



Parents' Views of their Involvement During Extended School Non-Attendance

A thesis submitted as part of the requirements of the University of Cardiff for
the Doctorate in Educational Psychology

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Summary

This thesis is divided into three distinct parts. Part 1, the Literature Review, will firstly cover the definition of extended school non-attendance (ESNA), the prevalence and onset of ESNA and research that has aimed to measure the impact of ESNA on the child who has experienced it. Secondly it focuses specifically on the current evidence-base regarding the factors involved in non-attendance, specifically the systems that have an impact on children's non-attendance. Attention is then paid to research highlighting the impact of parents' previous experience of school and involvement with professionals that has an impact in their involvement and engagement in their children's education. In the latter part of the literature review, the two issues of the factors affecting children's non-attendance and the constructs of parents' involvement and engagement are brought together. Finally, research that has aimed to explore parental views regarding their children's ESNA will be presented, discussed and critiqued.

An argument for the need to extend the evidence-base regarding parental involvement during extended non-attendance will be made and the impact the findings might have for educational psychology practice will be discussed. Finally, research questions are presented aiming to explore parents' views of their involvement during ESNA. The literature review is not exhaustive, but aims to give a clear overview of contextual factors, including changes in legislation and policy, as well as a rationale to the research by guiding the reader through a narrative towards the current research area and questions.

Part 2 of the thesis is the Empirical Study. It provides an overview of the current literature, the epistemology underpinning the research and the methodology used. A results section will include an overview and interpretation of the findings. A discussion section will include a discussion of the results in relation to previous research, relating to how the results support, oppose and enhance the existing evidence base. Limitations of the current study will also be explored along with the possibilities for future research. Furthermore, attention is paid to the implications of the research outcomes for the role and professional practice of educational psychologists.

Part 3 of the thesis, the Reflective Account, discusses the contribution to knowledge the current findings have provided. Furthermore, a review of the researcher's choices will be presented, critically analysing decision making throughout the process of the research. Discussion will focus on how the implications of the results for educational psychology practice. Finally, potential areas for further research will be explored.

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List of Abbreviations

AP	alternative provision
DfE	Department for Education
CAMHS	Children and Adolescents Mental Health Services
CD	Conduct disorder
ESNA	extended school non-attendance
EP	educational psychologist
EPS	Educational Psychology Service
EWO	educational welfare officer
EWS	Educational Welfare Service
LA	local authority
ODD	Oppositional Defiance Disorder
PRU	pupil referral unit
TA	teaching assistant



Parents' Views of their Involvement During Extended School
Non-Attendance

PART A: LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Introduction

School attendance is a high priority concern and is currently the focus of intense activity in schools and local authorities (LAs) in England and Wales (Department for Education, DfE, 2011a, 2015c; Taylor, 2012a). In 2005, the English and Welsh Governments began to collect attendance figures for every maintained primary and secondary school across the country and published them in yearly statistics documents. The publishing of school attendance figures increased the interest in research exploring the importance of school attendance on young people's development and attainment. An English Government paper exploring the effect of non-attendance on attainment between 2009 and 2010, found that children who were persistent absentees (20 percent of sessions absent from school or over) across both the key stage 4 years were 80% less likely to achieve 5 or more A*-C grades at GCSE or equivalent including English and math GCSEs. This figure dropped to 2.9% for pupils missing more than half of the final KS4 year (DfE, 2011a).

School non-attendance has also been linked with disaffection, crime and not being in education, employment or training at age 16–18 (DfE, 2011a). The DfE (2011a) found that less than a quarter of young people who were persistent absentees at the age of 15 remained in full time education at age 18. This was compared to just over a half of their peers who had not been classed as persistent absentees at the age of 15. Just under a third of persistent absentees were not in education, employment or training (NEET) at the age of 18, compared to just over a tenth of their peers who were not persistent absentees at the age of 15.

The statistics above, along with further evidence within this literature review, highlight the importance of school attendance for economic security and emotional well-being. The current research aims to produce evidence that might offer insight into how school attendance can be supported in children who have extended school non-attendance (ESNA).

The review will begin by considering the definition of ESNA and the disagreement between researchers regarding the terms used for non-attendance within the literature. Secondly the review will evaluate the current evidence base regarding the onset and prevalence of ESNA. The impact of ESNA will then be explored, including the impact on mental health.

Then, an overview of some prominent research that has aimed to uncover the causes and maintaining factors associated with ESNA will be included. The review will focus on research that aims to develop a systemic understanding of the problem rather than a focus on a 'within child' view. The review will utilise Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) to analyse the evidence-base. The utilisation of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory aims to highlight the effect parental involvement can have on children's attendance.

Suggested interventions for ESNA are critically reviewed with regard to how they support children's well-being. The review will describe studies that have reported links between parental involvement and children's attendance and engagement in schooling. In this thesis the term, 'involvement' describes a one-way interaction, generally, school involving parents and 'engagement' describes a collaborative interaction between school and parents. This review will then consider the evidence-base for strategies that promote parents' involvement in their children's education more generally.

Following this, the review explores the literature relating to how parents are involved during their child's ESNA. This review will investigate the potential barriers and supports to parents of children with ESNA. Finally, research questions are proposed.

1.1 Search terms and sources

In order to produce this literature review, databases including PsycInfo, PsychArticles, ERIC, and Google Scholar were searched for relevant literature relating to the research area. The searches focused upon two lines of enquiry: studies investigating pupil absenteeism from school and studies on parent involvement in education. The first search criteria included keywords such as 'school refusal', "school phobia", "persistent absence", "chronic absenteeism" and "truanting". The second search criteria included keywords such as "parent engagement" and "parental involvement". In addition to the results of the literature search terms, additional references were retrieved through the reference lists of primary resources. Relevant Welsh and English Government documents, policies and news articles were accessed through the Google search engine.

1.1.1 Inclusion/exclusion criteria

Firstly, research included was based on its relevance to children and parents of children with extended school non-attendance. Although there is an extensive body of research regarding clinical treatments for ESNA, it was decided that the literature review would focus on research exploring within school and systemic approaches to resolving ESNA due to the relevance to educational psychology practice. Secondly, the literature review includes research relevant to parental involvement and its effects on school attendance.

The search focused on journal articles that had been published from January 2000, up to January 2017. This was felt necessary due to changes in education policy in recent years and the possible effects these changes could have on parents' and children's attitudes to education. Due to the large quantity of relevant research found, there is an emphasis on research carried out within the United Kingdom to increase the relevance of the research findings for this study, since it was carried out in the U.K.

Research related to ‘children missing education’ (CME) was excluded. CME are children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school (DfE, 2015a). This was because although this population might include children who have individual, internal barriers to attending school (the ESNA population), other children falling into this category remain off school for other reasons such as being part of a traveller community (Ryder, Edwards and Rix, 2017).

1.2 Defining extended school non-attendance

There are a number of children every year who have poor attendance in school. This is categorised as persistent absenteeism, defined in England as less than 85% attendance and defined in Wales as less than 80% attendance. In 2015, in state-funded primary and secondary schools alone, there were 3.4% of children identified as persistent non-attenders in England and 2.7% of children identified as persistence non-attenders in Wales (DfE, 2015c; Welsh Government, 2015b).

Within the subset of young people identified every year as persistent non-attenders there is a smaller number of young people experiencing extended non-attendance, where they do not attend school for a prolonged period of time (Peligrini, 2007). It is not known exactly how many of those persistently absent from school are extended school non-attenders since this population is not recorded in national attendance statistics. In an audit conducted by Archer, Filmer-Sankey and Fletcher-Campbell (2003), 34 LAs distinguished between long-term non-attenders and other categories of non-attenders, whereas 26 LAs did not.

1.3 The evolution of non-attendance terminology

Researchers over the years have tried to define children who find attending school difficult. The terms generated include school phobia (Johnson, Flastein, Szurek & Svendsen, 1941), school refusal (Hersov, 1977), problematic school absenteeism (Kearney, 2008), emotionally-based school refusal, (West Sussex County Council, 2004), truancy (Reid, 1999) and extended school non-attendance (Pelligrini, 2007).

The changes in terminology reflect changes in thinking and understanding regarding the issue. The term school phobia as described by Johnson, Flastein, Szurek and Svendsen in 1941 refers to fear-based absenteeism. However, this term has fallen out of favour because of connotations it has with fearing the school itself, which is rarely the case. The prominent term within the research has been school refusal introduced by Kahn and Nursten in 1962. Kearney (2003) uses ‘school refusal behaviour’ as an umbrella term, which encompasses constructs such as truancy, school refusal, and school phobia. Figure 1 highlights the continuum of school refusal behaviours.

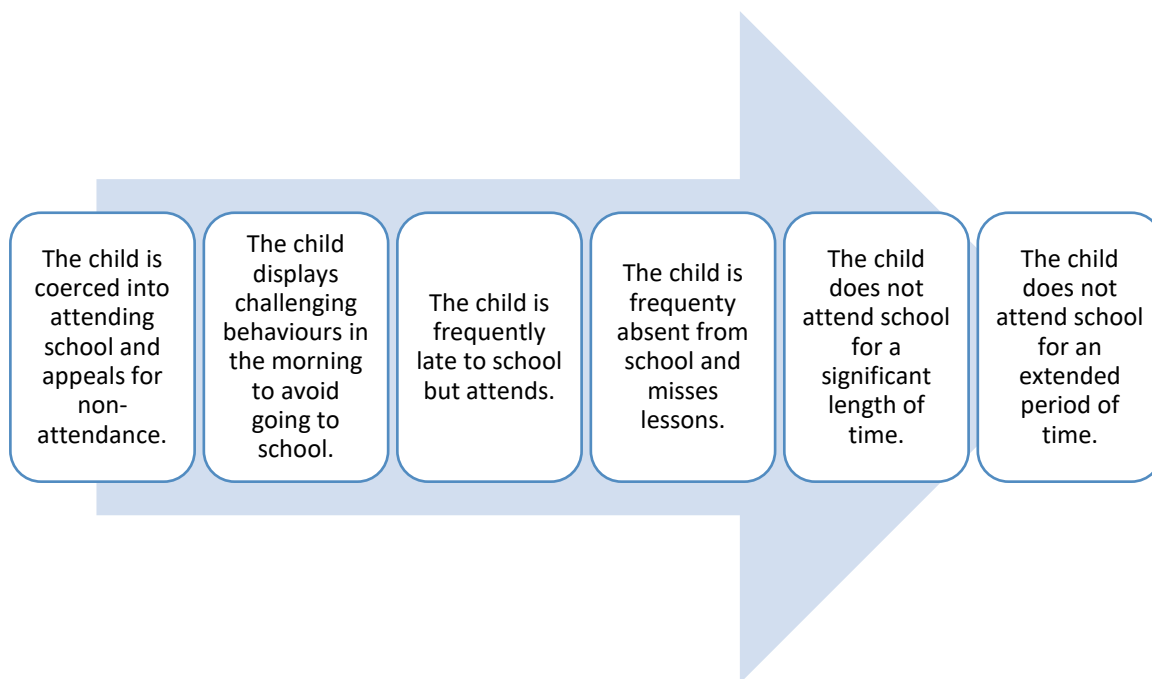


Fig. 1. Continuum of school refusal behaviour in youth adapted from Kearney (2003)

The term, ‘truancy’ has been generally defined as missing school without worthy cause (DfE, 2011a). However, this definition of truancy can cover a range of conventionally understood types of school absenteeism. These include missing specific lesson absence, missing lessons on a specific day, absenteeism without parental knowledge but also parentally condoned truancy. The use of the term truancy has, quite understandably, confused parents and professionals (Taylor, 2012a). This confusion has also detracted from the actual issue, how to encourage the attendance itself. Taylor (2012a) recommended that the U.K. Government should reduce the use of the term, truancy to emphasise practice that increases attendance, thus moving away from blaming young people for their non-attendance.

The term emotionally-based school refusal was created in order to emphasise that prolonged school non-attendance is due to emotional difficulties and therefore requires strategies to promote the child’s wellbeing (West Sussex County Council, 2004). Emotionally-based school refusal is described as resulting from “internalised problems such as fear and anxiety, misery, complaints of feeling ill without obvious cause, reluctance to leave home, or externalised problems including tantrums and oppositional behaviour” (West Sussex County Council, 2004, p. 5). On the other hand, extended non-attendance includes children who do not outwardly show clinically significant characteristics, such as clinical symptoms of anxiety (Pelligrini, 2007). The most extreme end of the Kearney’s (2003) school refusal behaviour continuum describes what Pelligrini (2007) refers to as ESNA (See Figure 1).

Baker and Bishop's (2014) phenomenological study highlighted that children believed the term school refusal suggested that they chose to behave the way they were and felt that they were being blamed. However, research suggests that the exact circumstances that lead to a child not attending school depend on complex, reciprocal interactions between the child and the environment, as specified by ecological systems theories such as Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model (1979). Pelligrini (2007) coined the term 'extended school non-attendance' in order to detract from the 'within child' view of the problem e.g., the child's mental state. This term encompasses all children who have a prolonged period of non-attendance, including the children who do not experience anxiety. The benefit of this is that practitioners might favour a more systemic view, taking into account the range of environmental and social factors affecting the child.

However, there is one issue with Pelligrini's term, ESNA, in that it does not give a minimum amount of time that a child should be off school to meet the criterion of having extended school non-attendance. Not having this criterion means that it is difficult to compare research that uses this term. For the purpose of this study, ESNA includes children who have had less than 70% attendance for at least one term and finds the idea of attending school difficult for a range of systemic reasons.

1.3.1 Problems associated with different terminologies

The issue that arises from having different terms is that research studies are difficult to compare, because of different descriptions associated with each term. Another issue arises when there is no consensus between researchers in the description of terms. Havik, Bru & Ertesvag (2015) give the example of truancy, explaining that some schools include parentally condoned absence, specific lesson absence and post-registration absence under the umbrella of truancy whereas other schools do not. Another example is that, in some research, school refusal includes children with conduct disorders and others do not. There is evidence that the confusion regarding terminology has been passed on to school staff. Archer et al. (2003), found there was no consensus amongst school staff regarding the use of the terms school refusal or school phobic behaviours. Some schools noted that they did not use the term school phobia, some used the terms synonymously, and others distinguished between school refusal and school phobia.

1.4. Summary

There continue to be a variety of terms used for children who find it difficult to attend school. The fact that prolonged non-attendance terms have been around since the 40s suggests that ESNA has been a problem spanning generations.

1.5 Prevalence of ESNA

Clinical researchers in the United States (U.S.) have estimated that a total 1%- 2% of children of school age are school refusers (Nuttall & Woods, 2013). However, there is no comparable data from the U.K, since school refusers are not recorded in absence statistics. The closest data that can be used to gain a picture of the percentage of children with ESNA in the U.K. is from an audit completed for the DfE in 2010 (DfE, 2011a).

The English Government tracked historic absences over three years between 2007 and 2010 (DfE, 2011a). This research produced evidence that patterns of persistent absenteeism become entrenched over time for a significant minority of pupils. Two cohorts of children were included, one between school years 1 to 3 (primary education phase) and the other between school years 9 and 11 (secondary education phase). For the primary education phase the levels of persistent absentees reduced from 3.6% to 1.8%. However, a core 1.1% of this cohort were persistent absentees throughout the three-year period. In contrast, persistent absentee levels in the secondary education phase were found to increase from 2.6% to 5.9%. A core 3.9% of this cohort were persistent absentees across all three years. Although this research did not specifically use the term ESNA, it is likely that the majority of the children who showed persistent absence across several years would be classed as having ESNA.

Between the school year (September to July) 2013/14 and the school year 2014/15 the number of persistent absentees in England and Wales decreased. However, persistent absenteeism decreased in England from 4.5% to 3.4% (in state-funded primary and secondary schools) (DfE, 2015c). Persistent absenteeism decreased in Wales from 3.1% to 2.7% (state-funded primary and secondary schools) (Welsh Government, 2015b). Although a number of these children are likely to have ESNA, it cannot be assumed that a similar, decreasing trend is occurring for ESNA. Unfortunately, there is also no evidence to support whether the number of ESNA's have increased over the years. This is due to data not being collected for this population of children.

1.6 Onset of ESNA

The DfE (2011a) audit suggests that ESNA could affect more adolescents than younger children. Many researchers have supported this finding (Kearney, 2008). However, the data from the population in the U.S. only includes the population of extended non-attenders who have been referred to mental health services. Since more children could be affected, it should not be assumed that more adolescents suffer from extended school non-attendance. It is suggested that the problem of ESNA becomes more complex since adolescent is the stage of development in which young people are striving for independence and identity.

King and Bernstein (2001) offered evidence to the contrary of Kearney (2008). King and Bernstein found that the onset of extended non-attendance can occur at any age, but peaks at the transition to year 1 in five and six-year olds and at the transition to secondary school in 11-13 year olds. Taylor (2012a) suggests that problems with non-attendance are likely to begin in primary school and therefore the effective management of non-attendance in primary school should alleviate problems later on.

1.7 Impact of ESNA

A paper commissioned by the English Government to identify the effect of non-attendance had on various measures of success including attainment, future employment and keeping out of harm. As stated in the thesis introduction it was found that that persistent absentees were less likely to achieve 5 or more A*-C grades at GCSE including English and maths. The statistics indicated a negative correlation between attendance and attainment, with the more time pupils had off the less likely pupils were to achieve GCSEs (DfE, 2011a).

A longitudinal study by the DfE collected data over 6 years from 2004 to 2010. In 2006, 9,000 teenagers between 15 and 16 years old took part in a wave of questionnaires and interviews. Approximately 1,500 of these young people were persistent absentees. The findings from the data collection suggested that persistent absentees are more likely to be bullied, excluded from school and be involved in risky behaviours (experiment with drugs, alcohol etc.) than their peers. Social exclusion was the most common form of bullying, cited by almost a sixth of persistent non-absentees, in comparison to only a tenth of the rest of their peers. However, the results do not establish a cause and effect.

There is a growing evidence base to suggest that ESNA has an impact on mental health. There is no formal diagnosis for any category of extended school non-attendance in the current Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM -5) (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). However, extended school non-attendance has been related to mental disorders including anxiety, depression, conduct disorders and separation anxiety (Kearney, 2008).

Egger, Costello and Angold (2003), used self-report questionnaires to ascertain the differences between the disorders found in anxious school refusers and those found in truants. The researchers found that out of their sample of school refusers, 11% suffered from anxiety disorders and 14% suffered from depression. Truancy was found to be significantly associated with disruptive behaviour disorders and depression. A number of children fitted into both categories, school refusers and truants. These children experienced varying levels of each disorder. It is possible that the disruptive behaviours displayed by truants are as a result of their anxieties regarding school.

The limitation of Egger et al.'s (2003) study is in their definition of anxious school refusal. Egger et al.'s anxious school refusers included children who had only exhibited anxious non-attendance once in a 3-month period. This does not correlate with other the definitions of anxious school refusal, such as Kearney's (2008) 'problematic school refusers' who had 50% non-attendance within a two-week period. This sample therefore involved pupils who exhibited very mild school refusal. This could explain other researchers identifying a much higher rate of internalising disorders (disorders that result from negativity that is directed inwardly) in anxious school refusers (McShane et al., 2001; Prabhswamy, Srinath, Girimaji & Seshadri, 2007).

Externalising disorders have also been highlighted in school refusers, including argumentativeness and aggression towards parents if they are forced to attend school (Berg, 2002). Externalizing and internalizing disorders both result from negative responses to stress. Internalizing behaviours are directed towards the self, whereas externalizing behaviours are directed towards other people or things.

Egger et al. (2003) found that in their population of anxious school refusers, 6% had been given a diagnosis of Oppositional Defiance Disorder (ODD). ODD is a pattern of angry or irritable mood; argumentative or defiant behaviour; and/or vindictiveness lasting at least 6 months. Egger and colleagues also found that 5% of the school refusers had been given a diagnosis of conduct disorder (CD). Conduct disorder is a pattern of behaviour, occurring in a 6-month period, in which the basic rights of others are violated. These violations can include aggression to people and animals, deceitfulness or theft and destruction of property (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Research has indicated that mental health difficulties are likely to be long-lasting in extended school non-attenders. McShane et al. (2001) found that 70–76% of adolescents referred for extended school non-attendance recovered from their mental health difficulties after a three year follow up. These results mirror earlier findings that about one-third of young people treated for school attendance difficulties continue to have serious emotional and behavioural problems later in life (Kearney, 2008). Other researchers have also found that, even after a 10 year period, around one third of young people who experience ESNA continued to meet criteria for a psychiatric disorder (McCune & Hynes, 2005).

Due to the nature of these studies it is not possible to ascertain whether anxiety and depression are a result of extended school non-attendance or a cause. However, school absenteeism remains an important public health issue for mental health professionals, physicians, and educators (Kearney, 2008).

2. Factors Associated with Extended Non-Attendance

2.1. ESNA from a medical model perspective

There has been a wealth of research that has explored the factors associated with ESNA. Most research with the ESNA population has focussed on the cause of the problem being ‘within child’, as evidenced by the number of studies exploring the correlation between mental health issues and ESNA and the use of clinical therapies to ‘cure’ ESNA (Baker and Bishop, 2015). As detailed above, the research has found that children having ESNA are likely to have symptoms in line with clinical depression and anxiety (Kearney, 2008).

However, research that focusses on how schools and other environmental factors can be changed to reduce the child’s difficulties with attending school are cited less in the literature. The problem with having a medical understanding of ESNA means that the obligation is on the child to change to fit in their environment rather than on key adults who should be modifying the environment to suit the needs of the child. Not only does this go against current legislation regarding the rights of children (Welsh Government, 2011) but it also reduces the scope of interventions possible to support the child in the resolution of ESNA.

2.2. ESNA from a social model perspective

On the other hand, there has also been research identifying the external factors that could be affecting ESNA. The social model of ESNA identifies systemic barriers and negative attitudes that have been related to ESNA. For example, ESNA has been found to be related to the child being within a chaotic family environment and more often occurs in children from one parent families (King and Bernstein, 2001). Research also suggests that parental perceptions of and experiences of education are linked to school attendance (Dalziel & Henthorne, 2005).

It has been suggested that children are more likely to have ESNA under certain environmental conditions (King and Bernstein, 2001). Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory (1979) views the child as living within a complex system of interactions between environments. The theory suggests that the child affects, and is affected by, the various systems which encompass her/him. Bronfenbrenner (1989) argues that to understand a person’s development, proximal and social systems must be explored. To develop a systemic understanding of the problem, Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) will be used to collate the evidence regarding distinct factors within the child’s environment which could affect ESNA. The evidence that there are systemic factors that affect attendance provides support for an ecological approach to promoting students’ school success.

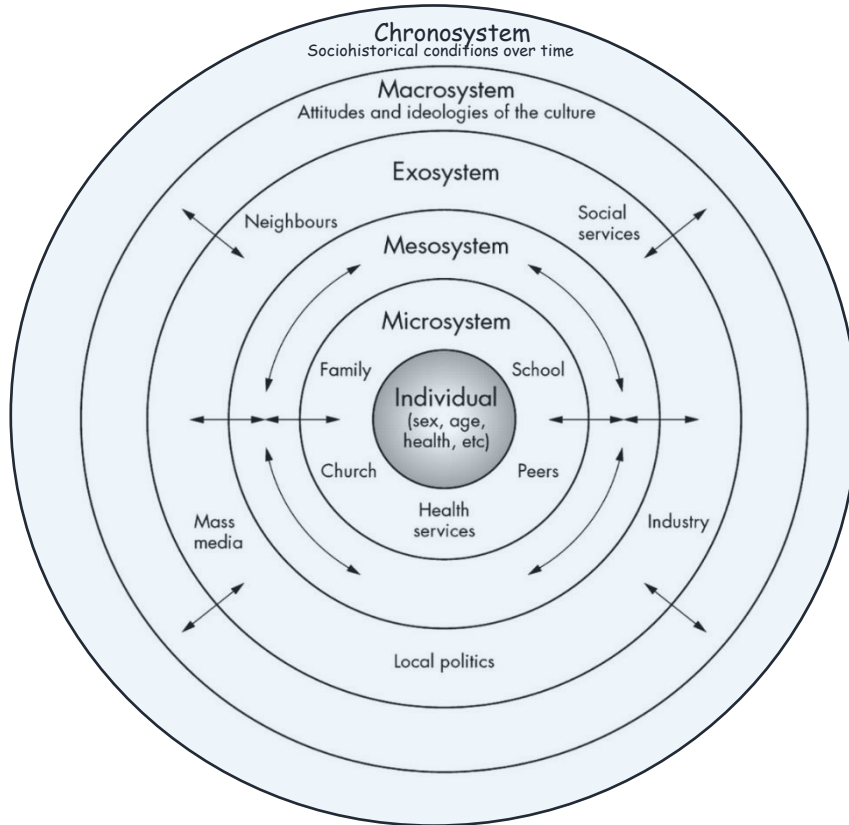


Fig. 2. Bronfenbrenner's five ecological systems adapted from Bronfenbrenner (1979).

