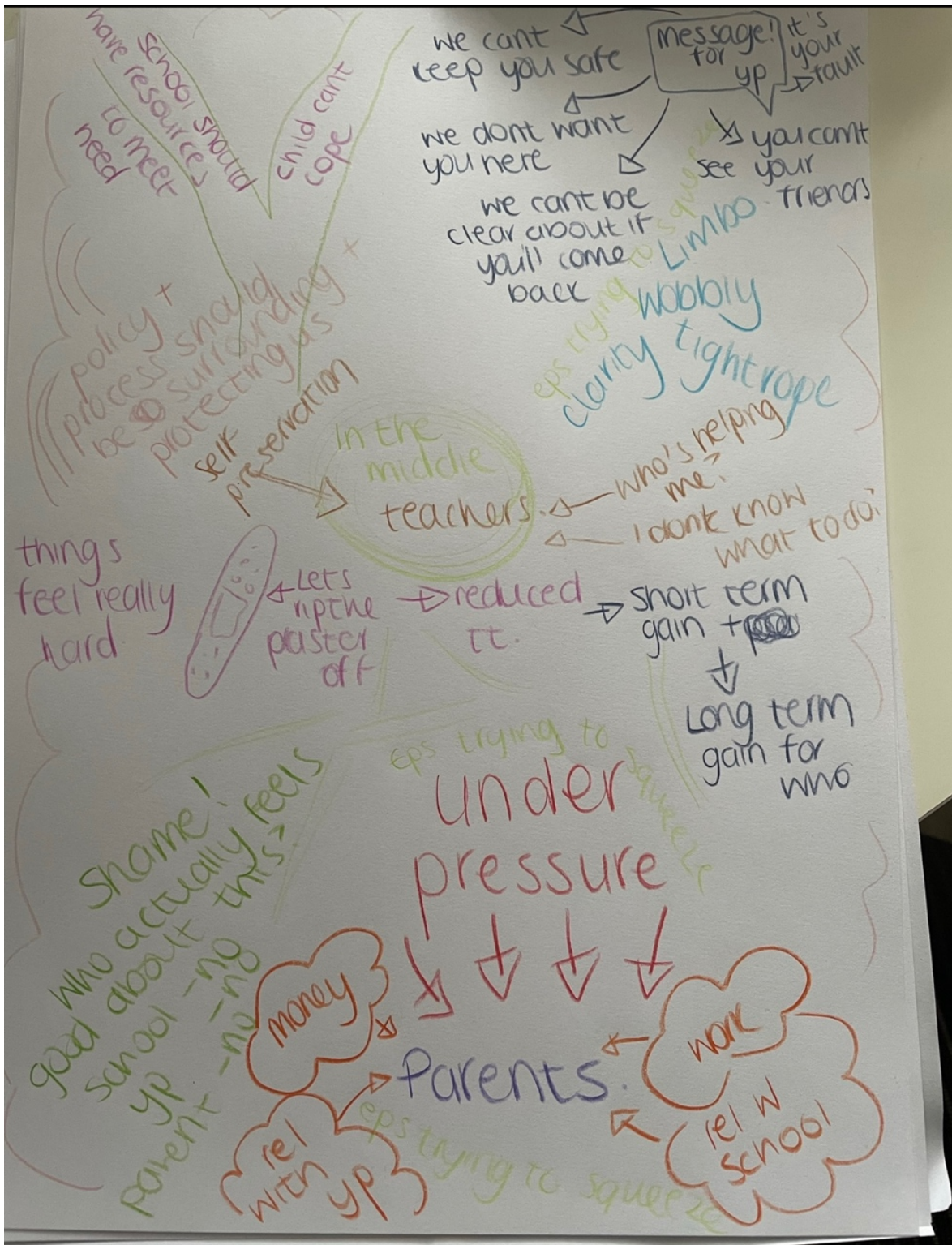
But in order to permanently exclude, they have to do one of these following things. And you have a right to appeal. It doesn't mean they'll never go to any other school again, which is what parents automatically assume is they'll never get anywhere or they're gonna end up in a PRU. UK, you know, so helping parents understand what permex means actually then have helps him enforced to whether they should accept a reduced timetable. Of course, schools don't do that. They just go well at this rate they're going to end up permanently excluded.

And that's just not helpful to parents because they're not understanding what all their options are then. Which is actually we're thinking about reduced timetable, and the reason we're doing this is because we want a plan to try and make things a bit better in school and improve things we hope if we work together, you know. If you don't accept this and we do nothing, we really worried that he could end up being excluded. That doesn't mean you couldn't have any other school, but we're doing this in order to avoid that. If there were those kind of conversations with parents instead that would be so much better. And then you know, he's gonna be excluded. You know, parents. And they don't understand. And that perm exclusion is really frightening. It's gonna be on their record forever.