The five systems in Bronfenbrenner's model include the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem. The mesosystem includes inter-relationships, for example, between the parent and school. These relationships have a distal relationship with the individual at the centre. The exosystem includes the links between a social setting in which the individual does not have an active role and the child's immediate context. The macrosystem includes the attitudes and ideologies of the culture in which the child resides, which has an impact on the exosystem. Finally, the chronosystem includes historical events that have led to changes in society, which affects each of the other four systems. An exploration of causes and maintaining factors associated with ESNA are included below in relation to Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems. This exploration highlights some of the systems that impact the child and emphasise the role that parent can play regarding ESNA.

2.2 Factors affecting attendance within the microsystem.

Kearney (2008) identified the factors directly resulting in a child's non-attendance were the parents' or child's motivation to attend. Kearney and Silverman, (1990) hypothesised that non-attendance is maintained by four functions:

1. to avoid negative stimuli, present in school, that lead to negative feelings (i.e., dread, anxiety, and depression);

2. to avoid aversive social and/or evaluative situations (e.g. tests, presentations, concerts, conversations with peers or physical education);
3. to gain attention from significant others; and/or
4. to gain tangible reinforcement outside of school (e.g. sleeping late, visiting friends or drug use).

Pellegrini (2007) argued that these four functions do not fully account for the social context, including histories and discourses linking the child and significant others. The following commentary aims to highlight the range of systemic factors that impact upon ESNA.

2.2.1 Family Context

A chaotic home environment was also viewed as a contributing factor to non-attendance (Dalziel & Henthorne, 2005). In a number of families, there had been domestic violence, child abuse or the break-up of parental relationships. Parents commented that the effects of these kinds of events can change the parent-child relationship, to the extent that children may be pressured to mature more quickly and to deal with adult issues before they are ready. Parents whose domestic situations were chaotic were aware of the effects on their children, and drew attention to the fact that such pressures could lead to other problems including attention-seeking and violent behaviour. This in turn could lead to a refusal to go to school or non-attendance, which the parent did not necessarily know about.

2.2.2 Parents' attitudes to education

Archer et al. (2003) found that, on interviewing education welfare officers and teachers, it was commonly thought that the lack of value parents placed on education contributed to extended non-attendance. However, in a study conducted by Dalziel and Henthorne (2005), which sought parents' and carers' views on attendance. It was noted that parents and carers of both children with poor attendance and good attendance shared the value that a good education is important. They also had similar views regarding what were acceptable and unacceptable reasons for keeping a child off school.

Past episodes of parent-school official conflict, extensive teacher absenteeism, low teacher expectations and poor interactions between parents and school officials also reportedly cause many parents to be less involved in their children's academic progress and attendance (Brand & O'Connor, 2004; Teasley, 2004). Students who drop out of school are also more likely than graduating peers to have parents and siblings who dropped out of school (Orfield, 2004).

2.2.3 Parental self-efficacy

Dalziel and Henthorne (2005) suggest that in some cases, parents may be involved in the cause of their child's non-attendance without realising, or may feel that there are factors beyond their control

that prevent regular attendance. One mother mentioned that she found it difficult to mix with other people and was concerned that her child's non-attendance was due to his having a similar character

Dalziel and Henthorne (2005) found that practitioners often considered that parents and carers of poor attenders felt helpless and did not see how they could change their child's poor attendance.

Individuals with high levels of perceived self-efficacy tend to persist with challenges until success is achieved, thereby confirming their beliefs of high efficacy; those with low perceived self-efficacy however tend to give up prematurely, in turn confirming their perceptions of low efficacy (Teti & Gelfand, 1991).

A clinical study by Carless, Melvin, Tongue, Newman (2015) aimed to explore the correlation between parenting self-efficacy and school refusal. Gibaud-Wallston and Wandersman's (1978) Parenting Sense of Competence Scale was used to measure parenting self-efficacy. Parenting self-efficacy was found to be a predictor of school-refusal. Anxiety within the parent and child were not found to affect these results. However, when the variables of parent age, parent depression, child depression and family dysfunction was controlled for, self-efficacy alone did not predict ESNA. This was suggested to be because of a complex relationship between parental self-efficacy and dysfunctional family behaviours within the ESNA population. Family dysfunction includes difficulties in family problem solving, communication, role definition, emotional responsiveness, emotional involvement, and behaviour control.

2.3 Factors affecting attendance within the mesosystem.

Kearney (2008) suggests that parental mistrust of professionals associated with school, which could have developed from parents' personal experiences of school. He also suggested that conflicts with school staff reduce parents' motivation for their children to attend school.

In a review by Guare and Cooper (2003) investigating truancing, it was found that school officials failed to inform parents of a child's unexcused absence in 57.9% of cases. Over half (51.0%) of students who cut class reported having never been caught for doing so, and 26.5% had been caught only once. In addition, 74.4% of students caught for skipping school were not punished by the school for doing so (Guare & Cooper, 2003). The lack of accountability on the school's part is likely to have had a negative impact on children's subsequent attendance. In addition to this, parents would have been unlikely to trust staff.

Nuttall and Woods (2013) explored individual cases of intervention for school refusal behaviour, by gaining perceptions of parents, children and young people, practitioners and school staff. One example explored a professional's view of a mother who was not engaging with professionals to get help for her daughter's ESNA. It was felt that this was due to the mother having a negative view of

education. However, the professional had mentioned that a change in attendance officer led to the mother adopting a more positive view of education and increased her willingness to engage with services. Whether a coincidence or not, the result was an increase in her daughter's attendance. The research suggests that the relationship parents form with professionals is an important factor during ESNA.

2.4 Factors affecting attendance within the exosystem.

Gorard, See and Davies (2012) argue that ESNA can affect children from any socioeconomic background. However, some factors, such as poverty, can increase the likelihood of poor attendance (Dalziel & Henthorne, 2005). Zhang (2003) measured the correlation between poverty and absenteeism. It was found that school absenteeism is strongly associated with child poverty, with pupils at primary school being much more likely to be affected by an area's economics and employment deprivation than their counterparts at secondary schools. School absentees normally start the habit of non-attendance when they are at primary school, with child poverty as a main associated factor. It is suggested that poverty leads to parents developing less favourable attitudes towards education, for example, parents faced with the prospect of becoming homeless are more likely to prioritize this matter over their child's education and attendance.

Another factor within the exosystem that has been suggested to affect school attendance is the quality of the pre-school provision the child attends (DfE, 2014). A longitudinal study commissioned by the Department of Education found that children who had attended a high-quality pre-school had more positive perceptions regarding their primary school and the extent to which they reported to enjoy school. It is suggested that children who enjoy school are less likely to be absent.

Another contributing factor is the neighbourhood that the child grows up in. An American study by Bowen and Bowen (1999) found that both neighbourhood and school danger contributed significantly to school attendance in adolescents. Neighbourhoods can also affect the aspirations of children, it is suggested that this could be due to variations in exposure to positive role models and/or the exposure to social norms of the community. Connolly and Healy (2004) found that on interviewing girls aged between 7 and 8 years old from working class neighbourhoods tended to focus more on relationships, motherhood and marriage rather than towards education and their future career aspirations. However, caution needs to be taken when generalising these results since the population of children who participated in this study were from particularly deprived areas of Belfast where there had been a history of violence between Protestant and Catholic communities.

2.5 Factors affecting attendance within the macrosystem.

Taylor's (2012a) report 'Improving Attendance at School' commented on the use of parental sanctions, initially introduced in 2004. At this time, local authorities were given extra powers to encourage parents to send their children to school (DfES, 2004). Whilst it remains largely a school's responsibility to maintain good attendance levels, schools are obligated to inform the local authority if a pupil's attendance falls below 85%. In England and Wales it is the role of the Education Welfare Service (EWS) to follow up poor attendance with the child's parents or carers. Education welfare officers can help support parents and carers by offering advice to parents, signposting parents to support services and liaising between parents and schools to improve attendance. In addition, education welfare officers (EWOs) issue Parenting Orders, Education Supervision Orders, School Attendance Orders and/or fixed penalty notices (FPNs) to further highlight the importance of education. However, if a parent is deemed to not be cooperating with education welfare officers, the council can prosecute parents, which can include a fine of up to £2,500, a community order or a jail sentence up to 3 months (DfE, 2016). It is likely that parents of extended non-attenders fear litigation and stigmatization for not being able to get their children into school. This fear could result in parents not being willing to engage with support services (Gregory & Purcell, 2014)

Research by Dalziel and Henthorne (2005) found that most parents did not agree that legal sanctions were appropriate in their case. One parent considered the social stigma attached to appearing in court to be far worse than simply paying a fine.

2.6 Factors affecting attendance within the chronosystem.

Historically the majority of research regarding ESNA has been provided by participants from the United States, United Kingdom, Canada and Australia. However, in the past couple of decades, there has been a surge in interest in the topic of ESNA from other countries including South Africa, Japan, Saudi Arabia, and India (Al-Dawood, 2002, Ananthakrishnan and Nalini, 2002; Liang, Flisher, & Chalton, 2002; and Prabhuswamy et al., 2007). It is suggested that extended non-attendance is an issue that is universal, since it is observed in countries that have different histories, cultures and education systems.

Research in the late 20th century has suggested that parent ambivalence towards their children's attendance in school was to blame for extended non-attendance. Berg, Butler, Hullin, Smith & Tyrer (1978) argued that 'socially deviant' parents existed who do not take their responsibilities to ensure their children receive an education seriously. Although much of this research is recognised as being outdated, Archer et al.'s (2003) research suggests that to some extent these negative perceptions of parents on the part of some education professionals still exist. It is the opinion of the researcher that these negative perceptions are likely to have a detrimental effect on home-school relationships.

This research above highlights how complex the problem of extended school non-attendance is and the heterogeneity involved in ESNA.

3. Intervention for ESNA

3.1 Therapeutic intervention for extended school non-attenders

The majority of the research in the area of intervening in ESNA has been confined to clinical studies (e.g. Egger, Costello & Angold, 2003; Carless, Melvin, Tongue & Newman, 2015; Heyne, King, & Tonge, 2004). Therapeutic interventions have focussed on the most effective treatment to minimise the internalising disorders of depression and anxiety amongst extended school non-attenders. Most research has focussed on the effect of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) (Baker and Bishop, 2015)

There is an urgency when implementing effective strategies for school refusers, since the more school a child misses the less likely he or she is to be able to reintegrate and the more impact it is likely to have on his or her attainment, social and emotional wellbeing (DfE, 2011a). However, children are more likely to be referred for clinical services once the behaviours associated with non-attendance have become established (DfE, 2011a). There is dispute between researchers as to how effective CBT is in ameliorating the factors that might be maintaining school non-attendance (Kearney, 2008). The evidence so far suggests that purely focussing on implementing CBT to reduce anxiety and/or depression in school refusers it does not automatically lead to a resolution in non-attendance (Kearney, 2008).

It is argued that adapting school environments to meet the needs of children with ESNA is suited to the role of the educational psychologist (Carroll, 2015). One approach to EP practice is consultation, this approach involves working together with the adults who know the child best. In consultation meetings, EPs facilitate the discussion with all key adults to explore the issues around the target child and search for solutions to support their education and well-being. In consultation, the EP takes the role as a facilitator, rather than the expert. EPs view the key adults as the experts in the child and that everyone involved has unique contribution to make (Wagner, 2008)

3.2 School-Based Intervention for Extended School Non-Attenders

Stroobant and Jones (2006) argue that, “school refusal behaviour is not fixed but is multi-dimensional, and changes over time in response to internal and external variables such as maturity, school pressures and adult and peer behaviour” (p. 211). This explains why identification, assessment and intervention can be such complex processes. King and Bernstein (2001) recommended that the assessment process should involve an in-depth understanding of the factors leading to the extended non-attendance

behaviour being maintained. It is suggested that this is best achieved by triangulating important information from the child, parents and school staff.

Baker and Bishop (2015) highlighted that due to the impact that not attending school has on a child, many studies have advocated that school attendance should be resumed earlier rather than later. This is because of the opportunities that school provides, including the development and mastery of adaptive problem-solving skills necessary in adulthood to effectively communicate with others. Statistics from the DfE (2011a) suggest that the more school missed, the less likely children are to obtain GCSEs. Increased rates of bullying, in the form of social isolation, was also found to be higher in persistent non-attenders. It is possible that this is because the children are not in school to form supportive relationships. Another explanation could be that there becomes a difficulty in maintaining relationships when off school for a prolonged period of time.

Due to the lack of consensus across LAs regarding how to best meet the needs of children with ESNA, Baker and Bishop (2015) suggested a need for a systematic review of evidence surrounding current intervention practice and more detailed analysis of individual occurrences to build up a picture of practice-based evidence.

3.3 Out of school provision for extended school non-attenders

In addition to phasing the return to school and reducing pupils' timetables, extended school non-attenders are also educated in out-of-school provision or alternative provision. Alternative provision (AP) is defined as an organisation where pupils engage in timetabled, educational activities away from school and school staff (The Office for Standards in Education, Ofsted, 2011). The AP offered by local authorities (LA) in response to ESNA varies from county to county (Archer et al., 2003). Archer et al. (2003) found that most of the LAs involved in their audit offered a home tuition service, however, these LAs did not state the number of hours of support available. Three quarters of the LAs offered alternative curricular provision for these pupils and over half offered provision at a pupil referral unit (PRU). Some LAs referred to other specific provision, for example, hospital schools, and some noted that the individual schools were expected to provide appropriate support, for example, through learning support units (LSUs) or inclusion units. In Gregory and Purcell's (2014) study two children were receiving input from the Home Tuition Service and three children were home educated.

Local authorities must comply with regulations that a child, who is educated outside a mainstream school, should receive teaching each week equivalent to a full school week. Ofsted inspect and regulate services that care for and educate children and young people. A review by Ofsted (2004) reported that there was a problem with the amount of time to find appropriate out of school provision for young people. It was taking some LAs up to seventy-five days to find alternative provision. In a

review of APs, Taylor (2012b) described that the quality of support offered by APs was too variable. A key factor stated as important when organising provision was to ensure communication is frequent between school in which the child with ESNA is registered and the AP to ensure the needs of the child are met (Taylor, 2012b).

An AP audit (DfE, 2011a) reported that there were 14,050 pupils in PRUs and 23,020 in other AP settings on full or part-time placements. The Alternative Provision Directory (DfE, 2017) has information on 493 organisations providing alternative education. Out of these organisations 57 claim to cater specifically for children with ESNA. The organisations included in the directory only include those that have been registered and it is expected that thousands more are unregistered (DfE, 2017).

The data and research outlined above suggests that there are a range of strategies used by schools with the aim of supporting children with ESNA. However, the way in which these strategies are implemented varies in quality across schools and it is suggested that children are being sent to alternative provisions because it is not known what else to try. If a social model of ESNA is to be realised, the researcher believes that more research should be done to explore how systems around the child could be changed. The research above suggests that the focus of intervention has been on changing the relationship between children with ESNA and school, i.e. a change in the microsystem. However, it is believed that both a change in the relationship between parents and their children and in the relationship between parents and school staff (mesosystem) could also help resolve ESNA.

4. Parental Engagement and Involvement

4.1 Defining Parental Engagement and Involvement

The following section reviews research including both the effects of parental involvement and engagement on children's education in general and in cases where there is ESNA. Defining parental involvement and parental engagement is not as easy as it first may seem. Firstly, involvement and engagement have often been used synonymously, which has made comparison between research studies difficult. It has been argued that there is an important distinction to be made:

“A school striving for family involvement often leads with its mouth—identifying projects, needs, and goals and then telling parents how they can contribute. A school striving for parent engagement, on the other hand, tends to lead with its ears—listening to what parents think, dream, and worry about. The goal of family engagement is not to serve clients but to gain partners.” (Ferlazzo, 2011, p.10)

As evidenced in Dalziel and Henthorne's (2005) study, educational professionals often complain that parents are uninvolved in their child's education and school attendance. However, several researchers have suggested that this perceived non-engagement is due to parental mistrust of educational

professionals (Franklin & Soto, 2002; Gregory & Purcell, 2014). This is evidenced in Nuttall and Woods' (2013) study, in which professionals suggested that the mother of a children with extended non-attendance only engaged with services because of the threat of prosecution. However, the mother became engaged when the key adult who was supporting her changed.

4.2 Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's Model of Parental Involvement in Education

In an attempt to conceptualise the decision-making processes used by parents to decide how and when to become involved in their children's education, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005) developed the Model of Parental Involvement in Education (see fig. 3). The Model considers a dynamic interaction between a parent's motivations for involvement and his or her child's achievement. The model shows that parental involvement in education involves multiple levels of constructs operating between parents' initial choice to become involved at level one and the positive impact that involvement has on student outcomes at level five.

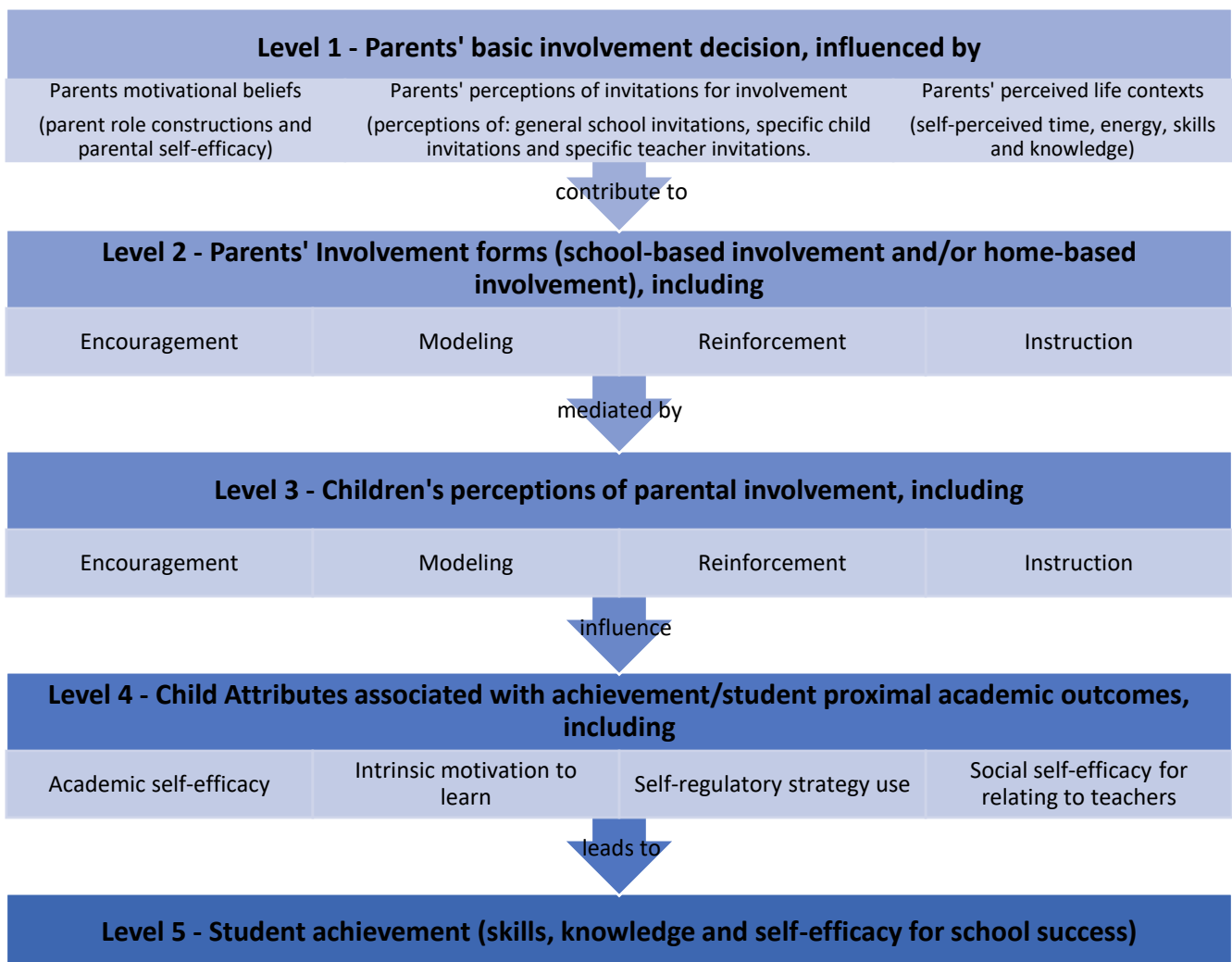


Fig. 3. Hoover- Dempsey and Sandler's (2005) model of parental involvement in education.

Level one includes the factors that affect parents' motivation to perform activities that support their children's education. These factors are categorised into 3 groups: parents' motivational beliefs; parents' perceptions of invitations for involvement from others; and parents' perceived life contexts. Parents' motivational beliefs were defined by how parents conceive their role in their children's education (parental role construction) and the degree to which they can perform their role effectively (parental self-efficacy). Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) argue that, without addressing role construction and parents' feelings of self-efficacy, any attempts at increasing parental involvement will have minimal effect. Another factor affecting parental decision making is the parents' perceptions of invitations for involvement. These invitations include general and specific invitations from the school and specific invitations from the child. Finally, parental involvement is also affected by whether parents believe that they have the resources to become involved in their child's education (parent's perceived life context). These resources could include time, energy, skills and knowledge. For example, assuming the model is correct; a mother who has limited knowledge of maths is less likely to help her child with their maths homework.

In level two of the model, the forms of parental involvement are defined as school-based behaviours and home-based behaviours. School-based involvement includes activities such as becoming a school governor, helping out on school trips, attending parents' evenings, and volunteering on sports day and at school fairs. Home-based involvement relates to children's learning in school, such activities include parents discussing with their children about what they have done in school, providing enrichment activities and helping with homework. Parental involvement in these activities can take the form of encouragement, modelling, reinforcement and/or instruction.

Level three of the model highlights the importance of how the form of parental involvement has been received by the child. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler suggest that it is not merely whether a parent engages in educational activities, it is how these activities are perceived by the recipient, that increases positive outcomes. Therefore, the parent, to be most effective, needs to choose the most appropriate form of involvement: encouragement, modelling, reinforcement and/or instruction.

Level four of the model describes the impact of their parent's involvement on their children's positive self-perceptions of education. These attributes include: academic self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation to learn, self-regulatory strategy use and social self-efficacy for relating to teachers. An increase in these positive self-perceptions leads to improved student achievement (Level five), which Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler defined as skills, knowledge and self-efficacy for school success.

4.2.1 Strengths and limitations of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model.

The advantage of the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (2005) Model of Parent Involvement is that it takes into account the interactions between the thoughts and actions of parents and of the environment around them. Although it does not provide a comprehensive list of all the possible motivational variables that may contribute to parental involvement, it provides a framework that can be used to explore different factors involved in parental motivation.

However, the relatively few empirical tests in support of the model have mostly been co-authored by Hoover-Dempsey, who created the model (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1992; Reed, Jones, Walker & Hoover-Dempsey, 2000; Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2007), which could have led to more positively framed research outcomes. Anderson and Minke (2007), however also found support for the model in that invitations from school staff positively influenced their involvement. This suggests that relationships with staff was a key factor for parental involvement. However, Anderson and Minke (2007) also found that parents' resources, such as time, transportation, and child care, did not influence their involvement decisions. Anderson and Minke (2007) suggested that this discrepancy could be because of the difference in parent samples used by Hoover-Dempsey. The parents involved in Anderson and Minke's study perceived that their resources were moderately adequate and therefore felt that their resources were not a significant barrier. If parents had perceived their resources to be low, their involvement might have been affected.

Although the model provides a good overview of the possible factors involved in parents' motivation for involvement with their children's education, there are likely to be a multitude of other factors that affect parents' motivation that one model would be unable to incorporate. The discrepancy between studies highlights a lack of consensus in these factors.

4.3 Evidence of the importance of promoting parental involvement in children's attendance at school

Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) suggest that good parenting at home has a significant positive effect on children's achievement and adjustment. Good home parenting has such a strong impact that it continues to be a significant predictor of achievement even after all other factors shaping attainment have been controlled for. The research shows that this positive affect arises from high parental values and educational aspirations continuously exhibited through parental enthusiasm for, and their own experiences of, education.

There has been little empirical evidence that supports a positive correlation between parental engagement and children's school attendance. Archer et al. (2003) highlighted several strategies that were considered to be effective by school staff for increasing attendance, which included liaising with

parents. A case study conducted by Ofsted, involving 29 schools, found that the most effective schools at re-engaging disaffected students were those that promoted the engagement of parents and carers in supporting young people (Harris & Goodall, 2008).

The effect of school staff on parental involvement was supported by Anderson and Minke (2007). The authors conducted a survey to test the reliability of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (2005) model of parental involvement in education. Anderson and Minke (2007), found that specific invitations from teachers had the largest effect on parents' involvement at home, at school events and ongoing involvement at school (e.g., helping with homework, helping at school, attending an Open House, Parent-Teacher Association meeting, fundraising event).

Sheldon (2007) used data to compare student attendance in secondary schools that developed school-wide programs of school, family, and community partnerships with the attendance of students in schools that did not develop the programs. The findings suggested that in schools working to implement school, family, and community partnerships, student attendance improved an average of .5%, whereas in comparison schools, rates of student attendance declined slightly from one year to the next. Further analysis suggested that school outreach to families was the key factor involved in improving attendance.

5. Promoting Parental Engagement in Schools

In light of research highlighting the importance of parental involvement in education, a review was commissioned by the English Government's Department for Education (DfE) aimed at identifying effective interventions to support parents and carers involvement in their children's education (Goodall & Vorhaus, 2011). The report presents a model of good practice for schools, in promoting parental engagement within an educational setting.

The model suggests four key elements: planning, leadership, collaboration and sustained improvement. The authors assert that planning needs to be carried out at a school level which focuses on strategies that are pertinent to the area in which the school is located and the needs of the parents. Regarding leadership, Goodall and Vorhaus (2011) emphasised the need for a senior teacher who is dedicated to develop positive relationships with families, who liaise with relevant professionals and who is a good role model, to improve outcomes. It is stressed that any engagement with parents needs to be collaborative, allowing parents to feel involved in decision making processes and to become empowered to make changes.

Harris and Goodall (2008) argued that some schools place a disproportionate amount of effort to get what they deem as 'hard to reach' parents simply to interact with the school. Harris and Goodall

(2008) argue that schools should focus on maintaining the engagement of parents rather than chase parents who are completely unwilling to. A reason why the parents might be perceived as hard to reach could be that there is a discrepancy between what parents and teachers believe are activities that constitute ‘parental engagement’. Conteh and Kawashima (2008) found that schools often did not recognise efforts made by parents to engage with their children’s learning. It is argued that more evidence is needed on how parents engage with their children during ESNA, to inform interventions that are appropriate to the needs, behaviours and values of families. To maintain parental engagement, Harris and Goodall (2008) explain that parents need to be seen as a fundamental part of the learning process and they need to know they matter.

Many studies have measured how much of an impact these parental engagement programmes have had on educational outcomes (Jeynes, 2012). Cox (2005) evaluated eighteen empirical studies of home-school collaboration interventions. It was found that home-school collaboration interventions are effective in helping achieve desired school outcomes for children, including academic achievement and positive behaviours. It was suggested that the most effective interventions were those that utilized a two-way exchange of information. However, other studies have found that school based parental engagement programmes have a smaller effect size on academic achievement than voluntary acts of parental involvement (Jeynes, 2012). Although these studies offer evidence regarding the impact of parental programmes on children’s attainment and behaviours, they do not offer evidence directly relating to the impact on children’s attendance.

5.1 Current research involving parental Involvement and parental views during ESNA

There is a significant gap in the literature concerning parental views of their involvement and engagement during ESNA. Since research has suggested that views of what constitutes engagement often differ between school staff and parents (Conteh & Kawashima, 2008). It is argued that exploring parents’ views to develop effective interventions is important. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) propose that:

“Even well designed school programs inviting involvement will meet with only limited success if they do not address issues of parental role construction and parental sense of efficacy for helping children succeed in school” (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997, p.3)

5.1.1 Professionals views of parental involvement

Dalziel and Henthorne’s (2005) research gathered parents’, carers’ and practitioners’ views regarding attendance using semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. A key issue reported by practitioners was how many families did not mention the difficulties their children were having with attendance when they first arose, which led to a delay in providing support. However, contradicting this

perception, parents and carers felt that earlier intervention and personal contact from education welfare officers would have prevented the problem from reaching the stage where legal action needed to be taken. Specifically, parents and carers mentioned how useful the EWOs were in helping them communicate with the school, particularly when they lacked the self-confidence to contact the school themselves. Analysis of interviews led to the researchers grouping parents and carers into four categories: those who are trying hard, those who are powerless, those who are overprotective or dependent and those who are apathetic or non-engaging.

Parents classed as trying hard were defined as collaborating with support services, school staff and EWOs alike. They constructed their children's non-attendance as due to illness, educational need and behaviour problems. Parents classed as 'powerless' were defined as those who felt that they were unable to make a difference to their children's attendance. Parents classed as overprotective or dependent were described as feeling that they needed to keep their children at home due to wanting to keep them safe from illness and bullying. These parents were upset when told that their children needed to be in school and actively sought alternative provision for them. Parents classed as 'non-engaging and apathetic' were described as not responding to support. The researchers make some generalisations about the parents and carers in this group by adding that these parents were more likely to have been poor attenders themselves, had left school without qualifications, were least likely to value education, were less responsive to their child and were more likely to worry about fines.

A criticism of this categorisation of parents is that there was overlap between categories and no parent fitted perfectly into one category. This overgeneralisation might lead to schools reducing the efforts made by staff to support the engagement of the parents or carers that they perceived as non-engaged or apathetic.

There were also contradictions within the study, since there was no significant difference found between the views of parents of poor attenders and those of regular attenders. All parents viewed education as invaluable and stressed that children would learn more if they attended school regularly. Most parents also had the same views about when it is acceptable to keep their child away from school, for example, in response to bullying and illness, in that in most situations it would depend on how severe each was to whether it was acceptable to keep the child at home or not.

5.1.2 Parental views of the supports and barriers during ESNA

Toplis (2004) used semi-structured interviews to gain parental views on what they felt were effective interventions to combat non-attendance. Parents mentioned several factors that supported their engagement in the change process. All parents interviewed in Toplis' (2004) study mentioned that they felt their children's time in a specialist unit to be helpful. Parents also felt that an adult who the

child could trust and develop a longstanding relationship with, was particularly important. They also felt it was important for there to be good communication between agencies, and between agencies and school. They felt that their child had benefited from education in smaller groups of children, and in some cases part-time rather than full-time education. Toplis suggested that these factors increased parents' confidence in their personal management, and school's management, of the attendance difficulties.

On the other hand, Toplis (2004) many parents highlighted the problem of finding someone in school that they felt listened to them or their child, and acted on their concerns. The long wait for support from outside agencies and a lack of information for parents were also discussed as causal factors. Parents also perceived there to be a lack of clarity about the role of different professionals. Although school staff have reported that liaising with parents is considered an effective strategy, this research suggests that there is still much to learn about communicating effectively with parents of extended school non-attenders.

One limitation of this study was that participants were selected from parents that were known by the educational psychology service. It is questioned whether this sample is representative of the population of parents of children with ESNA as a whole.

However, in support of Toplis' study, Gregory and Purcell (2014) found that families described negative experiences regarding their involvement with professionals, including being blamed for their child's non-attendance, being threatened with court action, being patronised by professionals and not being believed when they said they could not get their children to school. These parents were recruited from the total number of parents of children experiencing ESNA within an LA. Due to this, the results from this study were more representative of the parent population.

5.2. Summary

Sections 2,3,4 and 5 highlight the complexity and heterogeneity of ESNA. The previous research has provided a medical model of ESNA, which focussed on affecting a change within the child. It is argued that furthering the evidence-base for a social model of ESNA increases the understanding of factors that can be changed to support the resolution of ESNA. To date, there has not been any specific research, focussing on the systemic factors of: the relationship between the child and parent; and between the parent and school.

Specific parental factors and home circumstances have been indicated to increase the likelihood that a child will have ESNA. Therefore, strategies to support parents during ESNA might subsequently have a positive impact on the parents' capacity to support their children's wellbeing. It is hoped that by gathering parent's views of their involvement during ESNA, education professionals understanding of

how parents manage ESNA, why parents make certain decisions and what professional support parents value will increase. It is argued that parents' voices have previously been overlooked in this area.

6. The Current Study

6.1 Identifying a gap in the literature

The literature has highlighted the impact that poor school attendance has on academic achievement, emotional well-being and future prospects. The literature has also highlighted the impact that parents can have on their children's attendance. There have been few studies that explore parents' views of their children's ESNA. To date, no research has been found that directly explores parents' views of their involvement during ESNA.

6.2 Focus of the Current Study

The current study aims to explore parents' views of their involvement during their children's ESNA. It is anticipated that the information gathered will provide insight into how parents perceive the interactions they have with their children, school staff and other professionals during ESNA. It is possible that these insights could provide an indication of the supports and barriers to parental involvement. It is hoped that the research will enable educational psychologists to develop approaches to best support parents' involvement during ESNA, which might reduce instances of ESNA or increase extended school non-attenders' attendance.

6.3 Relevance to educational psychology practice

Educational psychologists (EPs) are best placed to develop approaches to best support parents' involvement during ESNA, due to the work they undertake with extended school non-attenders (Farrell et al., 2006; Pellegrini, 2007). EPs' general approach is to consider the child and the relevant environments in which the child functions to highlight ways in which these environments can be altered to best support the child. To do this, EPs routinely work jointly with children, parents, school staff and outside agencies (Farrell et al., 2006). EPs also have a role in facilitating change at an individual, group and organisational level (Gameson, Rhydderch, Ellis, & Carroll, 2003). The research findings highlight strategies that could be implemented at each of these levels to foster parental involvement during their children's ESNA, with the aim of increasing extended school non-attenders' attendance.

6.4 Research questions

The following research questions aim to explore the views of parents' involvement during their children's ESNA.

1. How are parents involved in resolving their child's ESNA?
2. What intrapersonal and interpersonal factors influence parental involvement during their child's ESNA?
3. How does parental involvement change during a child's ESNA?
4. How can parental involvement be supported during a child's ESNA?

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Parents' Views of their Involvement During Extended School Non-Attendance

PART B – THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

1. Abstract

The current educational legislation has highlighted the importance of good attendance (DfE, 2012). However, ensuring good attendance is not always simple and the causal and maintaining factors involved in extended school non-attendance (ESNA) are multiple and complex (Stroobant and Jones, 2006). Many studies have focused on the ‘within child’ causes of ESNA (e.g. Egger, Costello & Angold, 2003; Carless, Melvin, Tongue & Newman, 2015; Heyne, King, & Tonge, 2004), although there are many other factors in the child’s environment that impact ESNA (King & Bernstein, 2001). Previous research has suggested that parents can be a supportive or obstructive influence on school attendance (Kearney, 2008).

An elevated level of parental involvement and engagement in a child’s education has been suggested to increase attendance (Cox, 2005). However, there is scant research that specifically explores involvement and engagement of parents during their children’s ESNA. Few papers discuss how parents can be involved in supporting their children’s attendance and even fewer include how parents can be supportive during ESNA (Gregory and Purcell, 2014). It is argued that educational psychologists (EPs) are well placed to facilitate the development of school processes and systems to support parental involvement during ESNA (Carroll, 2015).

A qualitative approach was used to collect information regarding parents’ views of their involvement during their children’s extended non-attendance. Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight parents. The responses were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis. The results were interpreted and reflected upon in light of the previous literature. The major themes constructed included ‘Response to Child’s ESNA’, ‘Disclosure of issues to school staff’, ‘Collaboration with school staff’ and ‘Additional support sought’. The outcomes of the present study for the role of educational psychologists are discussed, together with future directions for research and the outcomes of the present study.

2. Introduction

2.1 Definition of ESNA

Many terms have been used for children who find going to school difficult. These terms include school phobia (Johnson, Flastein, Szurek & Svendsen, 1941), school refusal (Kearney, 2008), chronic non-attendance (Lauchlan, 2003), emotionally-based school refusal (Toplis, 2004) and extended non-attendance (Pelligrini, 2007). The issue that arises from having different terms is that research is difficult to compare because of different descriptions associated with each term.

Pelligrini (2007) argued that using the term ‘extended school non-attendance’ was more a more suitable term to define non-attendance. He explained that this was because it does not focus on a ‘within child’ view of the problem e.g., the child’s mental state. It encompasses all children who have a prolonged period of non-attendance, including the children who do not experience anxiety. The benefit of this is that practitioners might favour a more systemic view, taking into account the range of environmental and social factors affecting the child.

2.2 The problem of extended school non-attendance

In recent years, there has been an increased interest in attendance figures from the Welsh and English Governments. Both Welsh and English Governments emphasise that school attendance is the key to raising academic achievement and potentially has long-lasting impact on individuals (Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS), 2009; DfE, 2011a). A discussion document brought out by the English Government entitled ‘Improving Attendance in Schools’ mentions that evidence shows that persistent non-attenders are more likely not to be in education, employment or training (NEET) when they leave school (Department for Education, DfE, 2011a).

Within this subset of young people identified as persistent non-attenders will be a smaller percentage of young people experiencing ESNA (Pelligrini, 2007). It is not known exactly how many of those persistently absent from school are extended school non-attenders, however one estimate is that 1% to 2% of the school-age population is affected, with a higher prevalence among secondary school pupils (Nuttall & Woods, 2013). The onset of extended non-attendance can occur at any age, but peaks have been identified in children aged between 5 and 6 and children during transition to secondary school, aged 11-13 years old (King & Bernstein, 2001).

2.3 Supporting extended school non-attenders

Stroobant and Jones (2006) argue that “school refusal behaviour is not fixed but is multi-dimensional, and changes over time in response to internal and external variables such as maturity, school pressures and adult and peer behaviour” (p. 211). This explains why identification, assessment and intervention

can be such complex processes. King and Bernstein (2001) recommended that the assessment process should involve an in-depth understanding of the factors leading to the extended non-attendance behaviour being maintained. It is suggested that this is best achieved by triangulating valuable information from the child, parents and school staff.

2.4 Current evidence regarding parental involvement and children's attendance

The model of parental involvement developed by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005) posits that there are several factors that influence a parent's involvement in education. These factors include role construction, self-efficacy, parent self-perceived life context and parents' perceptions of invitations of involvement from others.

2.4.1 Role construction

Archer, Filmer-Sankey and Fletcher-Campbell (2003) found that, on interviewing education welfare officers and teachers, it was commonly thought that a lack of value parents placed on education contributed to extended non-attendance. However, a study conducted by Dalziel and Henthorne (2005), which sought parents' and carers' views on attendance, noted that both parents and carers of children with both poor attendance and good attendance believed in the high importance of education and attendance.

A limitation of this study was the sample used, the parents involved in the study were selected by the Education Welfare Service, rather than the researcher. This selection could have been biased, for example, to include the most interesting parents. Another limitation is that it was not possible to identify whether any parents of children with ESNA participated. The lengths of time the children had not been attending for were not disclosed. Dalziel and Henthorne (2005) only knew that the parents interviewed had been receiving support from the EWS for different lengths of time. Parents' of poor attenders could have different views to parents who have children experiencing ESNA.

2.4.2 Self-efficacy

Dalziel and Henthorne (2005) found that practitioners often considered that parents and carers of poor attenders felt helpless and did not see how they could change their child's poor attendance.

Individuals with high levels of perceived self-efficacy tend to persist with challenges until success is achieved, thereby confirming their beliefs of high efficacy; those with low perceived self-efficacy however tend to give up prematurely, in turn confirming their perceptions of low efficacy (Teti & Gelfand, 1991).

2.4.3 Parent self-perceived life context

Malcolm, Wilson, Davidson and Kirk (2003) used semi-structured interviews to explore professionals' constructs of ESNA. It was found that the views of education welfare officers and teachers tended to focus on the impact of home factors: children taking on roles as carers and parents working long and atypical hours.

A study by Gregory and Purcell (2014) utilized semi-structured interviews to explore children's and parents' experiences of ESNA. Many of the families described negative experiences regarding their involvement with professionals, including being blamed for their child's non-attendance, being threatened with court action, being patronised by professionals and not being believed when they said their child was anxious about school.

2.4.4 Parents' perceptions of invitations of involvement from others

Sheldon (2007) compared schools that developed school-wide programs of school, family, and community partnerships and schools that did not develop these programs and their subsequent attendance data. Schools that had developed partnership programmes improved their attendance rates by an average of .5%, whereas attendance rates decreased slightly from one year to the next in comparison schools. School outreach to families was suggested to cause this effect.

Dalziel and Henthorne (2005) found that a key problem reported by practitioners was how many families did not mention the difficulties with attendance when they first arose, which led to a delay in providing support. Despite this, practitioners described how the majority of families wanted to support their child's reintegration into full time education and accepted the support they were offered.

Kearney (2008) suggests that some parents may not want to involve school staff due to mistrust of professionals associated with school developed as a result of parents' personal experiences.

In contrast, Toplis (2004) found that parents did not feel listened to when problems first arose. Semi-structured interviews explored parents' views on the factors that had an impact on their children's ESNA. All parents included in the study had a child who had experienced a period of school refusal and had at some point been educated in a specialist unit. Many parents highlighted the problem of finding someone in school that they felt listened to them or their child, and acted on their concerns. The long wait for support from outside agencies and a lack of information for parents were also discussed as causal factors.

One reason why there is a discrepancy between professionals' and parents' views of highlighting issues when they first arose could be that the professionals' in Dalziel and Henthorne's (2005) study were biased towards cases where there had been problems engaging parents. In Toplis' (2004) study,

the school staff mentioned by parents could have been very busy at the time of disclosure and perhaps had forgotten the issues divulged. Staff might have perceived the issue to be unimportant if parents had not persisted in seeking help. On the other hand, parents could have perceived this as staff not believing them.

It is suggested that there is an increased need for collaboration between school staff and parents to support children who are extended non-attenders (Gregory and Purcell, 2014).

2.5 Identifying a gap in the literature

The literature has highlighted the impact that poor school attendance has on academic achievement, emotional well-being and future prospects. The literature search has also highlighted the impact that parental involvement and engagement can have on children's attendance. There have been few studies that have directly studied the impact of parental involvement on attendance but research does suggest that parental involvement increases children's attainment and motivation to learn. It was felt that gathering parents' views of their involvement during ESNA was an area where further research might be beneficial.

2.6 Relevance to educational psychology practice

Educational psychologists (EPs) are best placed to develop approaches to support parents' involvement during ESNA, due to the work they undertake with extended school non-attenders (Pellegrini, 2007). EPs routinely work jointly with children, parents, school staff and outside agencies (Carroll, 2015). EPs also have a role in facilitating change at an individual, group and organisational level (Gameson, Rhydderch, Ellis, & Carroll, 2003). The research findings highlight strategies that could be implemented at each of these levels to foster parental involvement during their children's ESNA, with the aim of increasing school attendance.

2.7 Research questions

The following research questions aim to explore the parents' views of their involvement and engagement during their children's extended non-attendance.

1. How are parents involved during their child's ESNA?
2. What intrapersonal and interpersonal factors influence parental involvement during their child's ESNA?
3. How does parental involvement change during the course of a child's ESNA?
4. How can parental involvement be supported during a child's ESNA?

3. Methodology

3.1 Design

3.1.1 Ontology

A relativist, rather than realist, ontological position was adopted, which assumes that there are no absolute truths: truths are relative to each individual. It was therefore necessary to gather parents' perspectives about their involvement during ESNA, to get an idea of how a parent's perception of their involvement might have been influenced by the social, emotional and physical resources they had access to.

3.1.2 Epistemology

A subjective, rather than objective, epistemological position was taken, which assumes that each person has an individual interpretation of the world, based on their own constructs and experience (Orlikowski & Baroudi, 1991). This philosophical stance was taken because of the stigma found around parents of poor attenders (Dalziel & Henthorne, 2005).

3.1.3 Qualitative Design

The research was conducted using the qualitative methods of semi-structured interviewing and thematic analysis. This qualitative design allowed participants to express their constructions. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was an alternative qualitative approach that was considered. Gregory and Purcell (2014) used an IPA approach to explore parents' views and experiences of their children's ESNA. This research was best suited to IPA due to having broad research questions concerned with individuals' experiences. However, the current study had narrower research questions relating specifically parental involvement during ESNA and aimed to explore the similarities and differences in views between parents. Therefore, thematic analysis was felt to be the appropriate method of analysis.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather parents' views. The decision was made to use interviews rather than questionnaires since depth of meaning was essential to answering the research questions (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). It was believed that the research questions could only be answered by talking to parents directly, using prompts, due to needing to explore constructions of parents to try to understand why certain views were held. Without conducting interviews, it would not have been possible to analyse the latent meaning observed in parents' responses. Therefore, indirect methods, such as questionnaires would have negatively affected the quantity and quality of data gathered.

It has been suggested that focus groups enable access to interaction and meaning-making processes, are able to facilitate disclosure, can empower participants to make a change in their subsequent behaviour and reduce the influence of the researcher. However, due to the suggestion from the literature, that parents of children with ESNA are likely to be vulnerable, it was believed that individual interviews should be carried out to decrease anxiety from speaking in front of a group. Also, by conducting the interviews in person, a trusting relationship was able to be established between participant and interviewer.

3.1.4. Measures

The semi-structured interview included eight questions informed by the model of parental involvement in education (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005). A foreword preceded the interview questions to provide more information about the interview process (See appendix 7). The questions used in the interview were open-ended allowing the interviewee to express their views and experiences. Prompts were included, however different prompts were used for every interview depending on what direction the parents' answers took. This method was used to ensure that the factors that parents felt were important to the topic of parental involvement during ESNA were covered.

3.2 Participants

There were eight participants from which data was collected, seven mothers and one father. One mother attended the interview with a member of school staff for support.

An opportunity sampling method was used to recruit participants. A small sample size was used to ensure depth and meaningfulness in responses and also to provide a manageable amount of data was generated for analysis (Smith, 1995). All participants were from one urban local authority in Wales. Due to the process used to identify participants (indirectly through the EWS), it is not possible to give details of the parent population, from which 8 participants were obtained. It is therefore not possible to calculate the proportion, of the total number of parents meeting the selection criteria, took part in the interviews.

3.2.1 Selection criteria

The selection criteria were co-constructed by the researcher and the head of the EWS (Table 1).

Table 1

Participant selection criteria.

Criterion Number	Criteria
1	The parent had a child, in primary or secondary school, who had or was experiencing ESNA.
2	The parent's child had an attendance of less than 70% for a minimum of one term.
3	The parent's child was accessing or had accessed differentiated provision for their ESNA, for example, received a modified timetable, attended a specialist provision or was home tutored.
4	The parent's child had experienced ESNA no longer than 3 years previously, if ESNA had been resolved.
5	The parent had engaged with professionals about improving their child's attendance.
6	The parent's child who had experienced extended non-attendance was a carer.
7	The parent's child did not have medical reasons for not attending school.
8	The parent had a child, in primary or secondary school, who had or was experiencing ESNA.

3.2.2. Parent pen profiles

Parent 1 is a mother with one son who is in year 7. Parent 1 believes that education is important and pushed her child to attend when he was reluctant. The child began not attending during the transition between primary and secondary school. The parent believed that her child's difficulties in attending school were due to her son being bullied. The parent is currently home educating her child and her child has asked to go back to mainstream education. The decision to home-educate was due to the parent not trusting that the school were doing all they could to meet her child's needs. Parent 1 suffers from mobility difficulties.

Parent 2 is a single mother with three children. It is her youngest daughter who has ESNA, she is in year 10. Parent 2 left school in year 10 due to being pregnant with her first child. Parent 2 gained qualifications when her children had grown. When she was young, parent 2's mother let her stay at home. However, parent 2 believes that education is very important and wants her daughter to attend

school full time. The parent believed that her child's difficulties in attending school were due to high levels of anxiety. Parent 2's daughter is withdrawn and self-harms, she is on the waiting list for CAMHS. Parent 2's daughter had moved schools recently, after moving to a new house. Parent 2 had a good relationship with the school and her child's attendance had been improving in the time she had been there. The daughter had been spending time in a resource base attached to the mainstream school.