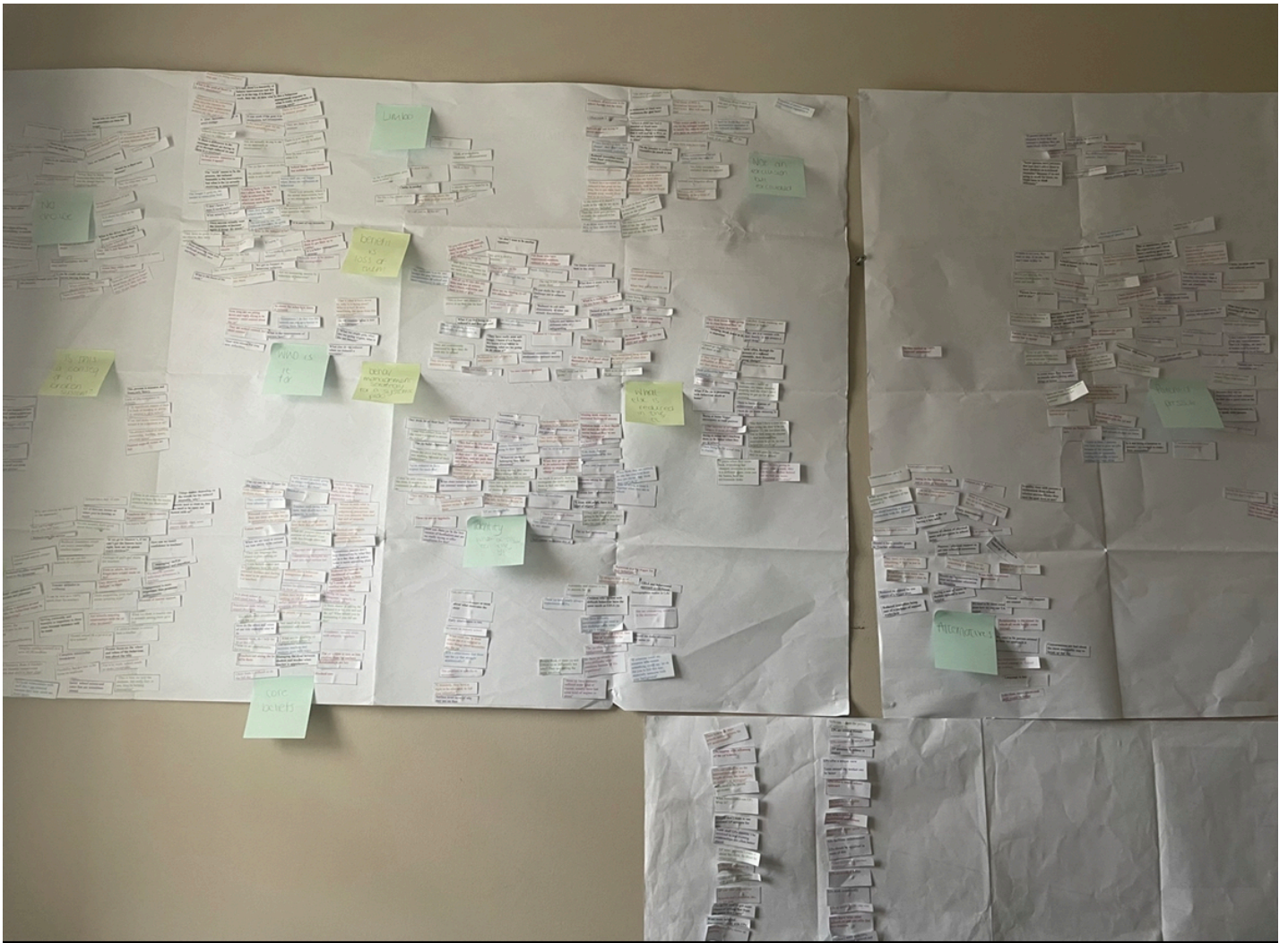
But why are they being kept out and that's the part. What are they hoping to achieve with keeping them out? Because just keeping them out for everyone to have a breathing space is not a plan, keeping them out so they can go and do an intervention once, you know, three times a

eventual acceptance of disappointment
no shared long
no one goes
hopeless
when they get
chronic fear of perm ex
threat
No clarity
there is no plan, the plan is to remove pressure
At least per kids have rights

(iii) Extract from research diary, noting themes in data.



(iv) Process of developing the final thematic map



(v) Final thematic map