Parent 3 is a single mother with five children. All five of her children had poor attendance, two older children have left school but her three youngest children are in secondary school and have ESNA. Parent 3 left school in year 11 due to being pregnant. She believes that education is important but that some of the subjects being taught at school are not relevant and will not help her children get jobs in the future. Parent 3 believes that school also provides important social experiences for her children. Parent 3 feels that her children will not go to school because they do not listen to her when she explains how important it is. Parent 3 suffers from depression.

Parent 4 is a father with two children and is an education professional. His youngest son stopped attending school when he was in year 10. It was at this time that parent 4's marriage broke down. Parent 4 did not live at home with his son during the onset of ESNA and did not believe that his ex-wife was doing all she could to get him into school. Parent 4 believes that his son stopped attending school in order to upset him and his ex-wife but had resulted in him becoming withdrawn and depressed. The ESNA was resolved when parent 4's son reached sixth form and could engage more with sports.

Parent 5 is a single mother with one son in year 10. Parent 5 left school in year 11 due to being pregnant. She believes that education is important. Parent 5 gained qualifications later, in her twenties, and now works part time for youth services. Parent 5's son had begun truanting when he was in year 8, his second year of high school. Parent 5 believes that this was due to wanting to be popular and making friends with the 'wrong crowd'. Parent 5 needs to take and hand over her son at school. Parent 5 sometimes needs to look for her son when he has absconded and take him back to school.

Parent 6 is a single mother with one son in year 6. Parent 6 left school without qualifications but regrets this and wants her son to have a good education. Parent 6 believes that her son stopped wanting to attend school because of chaotic home life. Although there were many professionals involved at the onset of Parent 6's son's ESNA in year 4, he would not engage with anyone. Parent 6's relationship with her son's current school had broken down. The ESNA was resolved when Parent 6's son moved schools. He had a one-to-one teaching assistant who had worked with him in the home and Parent 6 felt that members of school staff at her son's new school were approachable and non-judgmental.

Parent 7 is a single mother with 3 children. She had difficulties with getting her older 2 boys to attend school but had particular difficulties with her youngest son in year 10. Parent 8 believes that education is very important and wants her son to attend school full time. The parent believed that her child's difficulties in attending school were due to high levels of anxiety. Parent 7's son self-harms and is on the waiting list for CAMHS. Her son is on a reduced timetable of 3 hours of school a day, however this has not increased the child's willingness to attend. The parent has referred herself to social services for additional support to manage her son's behaviour, which can be aggressive. Parent 7 suffers from depression.

Parent 8 is a mother with one son in year 6. Parent 8 believes that education is very important for socialisation and wants her son to attend school full time. When she was young, parent 8's mother let her stay at home. Parent 8 feels that her son stopped attending school because he did not want to leave her during the school day. Parent 8 also believes that her son is becoming more reluctant to attend because he is beginning to start his transition to high school, which he is anxious about. Parent 8's son has had episodes of not wanting to attend school since he was in nursery, but now that he is older he is becoming more difficult to persuade and becomes aggressive when coerced.

3.3 Recruitment process

Firstly, gatekeeper permission was sought from the Local Authority's Head of Education (see Appendix 1). Once approval had been gained, the Head of Education Welfare Support (EWS) within the LA was contacted with a request for education welfare officers to contact parents who met the selection criteria to inform them of the study taking place and ask whether they would like to take part (see Appendix 2). These parents were sent a letter via the EWS team giving them more information about the study and inviting them to participate (see Appendix 3). This letter included a request for those who were interested in taking part to contact the researcher and for parents or carers to respond within two weeks. This procedure was followed since it was necessary for parents to remain anonymous until they had agreed to take part in the study.

However, due to a low response rate, Education Welfare Officers gained verbal consent from parents who would be willing to be contacted by telephone to organise an interview. The researcher was therefore able to answer queries directly. All interviews took place within a two-week period.

3.4 Interview trial and pilot

The semi-structured interview was trialled with a parent who was not from the target population but who was aware of ESNA. As a result of this trial, the vocabulary of the questions was amended, some closed questions were used at the outset to encourage responding and would cue parents into the more

philosophical questions later in the interview. Giving more examples for parents was also suggested so that parents would have a clearer idea of how to answer the questions.

3.4.1. The semi-structured interview

A semi-structured interview was conducted to gather information to address the research questions. Out of the eight interviews conducted, six took place in the parents' homes, one took place in the parent's place of work and one took place in the school in which her child attended. Prior to the interview parents were reassured that there were no right or wrong answers and that the interviewer was interested in the interviewees opinions and views on their involvement during their children's ESNA.

3.5 Data Analysis

3.5.1 Researcher perspectives

To minimise researcher bias, steps were taken throughout the research to increase reliability and internal validity. This included following the six steps of thematic analysis provided by Braun and Clarke (2006) (Table 2), to promote consistency and increase validity and an independent 'peer review' was completed.

The framework of The Constructionist Model of Informed and Reasoned Action (COMOIRA) (Gameson, Rhydderch, Ellis, & Carroll, 2003) influenced the perspectives of the researcher. This model is frequently utilised by EPs as a guiding framework, for example whilst completing casework and during supervision (Figure 4).

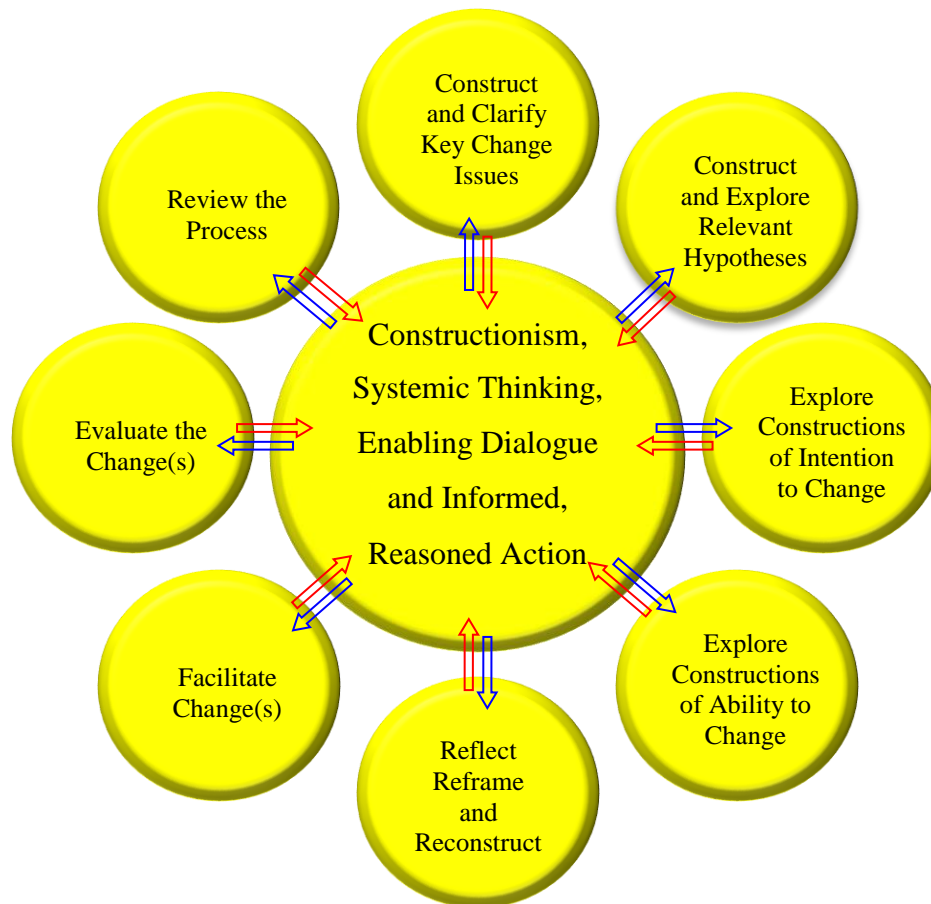


Fig. 4. The Constructionist Model of Informed Reasoned Action adapted from Gameson, Rhydderch, Ellis and Carroll (2003).

Social constructionism is a core component of COMOIRA and underpins the researcher’s understanding of the role of the EP as investigating and understanding other people’s constructions. The researcher felt that social constructionism would be an important aspect of the research with parents. Informed reasoned action was pertinent when considering the design of the interview questions. Crucially, the questions asked were based on the Model of Parental Involvement in Education developed by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005), which has been established in the literature.

3.5.2. Data-driven analytical methods

All of the interviews were voice recorded and transcribed verbatim. Transcripts were analysed for semantic and latent meaning using thematic analysis. The researcher generated themes across the responses of all participants, using thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six phase procedure was adopted (see table 2) as a response to the critique regarding the thematic analysis being an ad hoc process.

Table 2

Six stages of thematic analysis (adapted from Braun & Clarke, 2006)

Phase	Description of Process
1. Familiarisation with data	Data were transcribed, read and re-read. Initial ideas were noted down.
2. Generation of initial codes	Interesting points were coded across the data in a systematic way.
3. Search for themes	Codes were collated into potential categories and all data relevant to each category was gathered.
4. Review of themes	The researcher checked if the categories made sense for each of the coded extracts. Categories were refined into themes and an initial thematic map
5. Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis was undertaken to refine the specific nature of each theme. Clear names for each theme were generated.
6. Production of themes	A selection of compelling extracts was collected in relation to each theme. The write up of the analysis was conducted so that the themes were related

3.5.3 Peer Review

A benefit of thematic analysis is that the researcher interprets meaning from the data. However, this is also a limitation since it is likely to increase bias (Yin, 1989). To increase the validity of the results, an independent researcher was employed, to check that there was agreement between the codes and the subsequent themes generated.

3.6 Ethical considerations

The research adhered to the ethical guidelines stated by the British Psychological Society (BPS) (BPS, 2011). Ethical approval was gained from the University of Cardiff Ethics Committee prior to data collection.

Informed consent was gathered preceding the interview. This was done by giving the participant an informed consent form (see appendix 6) along with the interviewer reading directly each point on the form. The form included statements to ensure that the parents knew that the interview would be voice recorded, that they could withdraw from the study at any point during the interview, that names of people would not be included and that they would be given additional information about the study at the end of the interview. All voice recordings were kept confidential.

After the interviews participants were given a debrief (see appendix 8). During the debrief parents were made aware of the four research questions. Parents were informed that they would be able to ask for their data to be removed without offering any explanation until the interviews had been transcribed. The voice recordings were transcribed within 14 days of the interviews being conducted and at this point the data was anonymised.

There was a chance that, due to the emotional nature of ESNA, questions asked in the interview could have caused the parents emotional distress. To try to ensure that any distress caused was short-lived, parents were given the contact details of a member of the EPS who was available if they felt they wanted to speak with someone after the researcher had left.

4. Results

4.1 Overview of results

The themes identified will be presented in a descriptive form. Visual representation of the themes are also presented in figure 5. Four themes emerged: 'Response to child's ESNA', 'Parent/school collaboration', 'Disclosure to school staff' and 'Additional support sought'. Due to the relatedness of the research questions, thematic analysis was conducted over the complete data set rather than separately for each research question.

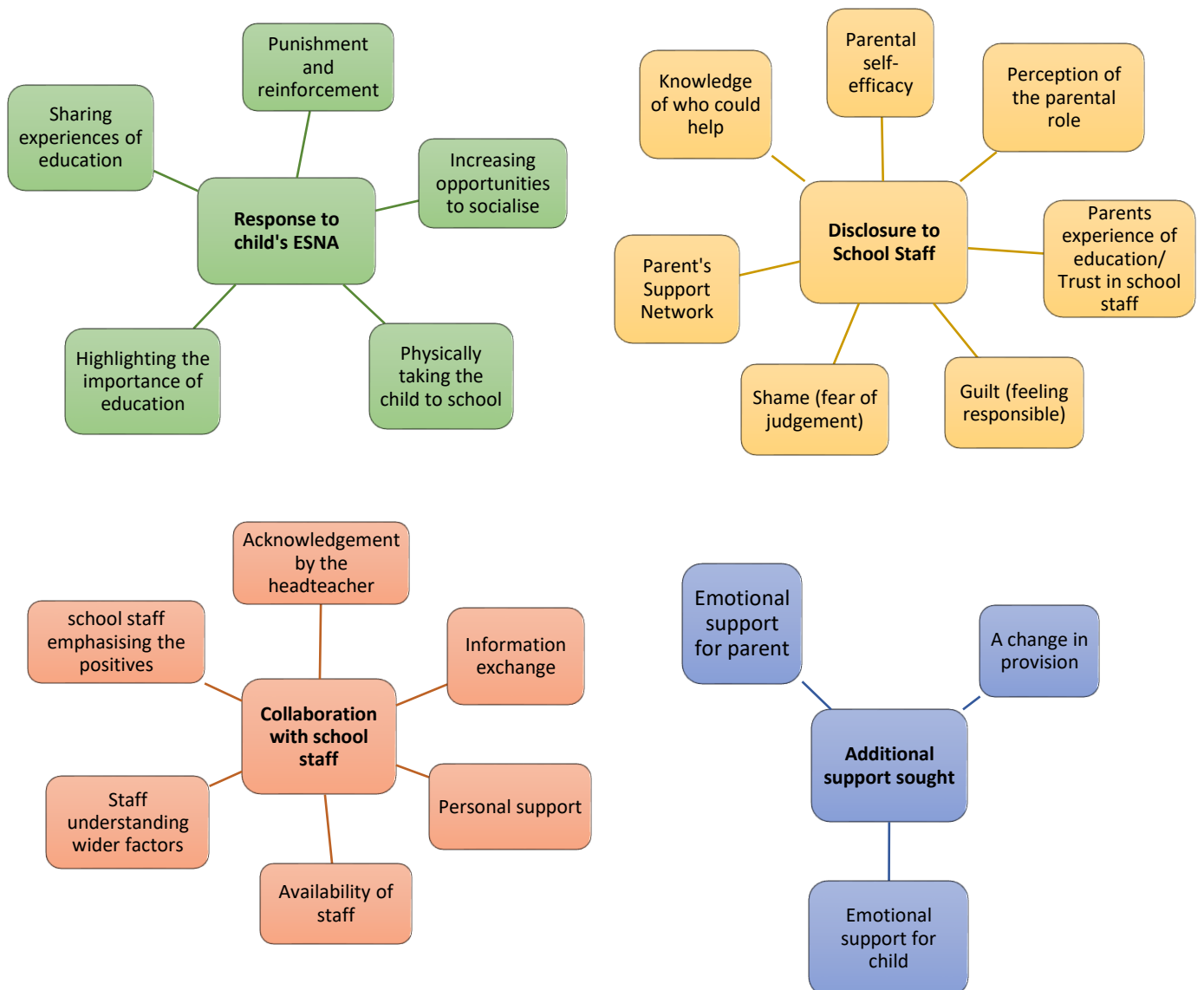


Fig. 5– Final thematic map

4.2 Theme 1 – Response to child’s ESNA

The parents highlighted the different strategies they tried to resolve the issue of their children’s ESNA. These strategies broadly included the use of punishment, reward, reasoning and physical force (Table 3).

Table 3

Table displaying a description of the subthemes related to theme 1.

Subtheme	Description	Quote	Other comments
4.2.1 <i>Highlighting the importance of education.</i>	One of the reasoning strategies used was to talk with their child about the importance of school and the additional opportunities they would have if they got a good education.	‘I try and say to him, you’ve got no education, you’re not gonna get nowhere... it’s like four years, four years and then you can get whatever job you want and spend the next 70 years doing whatever you want...’ P7	This comment also highlights the parent’s frustration with her child and not understanding why he was finding attending school so difficult.
4.2.2 <i>Sharing experiences of education.</i>	Parents also discussed with their children their regrets over not doing better in school. Parents wanted their child to have a better life than they had and thought that going to school both for their education and to socialise with friends would benefit their children’s futures.	‘...I’m so alone it’s surprising and I don’t want them to ever have to go through that so of course the education is good but it’s also the socialisation...’ P6	Parent 6 felt that to encourage her children to attend, she would like them to spend time with relatives who had done well in school and who were successful.
4.2.3 <i>Physically taking the child to school</i>	Another strategy included physically taking the child to school. The parents who did this either had very understanding line managers allowing them	‘...there was a couple of incidents where we actually dragged [child’s name] into a car in his pyjamas and take him to the school and he	Parents who had attempted to physically take their children to school against their will, found this traumatic and

	flexibility in their work hours or parents who did not have a job.	actually self-harmed himself... I thought "I'm not putting my son through that, I've offered the headteacher for them to come to my home to watch me to try and get [child's name] to get dressed for school and she didn't wanna come..." P6	felt that it was harming their child. It was felt that they had been coerced into doing what they did not feel was appropriate by school staff and EWOs who they felt did not fully understand the situation.
4.2.4 <i>Contingent reward</i>	Positive reinforcement, giving contingent rewards when they attended school and negative punishment, taking away privileges, were also used to encourage children.	'...I do try and bribe them with things like obviously she's [daughter] has got a prom tomorrow and I did say to her today "if you don't get up today mind, you won't be going to your prom tomorrow.' P3	However, Parent 3 also commented on how difficult it was finding activities that externally motivate her children enough that they will want to attend school and the expectation that they should be internally motivated to go.
4.2.5 <i>Increasing opportunities to socialise</i>	In addition to encouraging their children to go to school, parents also encouraged their children to socialise when at home. Several parents mentioned that their children became isolated after a period of non-attendance.	'...we've done things like she's not allowed to go to her room until after eight o'clock... she don't really participate in the family unit but she's in the same room now.' P2	

4.3 Theme 2– Disclosure to school staff

Disclosure to school staff was mentioned as a crucial factor for parents to receive support for themselves and for their children during ESNA. Parents mentioned several intrapersonal and interpersonal factors that affected their motivation to disclose the issues that they were having with their child’s attendance (Table 4).

Table 4

Table displaying a description of the subthemes related to theme 2.

Subtheme	Description	Quote	Other comments
<p>4.3.1 <i>Parents’ experience of education/ Trust in school staff</i></p>	<p>One interpersonal factor was the parents' own experience of education. The majority of parents interviewed had either had a difficult time in school due to being bullied or had left school early due to pregnancy. These experiences seemed to have had an impact on the parents’ trust in school staff and their motivation to disclose the difficulties they were having with their children’s attendance.</p>	<p>‘The idea that he was making threats to harm himself, I didn’t want to pass that on to school, I didn’t want to tell anybody... I think I just had it stuck in my head that he would have been taken away from me.’ P7</p> <p>‘I think they gave up on her too easily with her education, they could have been sending work home, um you know, helping me refer her to the right places earlier.’ P2</p>	<p>Parents’ trust also affected the view of the interventions offered by school and the impact they were having. Several parents wanted more input from schools when their children were at home.</p>
<p>4.3.2 <i>Perception of the parental role</i></p>	<p>The parents’ experience of education also seemed to have an impact on the parents’ perceptions of their role in their children’s education. Parent 3, for example, had mixed views over how important education was to her children’s future. She was therefore</p>	<p>‘... I think you need to do more like that than just text books and learning from books and things and what the teachers tell them I think it would be more interesting and more fun for them as well and</p>	

	in two minds about the importance of getting her children to school and felt that the ownership of her children's attendance should be placed on school staff.	maybe it would encourage a lot more children to actually go...' P3	
4.3.3 Guilt (feeling responsible)	The parents who felt that the non-attendance was due to themselves were more likely to feel guilt.	'...initially I was at fault because I always had to up and leave earlier due to the travelling distance and the nature of my job, so I was never there to get him out of bed.' P4	The feeling of guilt was more likely to generate a disclosure to school rather than shame.
4.3.4 Shame (fear of judgement)	The parents who felt that the non-attendance was due to the child or the school were more likely to feel shame, feeling judged, rather than guilt. This feeling of shame remained even after reassurance by school staff. A couple of parents mentioned that this feeling of shame could have been reduced if she would have known other parents who were going through the same difficulties.	'I actually broke down to the school... I ended up just begging them to help because I just didn't know what else to do...' P3	Parents who felt shame were more likely to wait until the problem had reached its climax.
4.3.5 Parental self-efficacy	Another factor that affected parents' disclosure was their self-efficacy, their perception of their ability to manage and improve the situation. Parents who had greater confidence in their ability to get their children into school were less likely to engage with school staff. Once the parents had reached a point of feeling helpless, this was the point at which they asked school for assistance.	'...there is nothing I haven't tried to say to him but he can be very persistent and if he decides he doesn't wanna do it he won't do it.' P5	One parent suggested that setting up a group for parents of children with ESNA could increase her ability to manage the issue.

4.4 Theme 3 - Collaboration with school staff

This theme highlights how important parents found support from school staff and what interactions parents found supportive. The comments suggest that once parents felt supported by school staff, they could work together to implement strategies to support the children’s attendance. A closer relationship then increased the parent’s confidence that the child’s extended non-attendance would be resolved (Table 5).

Table 5

Table displaying a description of the subthemes related to theme 3.

Subtheme	Description	Quote	Other comments
4.4.1 <i>Availability of staff</i>	To open the lines of communication, parents stated that staff availability was paramount. Parent 1 commented that when her child’s difficulties with attendance first began, she was unable to organise an appointment to discuss the issue with the headteacher. The headteacher only became involved when the child’s behaviours towards staff members had deteriorated. The parent felt that this behaviour could have been prevented if the headteacher had been aware of the issues and been able to put in place some early intervention.	‘I can come here and months ago I just didn’t feel myself and I just spoke to the reception woman and she just let me come in here, sit down and, yea, they are really, yea schools should be like you know welcoming.’ P6	
4.4.2 <i>Staff understanding wider factors</i>	Once parents had disclosed the problems with their children not wanting to go to school, they felt it was important for key staff members to be aware of, and to understand, the	‘After letting the school know of the issues at home, they were very supportive and helpful’ P4	Parents who felt that their situation was not understood by staff felt negatively about

	wider factors that were affecting their children.		the support their children were getting. Several parents also mentioned that staff had threatened them with prosecution if they did not get their children to school.
4.4.3 <i>Information exchange</i>	Keeping each other informed of developments was also seen as important to the parent/school relationship. The parents wanted to know about what interventions were being put in place for their child, both when they were in school and when they were at home. Parent 8 mentioned that her trust in school staff had broken down when they were unable to provide evidence of what her child was doing in school.	‘...[child’s name] was telling me he was constantly being bullied all the time, he was put in the inclusion group and all they had him doing all day every day was copying writing in a book, erm, there was no education going on...’ P1 ‘...after the first meeting and they could see that I was trying to make an effort...school got to the point where they would know that if they called me, I would do something about it...’ P5	Parents felt that schools appreciated them being honest about what they were doing to support their children’s attendance.
4.4.4 <i>School staff emphasising the positives</i>	Some parents mentioned that they found the negative feedback about what their child had done in the day overwhelming.	‘...Some days I just wanna be left alone and they’re still on the phone or I go up to a meeting and they walk to the gates and it’s the confrontation...’ P7	Parent 5 mentioned that even when her child was attending school, staff were reprimanding her child for something

		<p>‘...they would be petty about the uniform more than the education, you know he would get told off for not wearing, he was put in the LSC (learning support centre) for not wearing the right shoes to school and I think that didn’t help his attitude towards the school...’ P5</p>	<p>else such as disruption in class or wearing clothes that were not part of the school uniform. She mentioned that she would prefer it if school staff increased their communication of the positives.</p>
<p>4.4.5 <i>Personal support</i></p>	<p>Many parents mentioned that having at least one staff member who could offer personal support to them, as well as their child was important. When there was not an understanding key person in school, the relationship between home and school broke down. This subsequently affected the parents’ confidence that the situation would improve and the parents’ mental health. Parent 3 explained how differently school reacted when she told them about her depression:</p>	<p>‘...you need to be sort of stable enough and fit enough and be able to deal with that to get them to help the children...’ P3</p> <p>‘...if it wasn’t for her maybe certain things would have went really bad, like with um his old school, she knew there was like problems that [child’s name] had and like yes, she helped me get through it basically, telling the head teacher.’ P6</p>	<p>In circumstances where the school relationship had broken down, EWOs were cited as being of support to the parent.</p>

4.5 Theme 4 - Seeking additional support

The findings highlighted that parents’ expectations for a recovery of their child’s non-attendance were often unmet. There were instances where the home/school relationship had broken down and the

parents had become increasingly frustrated with the provisions school staff had set up to manage the situation. Parents therefore felt it necessary to seek additional support (Table 6)

Table 6

Table displaying a description of the subthemes related to theme 4.

Subtheme	Description	Quote	Other comments
4.5.1 A change in provision	Parents felt that a change of school was beneficial, for their children, to start afresh. Parents mentioned the importance of not following the rigid mainstream curriculum.	'...eventually he was excluded because of his truanting umm and he ended up going to the [name of alternative provision] and he loved it...It's more flexible, they don't have to wear a uniform.' P5	Parent 5 recounted that her son's out-of-school placement was beneficial to him because there was increased flexibility in what he could do and a focus on acquiring more practical skills, which helped him re-engage with education.
4.5.2 Outside agency support for parent	Support for the parent included included counselling and parenting support from social services.	'I've got another support worker I've got for myself so it is a lot easier now, now I've got like people who and they understand.' P3	
4.5.3 Outside agency support for child	Several parents mentioned the frustration they had with trying to get the right support for their child. They described being passed from one agency to the next.	'...he was referred to CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) but because he wasn't trying to kill himself they wouldn't take him on.' P1 '...considering you know it's supposed to be a multi-	

		agency, combined approach I think it's failing or it has done in this case. You know, the agencies now can too easily pass it on and I think it's dangerous.' P2	
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4.6 The progression of parents' interactions during ESNA

Figure 6 demonstrates how parents' interactions changed during ESNA and how these changes in interactions were decided upon. The figure is a simplified illustration of the process of parental involvement during ESNA, it is not intended as a comprehensive model as it does not include all decisions that could be made by parents and the possible outcomes of these decisions.

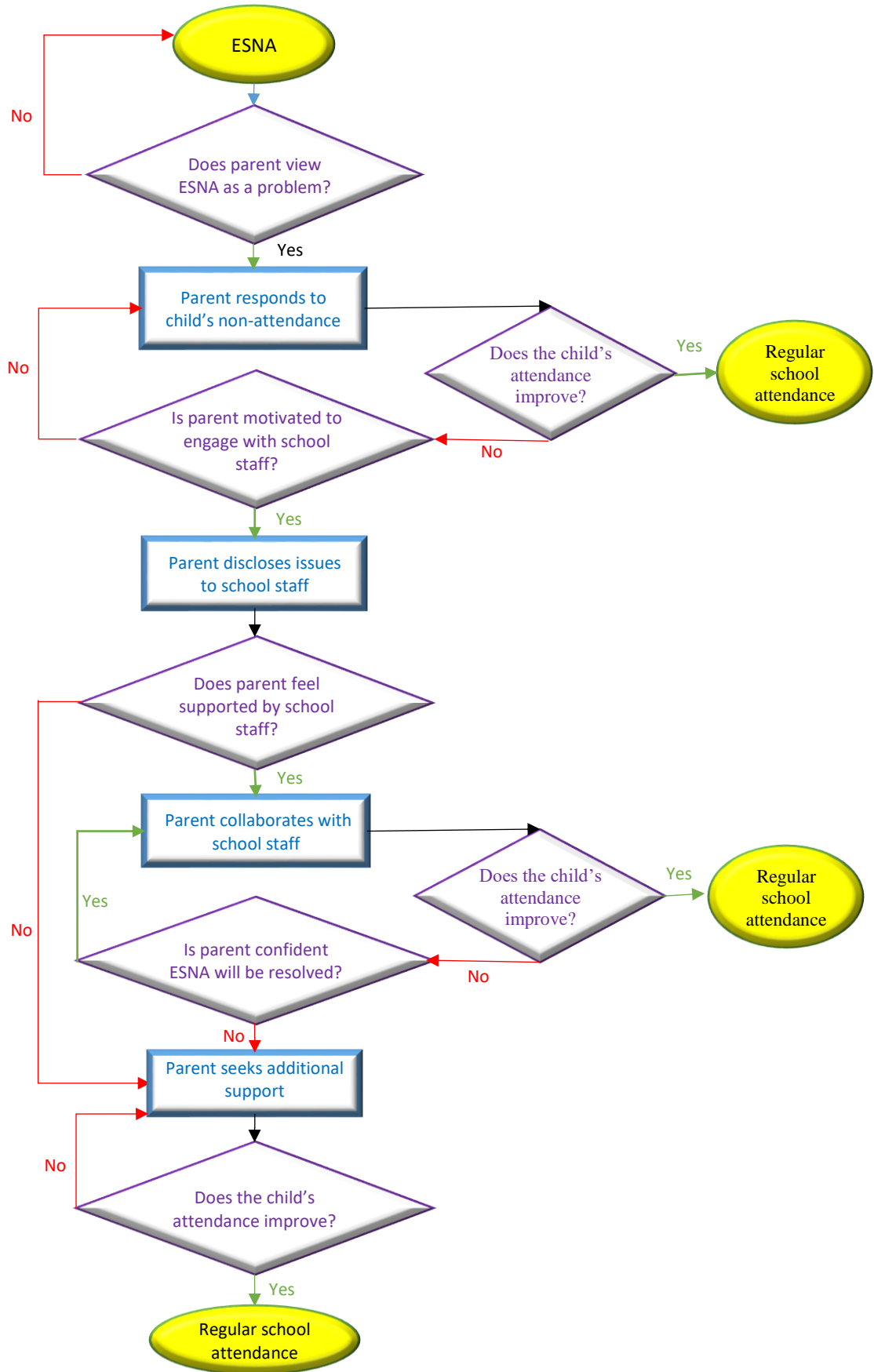


Fig. 6 – The progression of parents' involvement during ESNA

The four key themes are illustrated in blue rectangles and highlight the actions of parents during their children's ESNA. The purple diamonds illustrate the decisions that the parents made during ESNA and how parents progressed through the stages identified.

The findings suggest that the first decision that a parent makes regarding their involvement during their child's ESNA is whether they think that their child's non-attendance is a problem. If the parent believes that the non-attendance is not a problem their involvement with their child and school does not change. However, if the parent believes there is a problem then he/she will change the interaction he/she has with the child. This change in involvement can have two outcomes, either the child's ESNA is resolved or the child continues to not attend school.

If the ESNA has not been resolved, the parent must then decide whether he/she is motivated to disclose issues to school staff. If the parent is not motivated to disclose the issues then they continue to try and manage the situation themselves. However, if the parent is motivated, the issues the parent perceives to be relevant to the child's non-attendance are disclosed.

Once the parent discloses the issues regarding the child's ESNA, he/she decides whether he/she feels supported by the school staff. If the parent does not feel they are being supported adequately by school staff then they seek further support from other professionals such as those from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). However, if the parent feels supported the he/she collaborates with school staff in order to develop strategies to support the child. This change in involvement can have two outcomes, either the child's ESNA is resolved or the child continues to not attend school.

If the ESNA has not been resolved, the parent must then decide whether he/she is confident that, with the support being given, that the ESNA will be resolved. If the parent does not feel that the ESNA can be resolved then they seek further support from other professionals. However, if they believe the attendance will resume, they continue to collaborate with school staff. Although parents' involvement will peak and trough throughout the process, they continue to support their child until ESNA is resolved.

5. Discussion

5.1 Overview

This study aimed to explore parents' views of their involvement during their children's ESNA. Patterns of findings from the interviews will be discussed in relation to the research questions below, including references in relation to previous research and existing literature regarding the topic.

5.2. Research Question 1

How are parents involved in resolving their child's ESNA?

Results from the interviews suggest that parents are involved in a variety of ways to support their children during ESNA. This involvement broadly falls within two categories: interactions with the child and interactions with school staff and other professionals.

5.2.1 Interactions with the child

Parents tried to encourage their children to attend school by discussing the impact of having a good education on prospects, such as being able to follow their interests later in life. Parents also shared their experiences, either to demonstrate to their children that by getting the good qualifications they would be able to get a decent job or to highlight that by gaining qualifications they would have more opportunities available to them than their parents had. Parents did not believe these discussions had much, if any, effect.

The parents also shared their own experiences of education with their children. Parents shared their experiences, either to demonstrate to their children that by getting the good qualifications they would be able to get a decent job or to highlight that by gaining qualifications they would have more opportunities available to them than their parents had. Again, parents did not believe these discussions had much, if any, effect. It is suggested that this could be due to the mixed messages involved, since many parents who did not gain qualifications at school, gained them later in life and had careers.

Parents also used rewards and punishments to encourage school attendance, as well as physically taking the children to school. The interactions with children were largely one-sided, focusing on 'doing to' the child, rather than 'doing with', due to the children distancing themselves from their parents. However, parents persisted with re-engaging them by increasing the time the children needed to spend with the family and focussing on the children's interests, such as sports.

5.2.2 Interactions with school staff and other professionals

Parents informed staff of the difficulties they were having in getting their children to school and the difficulties within the systems around the children. These disclosures were received in a variety of ways.

Parents felt that staff were responded negatively because they had not spent the time listening to them and understanding all the issues. This finding is supported by Toplis (2004) who suggested that parents did not feel listened to, by school staff, when problems first arose.

Some parents mentioned the pressures that school staff were putting on them regarding getting their children to school physically. In many cases, parents felt that this had a detrimental impact on the child. Other parents were being threatened by court action from senior staff and EWOs.

Additional support was sought if parents were not confident in the support being received from school staff. In addition to emotional support for themselves, the parents also sought additional emotional support for their children such as speaking with their general practitioner (G.P.) or referring their children to CAMHS. This involvement had mixed success due to the waiting time for mental health services at the time.

5.3 Research Question 2

What intrapersonal and interpersonal factors influence parental involvement during their child's ESNA?

5.3.1 Parent/school relationship

The positive parent/school relationship was important in ensuring that parents felt supported and able to manage their child's ESNA. In support of this, most of the research suggests that supportive teacher practices are one of the strongest predictors of parental involvement (Anderson and Minke, 2007) Parents comments suggested that the relationship with school staff required a level of trust.

Parents also valued staff being sensitive to their emotional capacity and how it affected their ability to cope with their children's ESNA. These findings are supported by Toplis (2004) and Nuttall and Woods (2013), who found that easy access to professionals and regular communication between home and school were highlighted by professionals as invaluable.

5.3.2 Motivation to engage with education professionals

All parents had a positive view of education, even though some were unsure of how relevant some subjects were. Dalziel and Henthorne's (2005) study was supported by the current findings, having found that parents and carers of both children with poor attendance and good attendance shared the value that a good education is important. This suggests that there is a gap between professionals' constructions of parents and parents' actual views.

The parents who were nervous about disclosure were those who had negative experiences and did not think that there were staff in school who would support them. This corresponds to several researchers' opinions that a lack of engagement is due to parental mistrust of school officials (Franklin & Soto, 2002; Gregory & Purcell, 2014). The current research would suggest that the threat of prosecution was likely to increase the fear of judgement from professionals.

The parent who felt that schools should take responsibility for encouraging children's attendance felt less accountable for her children's non-attendance. Parental self-efficacy was also a factor influencing whether parents felt able to manage the situation independently or needed to seek support from school staff. Parents were more likely to disclose when they felt the situation was out of their control. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005) suggested that parental involvement is also affected by whether parents believe that they have the resources to become involved in their children's education (parent's perceived life context). It is likely that parents who have mental health difficulties are less able to support mental health issues that are associated with ESNAs.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) argue that, without addressing role construction and parents' feelings of self-efficacy, any attempts at increasing parental involvement will have minimal effect.

5.4 Research Questions 3

How does parental involvement change during a child's ESNA?

Results from the interviews suggest that parental involvement changes during ESNA dependent on the interpersonal and intrapersonal factors explored above. Figure 6 illustrates how parents' involvement can change through the duration of children's ESNA. Progression through the stages depends on how the parent responds at different decision points.

5.4.1 Parents view ESNA as a problem

All the parents in the current study realised that their children's ESNA was a problem. However, it is acknowledged that some parents might want their children to stay at home for company as highlighted in previous research (Kearney & Silverman, 1990). In these cases, parents do not perceive their children's non-attendance to be a problem. Seven out of eight parents interviewed were privy to the knowledge that their children were having attendance difficulties before school staff knew. However, one parent, whose child was absconding from school, found out from school sometime after the problem began. Guare and Cooper cited this issue as common, finding that school officials fail to inform parents of a child's unexcused absence in 57.9% of cases. Once parents recognised the non-attendance as an issue parents altered the interactions they were having with their children

5.4.2 Parents' motivation to engage with school staff

Dalziel and Henthorne (2005) reported that a key issue described by practitioners, supporting children with attendance difficulties, was how many families did not mention the difficulties their children were having with attendance when they first arose. Practitioners described this as a problem because it led to a delay in providing support.

5.4.3 Parents feeling supported by school staff

Previous research has suggested that some professionals have negative perceptions about parents, including the view that some are powerless, some are overprotective/dependent and some are apathetic/non-engaging (Dalziel and Henthorne, 2005). The current study suggests that parents pass through phases of trying hard or feeling helpless and disengaged, depending on their current relationship with education professionals. Parents felt most supported when they felt that they were listened to.

5.4.4. Parents confidence that ESNA will be resolved

Relationships that had been positive initially but had broken down, seemed to have done so because school staff had lowered their expectations of the child becoming a regular attender. This had reduced the parents' confidence that school staff were doing their best to support the child. This explains Brand & O'Connor's (2004) finding that parents were less likely to be involved in their children's attendance when staff's expectations are low.

5.5 Research Question 4

How can parental involvement be supported during a child's ESNA?

The current research findings suggest that school staff and professionals, working with parents and children, can adapt their interactions to facilitate parents' involvement during ESNA. Key interactions are those that affect parents' choices at different decision points explored above and illustrated in figure 4.

5.5.1 How can ESNA be recognised earlier?

Firstly, it is suggested that parents need to be able to recognise the early warning signs of ESNA. It is believed that this is possible through providing information regarding common signs, such as psychosomatic complaints e.g. frequent stomach aches. However, before this happens, school staff need to be aware of these signs.

A preoccupation with terminology could be causing a delay in implementing support for children experiencing ESNA. Archer et al. (2003), for example, found there was no consensus amongst school staff regarding the use of the terms school refusal or school phobic behaviours. Therefore, using the term ESNA is recommended to cover all instances of prolonged non-attendance, as advocated by Pelligrini (2007).

5.5.2 How can parents become more motivated to engage?

It is suggested that for parents' motivation to engage with school staff to increase, they first need to know that they are important to their children's education. Parents' comments suggest that they did not know that the disclosure of the attendance difficulties would help their child. This is consistent with Harris and Goodall (2008) who suggested that parents need to be a fundamental part of the learning process and they need to know they matter to maintain their involvement in their children's education.

Parents mentioned that they would have liked to know that other parents were going through the same difficulties as them. It is suggested that this would reduce parents' fear of judgement from professionals and subsequently have made them more confident in disclosing issues to school staff.

5.5.3 How can parents feel most supported by school staff?

The current research suggests critical factors in creating and maintaining the parent/school relationship include acknowledgement by the headteacher, keeping each other informed of developments, staff having the time to listen to parents, staff being easily available, school staff focussing on positives and offering emotional support for the parent. This result is in line with Gregory and Purcell's (2014) study who found that parents the barriers to feeling supported were being blamed for their child's non-attendance, being threatened with court action, being patronised by professionals, and not being believed when they said they could not get their children to go to school.

5.5.4 How can parents confidence that ESNA will be resolved be increased?

The results suggest that education professionals can increase the parents' confidence by continuing to have high expectations of a resolution. This is supported by Brand and O'Connor's (2004) finding that parents were less likely to be involved in their children's attendance when staff's expectations are low. Other recommendations include keeping parents informed of interventions and involved in decision making.

6. Implications for educational psychology practice

6.1. Individual level work

The research suggests that gathering contextual information is important to understand why a child is unable to attend school. This information can be taken into consideration when developing support plans and interventions. The information gathered can be shared with the EWS regarding the factors affecting parents' motivation to engage and the support parents value from professionals.

EPs are well placed to assist in the development of a support plan jointly between parents, children and school staff to address the parent and child's individual needs. EPs can also be involved in facilitating the development of trusting and collaborative relationships between parents and school staff using a consultation approach. EPs will have a more objective view that could help to identify whether a child would benefit from attending a different education provision.

EPs can provide parents directly with information regarding the prevalence and symptoms of extended non-attendance, along with recommendations of what parents could do if they are worried about their children's attendance. Parental support can be given directly through training and techniques from family therapy e.g. reflective practice and video interactive guidance (VIG).

6.2. Group level work

EPs could work to increase parents' confidence in managing their children's ESNA by facilitating support groups for parents, using techniques such as solution circles or reflective teams.

EPs could also increase school staff's knowledge, skills and confidence by delivering training on best practice during ESNA, including how to support parents and evidence-based interventions for children. In addition, training could include how ESNA can negatively affect the parent and child, which could challenge staff perceptions of parental involvement during ESNA.

6.3. Organisational and systems level work

EPs could work to assist schools in becoming ‘parent friendly’ by addressing policies and procedures. School policy and systems could be developed considering ways of increasing parents’ motivation to involve and collaborate with school staff. The research suggests that parents need to know that they are important to their child’s education and to school staff. In order to enable parents to feel needed, schools can ensure that a member of staff is easily accessible, that the headteacher acknowledges any issues, that there is frequent communication exchange between parents and staff and that staff members focus of positives regarding the children’s behaviour and progress.

Policies should ensure that parents feel comfortable about disclosing non-attendance, feel supported and kept informed during decision making processes. One way that this could be done is for EPs to work with school staff to develop literature that can be offered to parents regarding the onset, prevalence, and impact of ESNA, as well as, signs to look out for and who to contact for support. Developing an ESNA pathway with school staff could also be useful, so that the processes during ESNA are transparent to children, parents, school staff and other professionals involved.

EPs could also work to develop strategies in order to prevent ESNA. One strategy could include structured interviews at the beginning of every school year to identify parents of children at risk of extended non-attendance. Another could be undertaking a wellbeing screening in year 6 and a follow up in year 7 to highlight whether there has been a change in children’s wellbeing during transition to high school.

EPs could provide psycho education for education welfare services regarding ESNA. This would promote person centred planning and highlight the importance of having a solution focussed approach in order to address what the parents needs to support their child.

In addition to work with schools and education professionals, changes within Government guidelines might also be beneficial. It would be useful to begin to collect data regarding numbers of children with ESNA in order to get a better picture of the extent of the issue. It would be beneficial to have specific Government documentation regarding the support that can be accessed for parents of children with ESNA and to make the link between attendance and wellbeing in schools.

7. Strengths and Limitations of the Research

7.1 Methodological

7.1.1 Strengths

The parents were more representative of the parent population than in previous research, in which participants had been recruited from a pool of parents who had accessed the EPS (Toplis, 2004; Baker & Bishop, 2015). The current study recruited participants from all parents in the LA with children who had ESNA.

The parents involved in the research were from a range of socio-economic backgrounds and had different sets of personal circumstances. There were a range of possible reasons as to why each child had ESNA and the ESNA presented itself in diverse ways from one child to the next, such as absconding from school or becoming reclusive. The children also had a range of ways in which they had been supported by school staff and the interventions that had been put in place.

The use of semi-structured interviews allowed for an in-depth understanding of parents' views and experiences during ESNA. Parents felt able to be honest about their involvement and disclosed personal information that allowed the researcher to place the parents' perceptions of support in context.

7.1.2 Limitations

The interviews were completed in one LA and therefore did not provide a picture of the range of support systems for parents of children with ESNA across England and Wales. Therefore, parents' experiences across other areas of the United Kingdom will differ. Due to the sample size, these findings cannot be generalised to all parents of children with ESNA.

The views of parental involvement during ESNA were from only one perspective. It would have been beneficial to be able to triangulate information from teachers and the children with ESNA.

It is possible that those who agreed to participate in the interviews had particularly strong views about their involvement during ESNA and the support they received. The results might therefore have selection bias, causing the results to be less valid. It is also possible that choosing to participate in the research reflects the parents' inclination to engage with professionals.

Social desirability bias could have also occurred due to the current legislation focus on the importance of school attendance. Parents could have responded to questions in a manner that would be viewed

favourably by others. Parents could have over-reported involvement to support attendance or under-reported disengagement, or undesirable involvement.

7.2 Theoretical

7.2.1 Strengths

The study contributes unique findings into parents' views regarding their involvement during ESNA. One unique finding was why parents might be reluctant to inform schools when difficulties with attendance first arise. Another, was how parents encouraged their children to attend and parents' perceptions of the impact this had on their children's attendance. The research also highlighted how parents perceive different requests for involvement from school staff during ESNA. Finally, the current research provides a model for how parents involvement changes during ESNA and the key decisions they make which affect the directions they take.

7.2.2 Limitations

The model of decision making created to illustrate how and why parent involvement changes throughout their children's ESNA relies heavily on interpretation and inference. This model also does not involve all the possible factors involved in parents making decisions during ESNA.

7.3 Practical

7.3.1 Strengths

The results have important implications for parents, school staff, local authorities and Governments, since the research has highlighted similarities in the way parents' feel they are treated by education and LA professionals during their children's ESNA. The results also have direct relevance to educational psychology practice, since EPs could be key in bringing about change to support parents' involvement during ESNA.

It is known that many children with ESNA have mental health difficulties such as anxiety or depression. The relevance of the research at a time when there is a growing trend in the number of children who have mental health difficulties within the United Kingdom. It is important to know how to make the most of key adults around the child who can have a positive impact on wellbeing.

7.3.2 Limitations

Many of the approaches highlighted in the research should already be part of good practice within schools. Unfortunately, the research does not include why these approaches are not being carried out in schools. It could be that current constraints from government inspection bodies mean that teachers do not have the time to invest in parental support and unlikely to be rewarded for doing so.

7.4 Future directions

The findings from the study have highlighted areas of ESNA that could be researched further. The research suggests that parental confidence and perceived self-efficacy was important for helping them manage their children's non-attendance. One area in which research could be developed is regarding how parents' confidence and trust in school intervention could be increased. An example of a research question could be whether the explicit use of an extended non-attendance pathway, similar to those used for autism spectrum conditions (ASC) (NICE, 2016), used to recognise, refer, diagnose and manage the condition, could improve parents' confidence and trust in school intervention. Parents could benefit from this because parents' responses highlighted that initially they were not believed when they disclosed non-attendance issues and that parents felt that the school were not doing enough to support their child, such as only telling the parent that they needed to get the child into school, suggesting that schools did not know how to manage the problem. Another research area could be an exploration of how to increase parental self-efficacy and confidence in managing their children's extended non-attendance. One idea could be to study whether Solutions Circle groups or Circle of Adults could increase parents' confidence during ESNA.

The research also suggests that parents' expectations of school staff can affect the relationship between them. In order to further explore this phenomenon, the research could be developed is to undertake an exploration of parental expectations of school staff are during extended non-attendance. This could highlight ways in which schools could change their practice to support parents and children through ESNA. It could also highlight ways in which parental expectations need to be managed if they expectations are too high and cannot be met by school staff.

The research also highlights that parents try to support their children by talking to them about how school and education can benefit them in the future. It would be interesting to explore how children experiencing ESNA perceive this verbal encouragement from the parents. This could bring to light whether this encouragement has an effect on their willingness to attend and if so, why.

The research suggestions above suggest the use of qualitative designs to further explore ESNA. However, the research could also be developed using quantitative approaches. The research found, with the small sample size used, that parents whose relationships with school staff had broken down that ESNA was unable to be resolved. It would be interesting to find out whether there was a correlation between perceived quality of relationship between parent and school and the extent to which ESNA had been resolved.

8. Conclusion

The findings of the research highlight how parents view their involvement during ESNA. The research furthered the current evidence-base regarding parental decision making. The research is important for a number of reasons: it offers an explanation as to why parents might not disclose early warning signs of ESNA; it highlights misunderstandings a parent might have about the role of education professionals; it explains why parents might engage or disengage with school staff and draws attention to the ways in which parents support their children's return to school.

The research drew attention to the fact that many of the parents who participated in the study had personal circumstances that made them vulnerable. The research suggests that the needs of these parents, in order to manage their children's ESNA, are not consistently being met. A key finding was that parents delay in coming to the school when their children became reluctant to attend was because of a fear of judgement. This suggests that creating a community ethos in schools is paramount to ensuring early intervention. It is suggested that a supportive parent/home relationship is important for the resolution of ESNA. When parents felt listened to and involved in decisions they were more engaged with school staff and confident in both their personal management and school's management of the ESNA. Suggestions have been made for schools, EPs and other professionals regarding possible interventions and strategies that could be implemented to meet the needs of parents and children with ESNA, these included strategies for preventing ESNA, identifying ESNA and implementing early interventions.

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Parents' Views of their Involvement During Extended School Non-Attendance

PART C – THE CRITICAL REVIEW

1. Introduction

Part C relates to the choices the researcher made throughout the research process. The choices made during the research will be reflected upon. All aspects of the research from its conception to completion will be critically reviewed following the chronological order in which the research was undertaken. Firstly, the review will incorporate a discussion of the literature review, including the rationale for the inclusion and exclusion criteria in reviewing the literature. Secondly, there will be a critique and defence of the qualitative design used in the research, including possible alternatives and the reasons for not utilizing them. An exploration of how the ethical concerns were addressed will be analysed. The specific difficulties, including participant recruitment, data analysis and the write up stage will be included, and in addition to this, the steps made to overcome them. How the researcher developed as a learner throughout the process will be drawn upon. The potential usefulness and applications of the findings for educational psychology service users and potential directions in which the research could be developed will be outlined. The researcher's personal views regarding how the research and its outcome could be used in practice post-qualification will finally be summarised, in light of potential limits to generalisation.

1.1 The structure of the literature review

The literature review was structured to give an overview of the issues related to extended school non-attendance (ESNA) and parental involvement and then to explore relevant research combining non-attendance and parental involvement. The research showed that schools which fostered positive partnerships with families had better attendance rates. Finally, the relevance of this topic to educational psychology practice was outlined. The literature review's structure aimed to develop a rationale for exploring parents' views of their involvement and engagement during their children's ESNA.

1.2 Inclusion and exclusion criteria of the literature review

The review was focussed on research that had been carried out between 2000 and 2016. It was felt that, due to the changes in legislation regarding ESNA, such as the legal action that could be taken against parents (DfE, 2004), that any research before this time would be outdated.

Different terminologies have been introduced over the years to distinguish between several types of non-attendance although consensus has not been reached between researchers regarding how these terms are defined and the distinction between them. It was felt the reasons why there had not been consensus between terms would be interesting to analyse.

It was felt that some of the background context relating to ESNA was important to include because it was likely to have an impact on the way ESNA is viewed today.

The use of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979) aimed to highlight the ways in which different systems, not necessarily directly interacting with the child, could affect a child's willingness to attend school. The use of the term 'ESNA' was used throughout the thesis because it also lessened the focus on within-child explanations of extended school non-attendance.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (2005) model of parent involvement in education was used since it was felt to be the most comprehensive model that aims to explain why parents become involved in their children's education including interpersonal and intrapersonal factors that affect their decisions. There has also been a number of studies supporting the theory (Anderson and Minke, 2007).

1.3 The impact of the literature review on choices and directions

The critical review of the research highlighted how parental involvement and engagement can influence a children's social cognitions and subsequent attendance in school. It was felt that previous research focussed directly on asking whether parents value education and what specific activities they were involved in. However little research has involved a deeper understanding of parents' interactions and the circumstances that support these interactions. The common discourse on the part of school staff and education welfare officers (EWOs) around parents of poor attenders is that they are 'hard to reach' (Dalziel & Henthorne, 2005). However, there is additional research that suggests that parents have different views on their involvement to those of teachers and that some of the ways in which parents feel they are involved are not acknowledged by school staff. In fact, other research has suggested that schools, rather than parents, are hard to reach (Harris & Goodall, 2008).

Past research has also included parents' views of services and support that their children received during extended non-attendance. This has highlighted what parents do and do not feel are effective interventions in terms of support for their child. However, there is little research on how parents view their own involvement and what supports their involvement during ESNA. The only research found to explore this was conducted by Dalziel and Henthorne (2005), whose aim was to examine the views of parents and carers towards the support they received to improve their child's attendance. They found that parents valued EWO assistance when talking to schools about the issues with getting their children into school. Parents mentioned that often their difficulties regarding their child's attendance issues were not believed. It was hypothesised that parents who feel more supported by school and other agencies are able to engage in more effective and prosocial behaviours to improve their children's attendance. It was therefore felt appropriate to further explore what parents felt supported their involvement.

An exploration of the literature was conducted prior to the research taking place. This initial search was undertaken in order to gather information about the current evidence-base for ESNA, to uncover gaps in the literature and to develop a rationale for the research questions. An in-depth exploration of the literature was carried out prior to analysing the data. The main literature review was written at this stage so that the results would not bias what was included in the literature review. Further research was undertaken after analysis to help explain the findings. The literature review was carried out in this iterative manner because of the inductive nature of the study. The interview questions were purposefully left open, rather than being based on previous research findings, to allow novel areas to be covered. On the other hand, further research was needed following analysis due to the novel nature of parents' responses.

1.4 Development of the research questions

The research questions went through iterations of review and adjustment. There were initially three questions which asked more generally about parental views of their involvement, support for that involvement and change in involvement once the child had stopped attending school. After running the pilot interviews, it was felt that these questions needed to be refined to make them more specific to the population under investigation. This was done because parents had a wealth of information about what they had tried with the aim of finding a resolution, the factors that made this difficult, their engagement with school staff and other professionals and their opinions about the support they received. It was felt that exploring these questions would be more relevant to educational psychology practice. As a result, the research might be able to offer information about how parents could be better supported, so that they feel able to manage their children's ESNA.

2. Methodology

2.1 Paradigm underpinning the research

A social constructivist paradigm underpins the current research, which proposes that each individual constructs his or her own reality through active learning processes. This reality is socially and culturally constructed (Burr, 1995). This paradigm was used to underpin the research due to the suggestion that multiple and complex interactions affect a child's attendance in school.

A relativist, rather than realist, ontological position was adopted, which assumes that reality is interpreted by every human being differently, therefore truths are relative to each individual. It was felt necessary to gather parents' perspectives about their involvement to gain a clearer understanding of why some parents of extended non-attenders are viewed as 'hard to reach' and do not disclose their

difficulties in getting their child to school until the problem has become entrenched. Research has highlighted that the term 'engagement' is relative to each individual, for example, a parent might see his or herself as heavily involved but a teacher with experience of a range of parents' involvement might view these efforts as minimal (Conteh and Kawashima, 2008).

A subjective, rather than objective epistemology was taken, which assumes that people interpret the world around them based on personal opinions or feelings rather than on empirical facts or evidence (Orlikowski & Baroudi, 1991). This philosophical stance was taken because of the emotive nature of and stigma associated with, having a child out of school. The way parents view their interactions will be affected by their personal circumstances and background, such as those highlighted by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005). The research aimed to produce one possible answer to the research question due to the high degree of interpretation involved in analysing the data.

Some researchers believe that the constructivist approach adopted is less rigorous than a positivist approach which is perceived to be objective and value-free. However, Robson (2011) argued that since 'reality' is not viewed in the same way by all researchers, it is not possible for research to be value-free. Approaching the current research in a positivist manner would have limited the depth of understanding that could have been gleaned from parents' responses. Important information would have been missed and inferences regarding cause and effect would not have been possible. However, in light of the criticism, steps were taken throughout the research to increase reliability and internal validity. These included an audit of the paper trail from raw data to interpretation of findings and a review of the themes developed by an independent peer review.

2.2 The qualitative approach

The research was conducted using qualitative methods, reflecting the relativist approach taken. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather parents' views. The decision was made to use interviews rather than qualitative questionnaires since depth of meaning was essential to answering the research questions. Yardley's (2008) quality principles were used to guide the research process to increase the quality and validity of the qualitative research. Yardley states four principles: sensitivity to context; commitment and rigour; transparency and coherence; and impact and importance.

Sensitivity to context was demonstrated during the interview process; the interactional nature of the data collection process was taken into consideration and interviewing guidelines for researchers conducting semi-structured interviews was followed (Robson, 2002). Commitment and rigour was demonstrated through following Braun and Clarke's (2006) analysis stages and careful planning of the study, which has been outlined earlier (Smith et al, 2009). To ensure transparency and coherence, the research process has been described in detail, including how previous research and psychological

theory feeds into the current research questions and methods. In addition, all interpretations have been grounded in the context of interview transcripts and how personal experience informed the analysis and development of the key themes. Finally, it is suggested that the research has impact and importance for service users, including parents but also school staff, EWSs and EPSs. A further evaluation of the possible practical application of the findings is provided in section by focusing on a small number of participants, it has been possible to provide a detailed account which 'gives voice' to parents' experiences and views.

2.3 Development of the selection criteria

The selection criteria were developed in collaboration with the head of the education welfare service, who was the most likely to have an overview of the children within the local authority who were extended school non-attenders. Many factors were brought to light that had not been considered such as parents of children who had missed a large number of sessions due to medical conditions: this group of children do not meet Pellegrini's definition of ESNA. Another group of parents excluded from the study were those being cared for by their children, although it would be important to gather this group of parents' views, it was felt that the involvement that these parents could have would be limited and out of their control.

The choice of including thresholds for the extent of non-attendance was done so that the education welfare officers would find it easier to isolate prospective participants from their attendance data. It was felt that 70% attendance for a minimum of one term was significantly below the threshold where EWOs become involved with parents and are likely to have been involved for some time, meaning parents would have been involved with school staff and support agencies with the aim to resolve the non-attendance. Only parents who had engaged with professionals and where their children were accessing alternative provision were involved in the study, so that they could comment on the support received.

Parents of extended school non-attenders either at primary or secondary age were involved in the research since extended non-attendance can occur at any time in a child's education (Pellegrini, 2007). If non-attendance had been resolved, only parents of children who had experienced ESNA in the previous 3 years were eligible for the study, so their recollections were more likely to be reliable. . However, the selection criteria was not wholly effective since one of the parents who volunteered was not part of the population under investigation.

2.4 Participant recruitment

The initial plan of parents contacting the researcher after receiving a letter via the EWS did not acquire any participants. Instead, Education Welfare Officers gained verbal consent from parents who

would not mind being contacted by phone to organise an interview. Education Welfare Officers passed on the concerns that parents had in taking part in the study, such as nervousness regarding being judged, where the information would go, whether they would have to say things in front of a group and whether they were going to be able to answer the questions. These concerns were able to be alleviated during phone conversations. To reduce anxiety about the formality of the meeting, the phrase ‘Is it Ok if I pop over to have a chat about your views?’ was used when setting up the interviews, as suggested by Smith (1995). It took two months to complete this part of the process. If no parents had agreed to take part there was a contingency plan which involved recruiting participants from other authorities.

This recruitment procedure was used to have a small but representative range of parents. Nuttall and Woods (2013) recruited by asking educational psychologists to give names of relevant participants, however this would have limited the range of parents. Only one parent from the current study mentioned having had involvement from an educational psychologist.

2.5 Access to participants

In addition to changing the recruitment process to access parents, there were also challenges after the interviews had been arranged. Some parents cancelled appointments at the last minute and some parents had forgotten that we were meeting. It was found that parents responded to texts being sent out few days before each meeting to remind them of the upcoming interview. Parents said they were more comfortable with receiving texts than talking on the phone. Another issue was that one parent wanted to have the teaching assistant (TA) that she had built up a strong positive relationship to be present during the meeting. Although the TA had been informed that it was important to get the parents view, the TA did prompt and add her own comments during the interview which affected the parent’s responses. However, it was felt that the parent was able to make her voice heard and during analysis, responses were not felt to have been unduly biased by the TA, although it is acknowledged that they could have been.

2.6 Development of semi-structured interview questions

Initial interview questions covered too many aspects that could have some relevance to ESNA, only some of which were directly linked with the research questions. It was felt that this was because of a lack of knowledge of the literature and anxiety about committing to a particular area of study in case it would not yield any meaningful results. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s (2005) model of parental involvement in education gave a framework for developing the research questions to incorporate important factors implicated in parental involvement. The interview questions were then able to be reduced to eight broad questions linked directly to the research questions. The decision to keep the

questions broad was made so that parents had the flexibility to include factors they felt were important but also to minimise researcher bias.

The semi-structured interview was trialled with a parent who was not from the specific group under exploration, but was aware of extended non-attendance. The trial highlighted that the vocabulary needed to be amended to make it more personal and familiar. The interviewee also felt that “What is a parent's role in education?” and “How are you involved in your child's education?” were asking the same question. It was felt that some of the questions were too abstract. It was suggested that starting the interview with closed questions that parents could easily respond to, such as what activities are you involved in before school, after school, at weekends and during the holidays, before asking more philosophical questions. Giving more examples for parents was also suggested so that parents would have a clearer idea of how to answer the question. Rephrasing the question “What kind of things would increase your involvement?” to “Is there anything extra you would like to do for your child but you are unable at the moment? And is there anything that can be done which would allow you to do it?” were used to increase clarity.

2.7 Participant and researcher safety

There was a chance that due to the emotional nature of ESNA (Bishop & Baker, 2015) questions asked in the interview could cause distress. To try to ensure that any distress caused was short-lived, parents were reassured that they had the right to withdraw, that their responses would remain confidential, that there would be a debrief at the end of the interview to talk about any concerns and that a member of the EPS was available if they felt like they wanted to speak with someone after the researcher had left.

Researcher safety was also a consideration in the current study since 9 out of 11 interviews took place in the parent's home. Arrangements for home interview had been risk assessed and additional arrangements had been made to ensure safety (see Appendix 4).

2.8 The interview pilot

The pilot was carried out with the first two participants interviewed to ensure the questions were clear and accessible. A secondary reason why a pilot was carried out, was for the interviewer to practice steering, probing and prompting to get the most detailed and reliable responses from parents as suggested by Robson (2002). Checking, reflecting and summarising were also skills that were felt necessary to practise before the core interviews. These pilot interviews were not transcribed or analysed since the researcher had previous experience in these areas.

The addition of ‘intrapersonal factors’ to the question “What interpersonal factors influence parental involvement during their child’s ESNA?” was included because there was information already emerging from the two pilot interviews that emotional factors played a part in parental involvement.

3. Analysis

3.1 Challenges encountered during the data analysis process

Open coding was conducted on the transcriptions, which meant that everything that might contribute to the research questions was coded. This was because the researcher was aware that the data should not ‘fit’ preconceived ideas. Transcripts were analysed for both semantic meaning (describing what the parents said) and latent meaning (interpreting the underlying meaning of what was said). Latent meaning was included in order to gain insight into parental values and beliefs.

Attention was also given to what was identified as a theme, a subtheme or a code. I ensured that the theme was a ‘central organising concept’ which unified the data extracts. Themes also added something meaningful in respect of the research question. Subthemes added other factors that were related to the main theme. Subthemes were created when particularly interesting comments were made and when similar comments were made by different interviewees. Thematic maps were included in the write up to highlight relationships between themes and subthemes.

Due to the large amount of data, decisions over how to organise it needed to be made. Firstly, quotes in transcriptions were coded for substantive points. This was done by inserting a comment box next to the relevant lines of the transcript using Microsoft Word . This done twice to ensure that no important points had been missed. The comments were then printed out, cut up and tentatively placed into categories. Categories were refined until 13 categories were left. Initial codes were then refined to make the data more manageable. Thematic maps were drawn up to condense the data into its most central issues. The time initially set aside for analysing the data was exceeded due to wanting the final themes to reflect the decisions that parents made during ESNA. To do this adequately, a flow chart was created to give a narrative to parents’ involvement.

3.2 Minimising researcher bias

A benefit of thematic analysis is that the researcher interprets meaning from the data. However, this is also a limitation since it is likely to increase bias (Yin, 1989). In order to increase the validity of the results, an independent researcher was employed after the initial thematic map was drawn up, to check that there was agreement with the codes created from the raw data and the categories and subsequent

themes generated. Although there was high agreement with the codes and categories initially created, the main themes were interpreted differently. A discussion of the two perspectives was useful in clarifying why certain decisions (include these decisions) had been made. This interpretation was taken into account and final themes were developed by amalgamating and developing the two perspectives. It is acknowledged that the researchers' own constructions affected the final interpretation of the data set.

3.3 Ethical considerations

To access participants, it was important that they remained anonymous until they had agreed to take part in the research. The initial research proposal stated that there would be two streams of recruitment to have access to the greatest number of parents of extended school non-attenders. In addition to the method of recruitment utilizing the EWS, contacting specialist educational provisions directly was also considered. However, it was thought that contacting specialist educational provisions might compromise anonymity, due to the limited number of children experiencing ESNA attending these settings. Instead, a contingency was developed in case there were not enough parents who had volunteered to take part. This contingency involved extending the research to other local authorities, although, in the end, this was not necessary.

3.4 Ethics feedback

Although there were no major issues that had been fed back from the ethics committee, a few alterations needed to be made in order to ensure clarity. Clarification that the interview data would be destroyed after two weeks was needed, whereas previously it was stated that the data would be kept indefinitely. There was also a name that needed to be deleted as well as all non-university phone numbers.

4. Role of the researcher in the contribution of knowledge

4.1 A reflection on development and learning throughout the research process

4.1.1. Development as a researcher

Firstly, the researcher's understanding of how to develop a rationale for the research leading on from the current evidence base was developed. A number of thesis topics were considered before settling upon parental involvement during ESNA. The researcher wanted to include an exploration of ESNA due to the perceived lack of knowledge regarding how to support these children during educational

psychology practice. The researcher also wanted to include service users' views due to there being a limited evidence base including children's and parents' views. Pupil's views were not chosen as a focus for the research due to the similarity to the studies of Toplis (2004) and Gregory and Purcell (2014).

The understanding of the researcher with regard to appropriate research topics for a thesis was developed, with consideration to time constraints. Early intervention of ESNA was one topic that considered for the study. This idea involved using a case study design and carrying out an appreciative inquiry approach to explore how early intervention could be improved for children with ESNA. However, it was decided that the outcomes of this study would have been too specific to the school involved and therefore could not have led to results being generalisable. There was also an ethical concern, since any proposed early intervention techniques developed during the research would have needed to be followed up. It was believed that this idea would be better suited to a project that could be carried out during educational psychology practice.

The researcher learnt that the semi-structured interview questions needed to be directly related to the research questions whilst retaining depth of information. Initially the developed interview questions were too broad to be able to observe a direct link with the research questions. However, research enabled the researcher to tailor the interview questions to explore parental involvement. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model was used as a framework for developing the interview questions. The questions were framed positively, i.e. what has helped rather than what has hindered, to open up the possibility of solutions being generated, making the research more relevant to the role of an EP.

The researcher's understanding of the importance of trialling and piloting interview questions increased during the study. The trial and pilot highlighted that not all the questions were accessible to the participant due to their abstract nature. Parents were more settled if the first question was concrete, focussing on the activities that parents did with their children. Including examples to support the parents understanding of questions was also beneficial. A conscious effort was made to reduce bias by minimising the chance of the participant's answers being led by the researcher, increasing the data's reliability and validity;

During participant recruitment, the researcher overcame issues regarding a lack of response by prospective participants. This was done by asking EWOs to phone parents to ask them directly whether they would like to be involved in the study and if they would not mind being contacted by the researcher. This meant that the data could be collected within a 2-week time frame. However, some time was used up by carrying out an interview with a parent who was unsuitable for inclusion. This was due to the parent's son being out of school due to moving from abroad rather than being unable to attend school. This could have been prevented by clarifying the selection criteria.

The researcher's understanding of the considerations involved in transcribing increased during the research. It was decided that voice recordings would be transcribed verbatim (Jefferson, 2004), including all verbal utterances including laughs, coughs and non-verbal utterances (non-semantic sounds). Whilst this was time consuming, it allowed the researcher to understand the essence of the conversation. It also created an awareness of the latent and semantic meaning in parents' responses. This added another dimension to the analysis and provided an insight into parents' constructions.

In hindsight, to increase the efficiency of the write up, a speech to text programme such as Dragon Speech would have been used.

4.1.2. Changes in perceptions following the research

The findings of the study initiated a new way of thinking about the factors involved in ESNA. Firstly, it changed the researcher's perceptions regarding the efforts made by parents to support their children through ESNA before involving other professionals. In addition, the parents' views regarding why they did not involve professionals, even after the extent of the child's difficulties had been realised, highlighted the stigma attached to non-attendance. During EP practice, it will be important to emphasise the effect of negative connotations attached to ESNA and that the parents' feelings of shame and blame can affect whether parents are motivated ask for support from education professionals. By emphasizing parents' views, it is possible that the research will initiate a positive change in attitude towards parents.

Previous research by Toplis (2004) mentioned the importance of having a key person for the parent to speak with about their children, however, in addition to this, the present study found that acknowledgement by headteachers and other senior members of staff was important to parents. One theory for this is that by acknowledging the issue, parents feel that they are being vindicated; the non-attendance is out of their control and also that the school are acknowledging that they are partly accountable. Another theory is that the parents feel that they are finally being listened to and that they will be supported by the school making changes to accommodate the child.

It was important to realise that the parents of ESNAs were in need of emotional support due to the strain of ESNA and other unrelated personal issues. Some of the parents had given up jobs in order to support their child through ESNA. Even though many had done this, attendance continued to be an issue. Professionals must use proactive strategies rather than just demanding that parents get their children to school by any means necessary. EWOs were reported by parents to be helpful during meetings with school staff, especially when explaining the extent of the barriers to their children's attendance.

4.3 Key findings

4.3.1 *Motivation to engage with professionals*

The research highlighted that there are several factors that affect a parents' willingness to disclose the difficulties they have with getting their children to school when the problems first arise. Factors reducing the likelihood of disclosure included the fear of being judged, parents' feeling that they are able to manage the non-attendance and the pressure exerted by members of the family to resolve the problem. Factors increasing the likelihood of disclosure included parents feeling responsible for their child's non-attendance, knowledge of who could help, parents' feeling that it is their role to ensure their children's attendance and their experience of and trust in education.

The implication for this finding at an organisational level would be to foster a community ethos within the school so that parents feel less inhibited to disclose sensitive information. This could be done by having regular reading cafes, homework workshops and parent groups. Meeting the child's new teacher at the start of a new academic year could be a good way to ensure that parents know who they can go to about any issues. In secondary schools, a key person could be assigned to each parent so that they can speak directly to someone who knows about their child and build a relationship with them. Texts could be utilized in order to 'check in' on all parents throughout the term to remind them who they can go to if needed. This is so that parents of non-attenders are not singled out or feel pressured.

Support drop ins could be organised to give additional support to parents. Once a month a discussion group, run by parents, could be held covering different aspects of education e.g. homework, attendance, reading, creative ideas. Any issues brought up could be fed back to a member of senior management. This could reduce the impact on previous negative experiences of school as a barrier for seeking support. Parents could be texted about these meetings so that they feel encouraged rather than pressured to attend.

The implication for this finding at a group level would be to increase the information available to parents so that there is a better understanding of what extended non-attendance is and some of the signs and symptoms to look out for. This would hopefully decrease parent's guilt and shame in not being able to manage their child's attendance but also allow parents to see that the non-attendance is something that needs additional support. Specific parent support groups could be set up in order for parents to discuss the issues they are facing and brainstorm strategies that have worked for them. These groups could be facilitated by an educational psychologist.

The implication for this finding at an individual level would be for school staff to closely monitor attendance and organise drop ins at the parent's house for children on the cusp of ESNA to develop action plans to keep the child engaged in school.

4.3.2 Response to child's ESNA

The research highlighted that parents enhance the interactions they have with their children. The main interactions mentioned by parents were that they used more contingent reward strategies, they shared their own experiences of education with their children, they highlighted the importance of education, they tried to understand the reason for non-attendance, they tried to increase the children's opportunities to socialize and they physically took the children to school or they arranged to home-school the children.

The implication for this finding at an organisational level would be for schools to organise visits from successful ex pupils or celebrities, who had enjoyed school to raise the aspirations of disengaged children.

The implication at a group level would be to facilitate support groups for parents, using techniques such as solution circles or reflective teams. However, at an individual level there is a possibility that parents by conveying their negative experiences of education, adversely affect children's motivation to attend.

4.3.3 Parent/school collaboration

The research highlighted that parent/school collaboration enhanced parents' relationship with school and their subsequent confidence that the situation would improve. This collaboration was found to be supported by: the understanding of school staff of the wider factors in the parent's life; acknowledgement of the difficulties they were having by senior staff; parents' understanding of why specific interventions had been suggested and put in place; staff being available at short notice; personal support from key staff members and there being a two-way exchange of information about factors that could affect the child's mood.

The implication for this finding at an organisational level would be for schools to acknowledge the importance of home/school collaboration during ESNA and ensure that all the factors that parents found helpful are included in policy regarding ESNA.

4.3.4 Additional support sought

Parents initially disclosed difficulties with school staff only after having tried to resolve the situation themselves. After disclosure parents were having daily communication with school staff. However,

there were instances of relationship breakdowns where parents had lost confidence in how staff were managing the situation. Parents mentioned only receiving negative information from school, not knowing what was happening at school and a lack of engagement by school staff. As a result of these relationships breaking down referrals were made to outside agencies to support the child. If these agencies did not fulfil the parents' expectations, parents sought alternative provision for their child, such as a change in school, an alternative educational provision or home schooling.

The implication for this finding at an organisational level would be the importance of promoting parents' confidence in the ability of school staff to improve the child's attendance. This could be done by highlighting small improvements in the child's attendance and the positive impact that the parent has had on this improvement. Focussing on the positives if a child has managed to come to school, rather than picking up on small issues with disruption or not wearing the correct uniform. It might also be useful to develop a pathway so that parents know the steps that will be taken if interventions do not work in improving attendance.

The implication for this finding at an individual level would be that, in some specific cases, children are not able to cope with the school environment and alternative provision needs to be available so that these children do not become withdrawn and isolated.

5. Directions in which the research could be developed

The findings from the study have highlighted areas of ESNA that could be researched further. The research suggests that parental confidence and perceived self-efficacy was important for helping them manage their children's non-attendance. One area in which research could be developed is regarding how parents' confidence and trust in school intervention could be increased. An example of a research question could be whether the explicit use of an extended non-attendance pathway, similar to those used for autism spectrum conditions (ASC) (NICE, 2016), used to recognise, refer, diagnose and manage the condition, could improve parents' confidence and trust in school intervention. Parents could benefit from this because parents' responses highlighted that initially they were not believed when they disclosed non-attendance issues and that parents felt that the school were not doing enough to support their child, such as only telling the parent that they needed to get the child into school, suggesting that schools did not know how to manage the problem. Another research area could be an exploration of how to increase parental self-efficacy and confidence in managing their children's extended non-attendance. One idea could be to study whether Solutions Circle groups or Circle of Adults could increase parents' confidence during ESNA.

The research also suggests that parents' expectations of school staff can affect the relationship between them. In order to further explore this phenomenon, the research could be developed to undertake an exploration of parental expectations of school staff during extended non-attendance. Thus, highlighting ways in which schools could change their practice to support parents and children through ESNA. It could also consider ways in which parental expectations may be managed if they expectations are too high and cannot be met by school staff.

The research also highlights that parents try to support their children by talking to them about how school and education can benefit them in the future. It would be interesting to explore how children experiencing ESNA perceive this verbal encouragement from the parents. This could bring to light whether this encouragement has an impact on their willingness to attend and if so, why.

The research suggestions above suggest the use of qualitative designs to further explore ESNA. However, the research could also be developed using quantitative approaches. The research found, with the small sample size used, that parents whose relationships with school staff had broken down that ESNA was unable to be resolved. It would be interesting to find out whether there was a correlation between perceived quality of relationship between parent and school and the extent to which ESNA had been resolved.

6. The relevance of the findings for service users.

6.1. Parents

Findings show that there is some commonality in parents' views of their involvement during ESNA. The findings suggest that parents are doing their best to support their children during ESNA but perhaps run out of strategies to try or have too high expectations of a quick recovery.

6.1.1 Increasing parental confidence

One of the key findings is that when parents felt supported and involved in decisions they were more engaged with school staff and confident in both their personal management and school's management of the ESNA. The strategies suggested to support parents are simple to implement and are outlined under the 'school staff' section below.

6.1.2. Disclosure

The research highlights why parents might not disclose the issue of their children's non-attendance when it first arises. This could be due to the fear of judgement, pressure from family to fix the problem, shame and past experience of education. Ways in which parents can be supported by school

staff, such as ensuring parents know the early warning signs of ESNA and the support staff who can help, are indicated from these findings.

6.2. Children

6.2.1 Children's responses to encouragement

The responses from parents suggest that verbal and physical encouragement had little impact on the children's willingness to attend. The verbal encouragement being used by parents included informing children that once they had received qualifications they would be able to do what they wanted. Parents also mentioned their own experiences of education at their age, not wanting their children to make the same mistakes as they did.

6.2.2. Wellbeing during ESNA

The parents involved in the research generally only recognised ESNA to be a problem when it started to have more obvious effects on the child's wellbeing. In some circumstances, the child had begun self-harming before parental action was taken. It is therefore necessary to improve early recognition and intervention strategies.

6.2.3. Presentation of ESNA

The presentation of ESNA was different from child to child. This highlighted that the individual child must be taken into account when planning strategies to meet the child's needs. For example, one parent mentioned that her child displayed his ESNA by running out of the school grounds after registration whereas for others, difficulties were evident prior to the point of actually entering the school premises.

6.3. School Staff

6.3.1. Parental decision making

The parent decision making model developed in this thesis highlights how parents make decisions throughout ESNA. By using this model, school staff can better understand the constructions of parents, particularly when making decisions and will be able to reflect upon how their practice can change to support parents' decision making.

6.3.2 Developing home/school relationships

The research emphasises the home/school relationship as an important factor in the resolution of ESNA. The research identifies ways in which parents feel supported by school staff. Schools can increase their parental support by: ensuring that a member of staff is easily accessible; that the headteacher acknowledges any issues; that there is frequent communication exchange between

parents; and that staff members focus of positives regarding the children's behaviour and progress. However, the research suggests that once the home/school relationship has broken down the child is unlikely to return to the same school in which the ESNA began.

6.3.3. Early Intervention

The research suggests that children and parents would benefit from early identification and intervention of ESNA. One strategy could include structured interviews at the beginning of every school year to identify parents of children at risk of extended non-attendance. Another could be undertaking wellbeing screening in year 6 and a follow up in year 7 to highlight whether there has been a change in children's wellbeing during transition to high school.

7. Implications of the research findings for educational psychologists

7.1. Individual level work

The research suggests that gathering information from the parents regarding contextual information is important so that this information can be taken into consideration when developing support plans and interventions. The information gathered can be shared with the EWS regarding the factors affecting parents' motivation to engage and the support parents value from professionals.

EPs are well placed to assist in the development of a support plan jointly between parents, children and school staff to address the parent and child's individual needs. EPs can also be involved in facilitating the development of trusting and collaborative relationships between parents and school staff using a consultation approach. EPs also have an objective view that could help to identify whether a child would benefit from attending a different education provision.

EPs can provide parents directly with information regarding the prevalence and symptoms of extended non-attendance, along with recommendations of what parents could do if they are worried about their children's attendance. Parental support can be given directly through training and techniques from family therapy e.g. reflective practice and video interactive guidance (VIG).

7.2. Group level work

EPs could work to increase parents' confidence in managing their children's ESNA by facilitating support groups for parents, using techniques such as solution circles or reflective teams.

EPs could also increase the knowledge, skills and confidence of school staff by delivering training on best practice during ESNA, including how to support parents and evidence-based interventions for children. In addition, training could include how ESNA can negatively affect the parent and child, which could challenge staff perceptions of parental involvement during ESNA.

7.3 Organisational and systems level work

EPs could work to assist schools in becoming ‘parent friendly’ by addressing policies and procedures. School policy and systems could be developed considering ways of increasing parents’ motivation to involve and collaborate with school staff. The research suggests that parents need to know that they are important to their child’s education and to school staff.

Policies focus on supporting parents to feel comfortable about disclosing non-attendance, feel supported and kept informed during decision making processes. One way that this could be done is for EPs to work with school staff to develop literature that can be offered to parents regarding the onset, prevalence, and impact of ESNA, as well as, signs to look out for and who to contact for support. Developing an ESNA pathway with school staff could also be useful, so that the processes during ESNA are transparent to children, parents, school staff and other professionals involved. EPs could also work to develop screening techniques to identify those at risk of ESNA.

EPs could provide psycho education for education welfare services regarding ESNA. This would promote person centred planning and highlight the importance of having a solution focussed approach in order to address what the parents needs to support their child.

In addition to work with schools and education professionals, changes within Government guidelines might also be beneficial. It would be useful to begin to collect data regarding numbers of children with ESNA in order to get a better picture of the extent of the issue. It would be useful to have specific Government documentation regarding the support that can be accessed for parents of children with ESNA and to make the link between attendance and wellbeing in schools.

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9. Appendices

9.1 Appendix 1: Gatekeeper letter for head of education

Dear _____

I am currently studying for a Doctorate in Educational Psychology in the School of Psychology, Cardiff University. Part of the doctorate involves writing a thesis. The research project I am undertaking for my thesis involves exploring how parents of children who have had attendance difficulties view their involvement in their children's education. I am hoping to gain your permission to allow me to do the following.

1. To contact the education welfare service in order for them to contact prospective participants to ask if they would like to take part.
2. For the EWS to send out an information letter on behalf of the researcher for parents who would like to take part.
3. To interview parents in the local authority building (the interview will take about 25min).

Interviews will preferably take place in the Local Authority building, but parents will also be given the option of home interviews. All interviews will be voice recorded. I will ensure the participants know that they can withdraw from the interview at any time and refuse to answer any questions without an explanation. The researcher will also not seek, or record, any information about individuals (e.g. professionals involved). Voice recordings will be kept confidential and stored on a password protected laptop, for which I will be the only password holder. Participants will be made aware that they will be able to ask for their data to be removed without explanation. The voice recordings will be transcribed within 14 days of the interviews being conducted and at this point the information will be anonymised. Participants will be made aware that they will no longer be able to withdraw their data after this point. The anonymised information will be included in a research report and retained by the University of Cardiff indefinitely. The project will be supervised by Gillian Rhydderch (rhydderchga@cardiff.ac.uk).

Should participants have any complaints, they can contact the secretary of the Cardiff University School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee (02920 874007; psychethics@cf.ac.uk). If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me in person or through e-mail at myhill@cardiff.ac.uk.

I would be very grateful if you would support me in conducting this study. It is hoped this piece of research will inform practice for professionals working with the parents of children who are at risk of developing difficulties with attendance.

Kind regards,

Anna Myhill

9.2 Appendix 2: Gatekeeper letter for head of education welfare services

Dear _____

I am currently studying for a Doctorate in Educational Psychology in the School of Psychology, Cardiff University. Part of the doctorate involves writing a thesis. The research project I am undertaking for my thesis involves exploring how parents of children who have had attendance difficulties view their involvement in their children's education. I am hoping to gain your permission to allow me to:

- To contact prospective participants, who meet the selection criteria, to ask if they would like to take part in the study.
- To send out an information letter, on behalf of the researcher, for parents who would like to take part.

What I will do with this information:

Interviews will preferably take place in the Local Authority building, but parents will also be given the option of home interviews. All interviews will be voice recorded. I will ensure the participants know that they can withdraw from the interview at any time and refuse to answer any questions without an explanation. The researcher will also not seek, or record, any information about individuals (e.g. professionals involved). Voice recordings will be kept confidential and stored on a password protected laptop, for which I will be the only password holder. Participants will be made aware that they will be able to ask for their data to be removed without explanation. The voice recordings will be transcribed within 14 days of the interviews being conducted and at this point the information will be anonymised. Participants will be made aware that they will no longer be able to withdraw their data after this point. The anonymised information will be included in the thesis and retained by the University of Cardiff indefinitely. It is possible that this thesis is published. The project will be supervised by Gillian Rhydderch (rhydderchga@cardiff.ac.uk).

Should participants have any complaints, they can contact the secretary of the Cardiff University School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee (02920 874007; psychethics@cf.ac.uk). If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me in person or through e-mail at myhill@cardiff.ac.uk.

It is hoped this piece of research will inform practice for professionals working with the parents of children who are at risk of developing difficulties with attendance. I would be very grateful if you would support me in conducting this study.

Kind regards,

Anna Myhill

9.3 Appendix 3: Participant letter

Dear _____

I am writing to parents to invite them to take part in a study. The study involves exploring how parents of children who have had extended school non-attendance view parental involvement in education. The parents invited to take part have been identified because they have a child who has experienced a prolonged period of time out of school and is now receiving differentiated education.

It is hoped that your views, along with other parents' views, will help inform practice for professionals working with parents of children at risk of extended school non-attendance.

- The interview will take approximately 25 minutes to complete and will be voice recorded.
- You will be able to withdraw from the interview at any time and you can refuse to answer any questions without any explanation.
- The researcher will also not seek, or record, any information about particular individuals (e.g. professionals involved).
- Voice recordings will be kept confidential and stored on a password protected laptop, for which only the researcher has the password.
- You can ask for your answers to be removed without any explanation.
- The voice recordings will be transcribed within 14 days of the interviews being conducted and at this point the data will be anonymised. You can no longer withdraw your answers, after this date, because they will no longer be traceable.
- Your answers will be included in the thesis and retained by the University of Cardiff indefinitely. The thesis could be published. No individual will be identifiable in the report.

The project will be supervised by Gillian Rhydderch (rhydderchga@cardiff.ac.uk).

If you would like to take part please call me or send me an email by _____ 2016.

If sending an email please include your name and preferred contact details so we can arrange a time for an interview. I am hoping to carry out interviews in June or July and would be able to arrange a time which best suits you. If there is a high response rate, participants will be selected randomly.

Email address: myhilla@cardiff.ac.uk.

Phone number: 01633 235660

Mobile: 07903563433

Thank you for your consideration.

Kind regards,

Anna Myhill

9.4 Appendix 4: Arrangements for home interviews

The following measures will be made to ensure the researcher's safety.

- The researcher will ensure someone knows where she is, for the duration of each interview.
- The researcher's mobile will be fully charged.
- Another educational psychologist will check on the researcher by ringing five minutes after the start time for the interview. If the researcher has any concerns, this would be taken as an opportunity to cut short the interview and leave.
- The researcher will phone a predetermined member of the educational psychology service to state she is safe when she leaves.
- The researcher's car will be left in an easy place to access and depart from.
- The researcher will ensure the front door is not 'double locked' or key removed so she could get out if necessary.
- The researcher will check with the Local Authority that the house is not known to be unsafe beforehand.

9.5 Appendix 5: Foreword to accompany informed consent

I am currently studying for a Doctorate in Educational Psychology in the School of Psychology, Cardiff University. Part of the doctorate involves writing a thesis. The study involves exploring how parents of children who have had extended school non-attendance, i.e., had a prolonged period of not going to school, view parental involvement in education. By taking part in this interview you are helping me explore this, thank you.

You can decide not to answer any question, or to end the interview, at any point, without giving a reason. I will be recording the interview so that I am able to transcribe your answers later. Voice recordings will be kept confidential and stored on a password protected laptop, for which only I will have the password.

You can ask for your answers to be removed without any explanation until they are transcribed, from this point I will be unable to identify which answers were yours.

Your answers will be included in a research my thesis and retained by the University of Cardiff indefinitely. It is possible that this thesis will be published. No individual will be able to be identified in the final Thesis. It is hoped this piece of research will inform practice for professionals working with the parents of children at risk of extended school non-attendance.

9.6 Appendix 6: Informed consent

School of Psychology, Cardiff University

Consent Form - Confidential data

Please tick the box if you agree with the statement

- I understand that my participation in this project will involve an interview exploring my views on parental involvement in education.
- I understand that the interview will require approximately 25 minutes of my time.
- I understand the interview will be voice recorded.
- I understand that I am able to withdraw from the interview at any time.
- I understand that I am able to refuse to answer any questions without any explanation.
- I understand that the researcher will also not seek, or record, any information about particular individuals (e.g. professionals involved).
- I understand that the voice recordings will be kept confidential and stored on a password protected laptop, for which only the researcher has the password, therefore only the Researcher can trace the information back to me individually.
- I understand that I can ask for my answers to be removed without any explanation.
- I understand that the voice recordings will be transcribed within 14 days of the interviews being conducted and at this point the data will be anonymised.
- I understand that once the data is anonymised that my answers are no longer able to be withdrawn, as they will no longer be traceable.
- I understand that my anonymised answers will be included in a thesis and retained by the University of Cardiff indefinitely. This thesis could be published.
- I understand that I am free to ask any questions at any time.
- I am free to withdraw or discuss my concerns with the project supervisor, Gillian Rhydderch.
- I also understand that at the end of the interview I will be provided with additional information and feedback about the purpose of the thesis.

I, _____ (NAME) consent to participate in the study conducted by Anna Myhill, School of Psychology, Cardiff University with the supervision of Gillian Rhydderch.

Signed:

Date:

9.7 Appendix 7: Semi-structured interview questions

Foreword

- Thank you for taking the time to take part in this study.
- This interview will take about 25 minutes.
- I am interested in understanding your experience from your point of view. Therefore there are no right or wrong answers.
- Although I have some ideas of questions I would like to ask, I do not have a pre-set agenda and I am interested in what you have to say about the topic, in as much detail as you would like to give.
- During our discussion I will say very little, because I am interested in hearing and learning as much as I can about you and your experience

1. What do you do to help your child with school life?
What do you do before school? After school? At weekends? During the holidays?
With school?
2. Do you think your help has an effect on your child? In what way?
Grades? Happiness? Willingness to learn?
3. Has the way you have helped changed since your child's difficulties in going into school? If so, how?
What caused this change?
4. Does anyone affect the help you give and your involvement with school?
e.g. school requests, requests from child, school concerts etc.
Does anything else?
What effects your engagement the most?
Has your child's non-attendance affected your involvement? If so how? why?
5. To what extent do you think your personal values and experiences of education play a part?
Where did these values come from?
What experiences had an effect?
Do you feel any differently now than before your child's difficulties?
6. Is there anything extra you would like to do for your child but you are unable at the moment?
What do you think is stopping you? Home situation, work commitments?

How might that help?

Is there anyone or anything that could help?

7. Is there anything that makes/made you uncertain about involving school/other agencies?

Why do you think this?

Could you tell me a little more?

8. Is there anything that would make/have made you more comfortable/ want to engage?

School staff?

Other agencies? E.g. educational psychology, social work, family liaison

Further information

Support networks

What could they do?

How could this help you?

9.8 Appendix 8: Interview debrief

School of Psychology, Cardiff University

Thank you for taking the time to participate in the interview. This study aims to explore how parents of children who have had extended school non-attendance view parental involvement in education. Specifically, there are 4 research questions:

1. How are parents involved in resolving their child's extended school non-attendance?
2. What intrapersonal and interpersonal factors influence parental involvement during their child's extended school non-attendance?
3. How does parental involvement change during the course of a child's extended school non-attendance?
4. How can parental involvement be supported during a child's extended school non-attendance?

It is hoped this piece of research will inform practice for professionals working with parents of children at risk of extended school non-attendance.

The information you have given us will be kept confidentially until made anonymous. Please remember that you do have the right to withdraw your answers up until _____2016, after this the information will have been anonymised and therefore will not be traceable. If you are affected by any of the questions asked, please speak to _____ who is aware that you might need to talk to her/him. Further information about extended non-attendance/school refusal and ideas of how to support children who are experiencing extended non-attendance can be found at http://www.handsonscotland.co.uk/topics/troubling_behaviours_topic_frameset_list.htm and a list of useful websites and support groups can be found at <http://www.specialneedsjungle.com/school-refusal-wont-go-cant-go/>.

If you have any further questions or you wish to withdraw, please email Anna Myhill (myhillA@cardiff.ac.uk). Alternatively, you can contact the research supervisor: Gillian Rhydderch

School of Psychology
Cardiff University
Tower Building
Park Place
Cardiff CF10 3AT
Tel: 02920 875493
Email: rhydderchGA@cardiff.ac.uk

If you have any ethical concerns, you are welcome to contact the Cardiff University Ethics Committee directly:

Secretary of the Ethics Committee
School of Psychology
Cardiff University
Tower Building
Park Place
Cardiff CF10 3AT
Tel: 02920 870360
Email: psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk

9.9 Appendix 9: Example of coding and analysis

Step 1: Familiarisation with the data.

Below is an extract of transcription with initial code. This interview was slightly different in that the teaching assistant who had been there to support the parent during her child's ESNA was asked to join us during the interview.

I: What do you think your role is in your child's education?

P6: I do try my best at home you know but [child's name] I tried to help him before with homework and well he's been telling, 'I do it this way' and I'm trying to explain to him, 'You've gotta try and do it this way' but it just all went wrong anyway so I try not to help him with too much at home, 'cos he gets uh, really uh, he, like,(.) changes and things like that and says, 'I can't do it'.

I: What do you do to help your child with school life so is there anything you do before school?

P6: I used to, where I used to say, 'Come on, you can make new friends' and everything but now I ain't got to really say anything to him, he likes coming to school, he's up most mornings before me, umm dressed and out through the door, he's going, so nothing now, it's good.

I: What kinds of things do you get up to after school with him? The homework no, not so much!

P6: He goes and, he's not really, he goes on his Xbox and plays with his friends, he don't really sit in and watch films any more, I think he's at that age where he wants to go out playing or doing stuff with his friends now so not really much with me now after school.

I: Does he do any reading?

P6: Oh yeah, he does do reading, so yeah, I'll read the book to him and he'll read it back to me, but yeah, that's about it really.

I: What kinds of things do you do at the weekends?

P6: Same again, he likes playing, he likes days out, we'd be going day trips out but not too far because he don't like travelling.

I: What kinds of day trips does he like?

P6: Uh, well the beach is the closest place to use where to can actually say you know it's only about twenty minutes, half an hour on the train or whatever. So, the beach, swimming, town, and things like that.

I: Does he like his sports?

P6: Yeah, he is a sporty boy, he's good as well.

I: Do you think, when you were encouraging him to go to school, do you think that has had any effect?

P6: Yeah, I just had to keep, you know, like I said it was really difficult to get [child's name] to come to school at one point and I just had to keep up with it and you know it was hard some days but yeah, we managed to get him here and he loves coming now so yeah.

I: Is he, do you find that his willingness to learn has changed?

Personal TA: yeah, now, it's been a long process but now, yeah definitely, he's engaged, particularly good at maths and I think because he's understood because he is actually good at maths and other things it's given him the confidence to not rely on me too much and it's been great, because when I first started with him, trying to get him to do anything was, we used to have to do quite a lot of practical work because he wouldn't sit down and write so there was a lot of hands on stuff but now he will sit and he's now in school 6 hours of the day and he will do all of his work. We still get days where... but he will say to his Mum that he doesn't wanna do it but he never said to me. So, on the way to school he'll say, 'I don't wanna do work today' but he'll come in and he'll be absolutely fine but with [child's name] you need to completely tell him exactly what's happening and when or he'll ask you what time it is or how long this is going to take. He needs structure, a lot of structure. But he is happy to do it now.

I: Do you think the way you helped him and encouraged him changed since he was having difficulties going into school?

P6: Well I would like to say I helped him, yeah, 'cos I kept to my word, some days I'd be like [groan] and didn't think it was gonna happen like, you know, but now he's like... yeah

Personal TA: You always wanted him to go and showed that you wanted him to go. It was never false or giving into him, you were always encouraging him to come in or try and do work with me when I was at the house which had a positive effect 'cos you could have just gone 'I can't deal with this'

P6: Yeah, exactly, yeah. I did keep to my word and kept on and on.

Personal TA: I started with [child's name] in the April but there had been a few before me.

P6: There were a lot of people involved like support workers and people from...

Personal TA: School sent home support tuition from school.

P6: Uh, quite a few people there was, I can't remember all the names of them but there were quite a few people but [child's name] would not engage with anybody, he wouldn't look at anyone he wouldn't speak to anyone, he wouldn't do nothing really, he'd be like head to the floor and that was it, you couldn't get nothing out of him at all and [TA's name] come up one day and it took him about a month at least to try and get [TA's name] to sit down and do stuff with him.

Personal TA: I think though he threw everything he had at me and I still came back. We'd have days where he'd go upstairs and refuse to come down so we just set everything up and slowly but surely, he'd creep down the stairs and join in. Sort of a build-up but there'd been a couple of people before me but I think from what I've read because there was no engagement, they had given up on him and I think that just added to everything that was stopping [child's name] coming to school in the first place.

P6: Definitely

Personal TA: There is rejection there.

I: At the time when [child's name] was not coming in and refusing to come into school who affected your commitment to getting him back in? Did your son ask you for help?

P6: No, I wanted him to come to school more than anybody to be honest with you, for his education and everything but it was when he was at his old school he would not go at all and I had umm a lot of pressure on me then because the head teacher of that school, she was like kind of putting pressure on me saying 'you've gotta make sure he comes' and there was a couple of incidents where we actually dragged [child's name] into a car in his pyjamas and take him to the school and he actually self-harmed himself quite badly on his face and made himself bleed, it was a lot of incidents and I just thought 'no, this aint right for my son' you know so I did kinda, held back a little bit 'cos I thought 'I'm not putting my son through that, I've offered the headteacher for them to come to my home to watch me to try and get [child's name] to get dressed for school and she didn't wanna come, uh, I just like to know, I can't put my son through it, obviously he is not happy at that school, there's obviously something going on so I did kinda hold back then and then I just thought, 'Do you know what...' then Social Services got involved and everything started to fall back into place then. I sat down, all the right help that he needed and God bless for [TA's name] she's been-, my son's a total different boy, literally a total different boy. I'm really really proud of him now, and proud of, well I love [TA's name] to bits anyway, I do, she's really good. I get very emotional thinking back on it.

Personal TA: I think as well, this time last year we could never have imagined he'd be going out to play with friends 'cos he used to be like a recluse, didn't he?

P6: Yeah, nothing at all we couldn't get nothing from him.

Personal TA: Barely speak to anybody.

P6: He'd barely speak to me or, well he did but he'd be abusive to me then and now, total different boy. It's amazing, amazing.

I: What did you think it was that really made the turn around?

P6: Well [TA's name] that's the only way I can describe is [TA's name] come and everything's just changed, literally, like you know it took a while but he's in school all day. When he first come to the school he was only doing two and a half wasn't he, hours.

Personal TA: the school were quite effective at getting him to transition because they understood that he'd been off for nearly a year and a half, you can't just force a child to come in for six hours a day who'd been at home for that amount of time and the head was very understanding wasn't she?.

P6: Really, I love this school, absolutely love it.

Personal TA: So, at first I think on paper they read about a child and they think 'right well you know he's gotta be coming into school' but once they met [child's name] they understood the bigger picture they were like, 'Well, let's let him go at his pace,' and I think in the September he was turning around and he asked if he could come the whole day.

P6: I can't believe it, I can't breathe thinking about it.

Personal TA: And we said, 'Ok, if you like, yeah' and we haven't really looked back have we.

P6: No, don't get me wrong, he does have his odd days, now and then but we get him through it.

Personal TA: I think we had two blips, one this week and one sort of not long after he'd been coming for full days but, go out and say you know 'come in, if you're still feeling like this at lunch time mum can come and get you 'cos coming in for some of the day is better than none of the day.'

P6: He says, 'Oh mum, please tell [TA's name] I don't wanna do work, I says, 'Ok I'll say to [TA's name],'' and then she says he don't mention nothing to her, so I think he is just...

Personal TA: He sees other children just getting on and he is on a table with other children with similar situations and similar levels so he doesn't feel sort of out of his depth or made to feel bad because he's behind or not been in school because there are children with similar needs and he actually thrives on the fact that he has competition. He'll be like 'how many have they done, how many sentences have they done?' and I'll be like 'they've done ten... oh, I'm gonna do twelve' and that's worked out really well because it encourages him to work.

I: Where have your views come from about wanting him to get an education? Do you think it's your school that you used to go to or your parents?

P6: No, nothing like that, just basically myself really and I want my kid to have an education you know, we're not all brainy, like myself and it's not nice. I don't want my son to be growing up without not knowing certain things and you know it's really important so making sure they're in school every single day even some mornings it kills me, so it hasn't come from no one but me wanting my kids to be in school definitely.

I: Is there anything extra you would like to have done for [child's name] while he was going through his difficulties but you felt you were unable to?

P6: Yeah, basically when we were at our old address and I won't go too much into detail, yeah, I could of done certain things maybe a bit different, I was going through a bad stage myself, umm, but yeah.

Personal TA: And you asked for help which was massive, you wanted the help.

P6: Yeah, I did like I was saying I had loads of support before and nothing ever worked like you know I even phoned Social Services myself to come and help me because I just didn't know what to do at one point and I was like, 'My kids out of control' so yeah.

I: Is there anything that made you uncertain about getting that extra help?

P6: No, the school's been brilliant, [TA's name] obviously knows quite a bit about it anyway but no I weren't worried about that.

I: You were quite happy to ask?

P6: Yeah

Personal TA: Because you've [parent 6] been quite open as well from the start, that's allowed us to understand why there was issues and why he's anxious and be able to work with him. Because if you hadn't offered information about the past and things then we'd have no sort of clue how best to work with him.

I: Is there anything that you would have liked, any information?

P6: I wouldn't mind to see how other children behave.

Personal TA: Maybe other parents as well.

P6: Yeah, definitely in a similar situation.

I: Like a group of you?

P6: don't get me wrong I don't like sitting in groups, I don't, I really shy myself I am but I would like to see other parents and their opinions on certain things, yeah.

Personal TA: the education welfare officer was involved too?

P6: Yeah.

Personal TA: Her involvement was important wasn't it.

P6: If it wasn't for her maybe certain things would have went really bad, like with um his old school, she knew there was like problems that [child's name] had and like yes, she helped me get through it basically, telling the head teacher.

Personal TA: She didn't see [child's name] as 'he has to go in' she seen him as an individual child who has needs and not a statistic of attendance.

P6: She was really shocked actually when I told her the statement the other day and she was actually shocked to think how that school let it go on, she really got upset about that.

Personal TA: She has always bent over backwards to make sure that we could get to this position now rather than forcing him into a school where it was clearly not working for [child's name].

P6: All she, the other head teacher wanted to do was prosecute me and like, [EWO's name] said, 'That's not the way to go about it, you can prosecute her but what about [child's name] that's just gonna add more stress on the top of everything else and could make it go the other way.'

Personal TA: And in some circumstances it's not a situation you've chosen to be in yourself, often it's just circumstances I think they didn't really want to see this, it was just that [parent 6] wouldn't get [child's name] into school I think because then you'd be picking up children, they'd see [child's name] with you and say, 'Well he is capable of coming to school because he comes to pick up his sister,' but it wasn't about that.

P6: Yeah, loads of things.

I: Do you think for other parents with this difficulty, do you think having flexibility with the school would help them?

P6: Oh definitely, I can come here and months ago I just didn't feel myself and I just spoke to the reception woman and she just let me come in here, sit down and, yeah, they are really, yeah schools should be like you know welcoming.

Personal TA: Its very community based because it's in the heart of [area's name], like [mum's name] said, she could come in, she wanted some help and to chat and the staff did and phoned the social

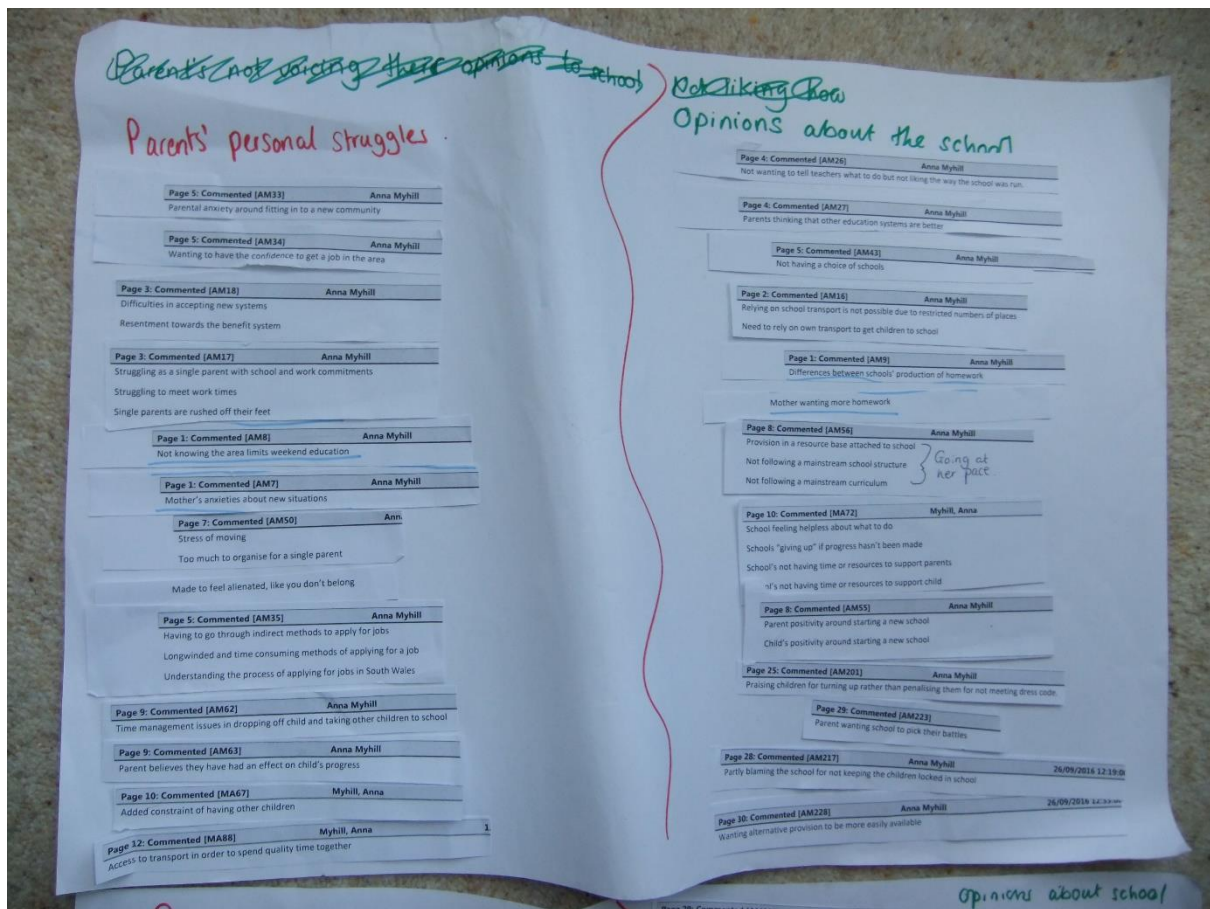
worker just to say, 'I think you should come in and see [mother's name].' You could go to other places and they'd be quite dismissive. You know like, 'It's not my problem.'

I: I think that's all of my questions, would you like to add anything else?

P6: No, that's fine, I think that's all from me, because I'll get all emotional if I start getting too deep

Step 2: Search for categories

Initial codes were printed out and grouped to search for common categories (Figure 7)



Personal issues

- Page 16: Commented [AM132] Anna Myhill 19/09/20
Parents needing to be in the right frame of mind in order to cope with the situation
- Page 12: Commented [MA89] Myhill, Anna 1
Feels that money is needed to spend quality time with the children
- Page 19: Commented [AM150] Anna Myhill
Having to go to work early negatively impacted on child going to school
- Wanting help with structure and boundaries
- Page 25: Commented [AM204] Anna Myhill
Flexibility in work
- Page 35: Commented [AM269] Anna Myhill 26/09/2016 14
Parent anxious around groups of people
- Page 34: Commented [AM264] Anna Myhill 26/09/2016 14
Parental vulnerability having an effect on parenting capacity
- Page 37: Commented [AM283] Anna Myhill
Money limiting the ability to take the child out on trips and activities at the weekend
- Page 38: Commented [AM285] Anna Myhill
Parent not able to follow the child's sporting interest due to emotional issues
- Page 40: Commented [AM313] Anna Myhill
Parent not able to spend as much time with child due to personal difficulties
- Page 42: Commented [AM335] Anna Myhill
Parental anger
- Page 42: Commented [AM333] Anna Myhill
Parent realising that she tends to see situations in a negative light
- Page 42: Commented [AM334] Anna Myhill
Reliant on children for emotional support
- Page 41: Commented [AM326] Anna Myhill 26/09/2016 16:27:00
Parent doesn't always have the ability to cope with the situation and take on strategies recommended
- Page 53: Commented [MA425] Myhill, Anna 27/09/20
Parent forced to home school needed respite from child
- Page 55: Commented [MA443] Myhill, Anna 27/09
Meeting the emotional needs of the parent is necessary in order to support child

Opinions about school

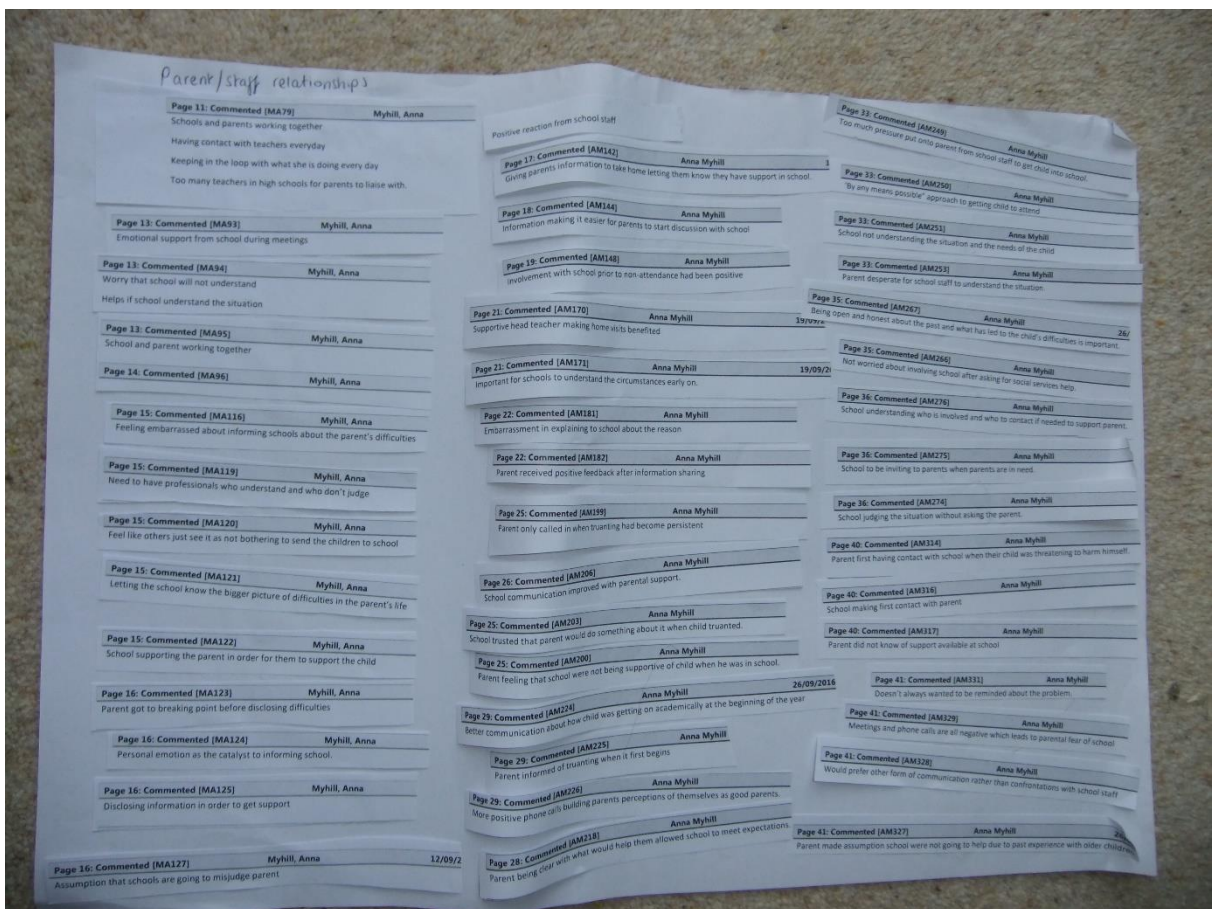
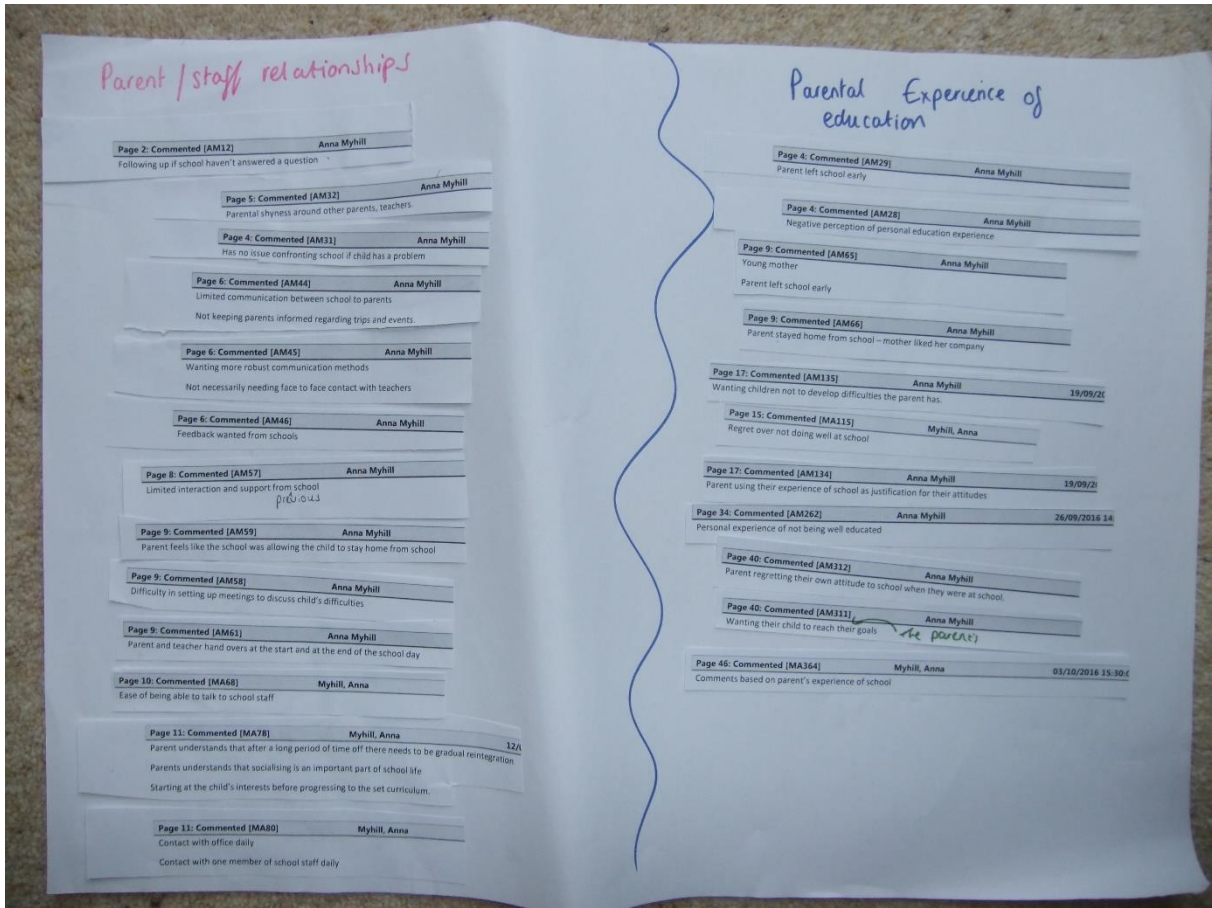
- Page 29: Commented [AM227] Anna Myhill 26/09/2016 12:32:06
Alternative provision - more flexibility
- Page 32: Commented [AM242] Anna Myhill 26/09/20
Supporting child by introducing a more structured timetable with the support of a key adult
- Page 32: Commented [AM241] Anna Myhill 26/09/20
Phased entry back to school after time out
- Page 32: Commented [AM240] Anna Myhill 26/09/20
Encourage attendance through practical, hands on work
- Page 32: Commented [AM239] Anna Myhill 26/09/20
Slow reintegration into school
- Page 32: Commented [AM238] Anna Myhill 26/09/20
Finding a particular academic interest has encouraged the child's willingness to engage
- Page 32: Commented [AM246] Anna Myhill
Importance in building relationship in order for child to engage
- Page 32: Commented [AM247] Anna Myhill
Personal tutor to be resilient and patient in order to build child's trust in her
- Page 32: Commented [AM248] Anna Myhill
Other tutors that had given up on child slowed progress due to child feeling rejected
- Page 33: Commented [AM256] Anna Myhill
School understood that they could push the child before he was ready
- Page 34: Commented [AM258] Anna Myhill
Being with children of similar ability
- Page 34: Commented [AM257] Anna Myhill
Important to go at the child's pace
- Page 34: Commented [AM259] Anna Myhill 26/09/2016 14
Doesn't feel like he is out of his depth or behind
- Page 38: Commented [AM293] Anna Myhill
Parent feels the reduced timetable is not showing enough progress
- Page 38: Commented [AM292] Anna Myhill
Wants child to be in school full time - can't see the progress he is making
- Page 38: Commented [AM292] Anna Myhill
Reduced timetable doesn't always work

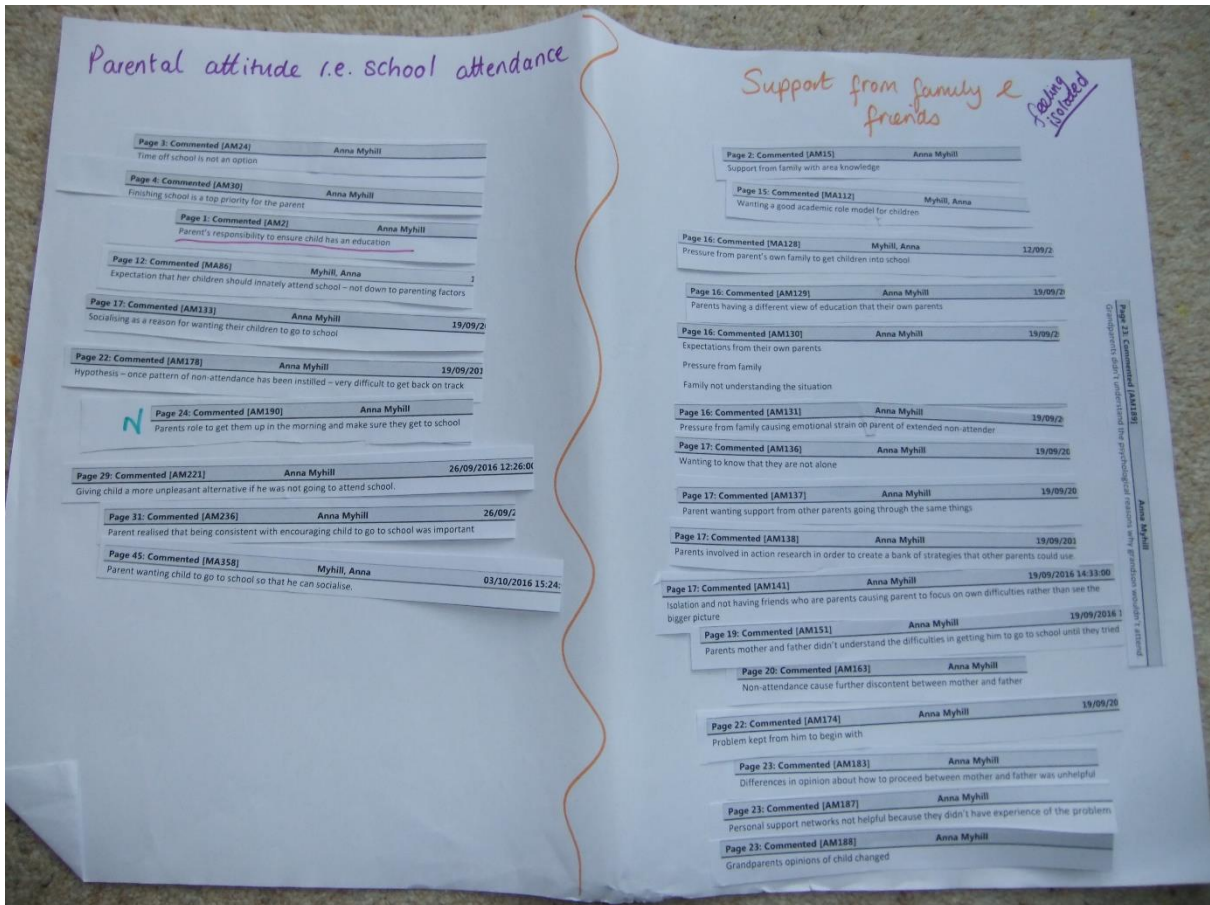
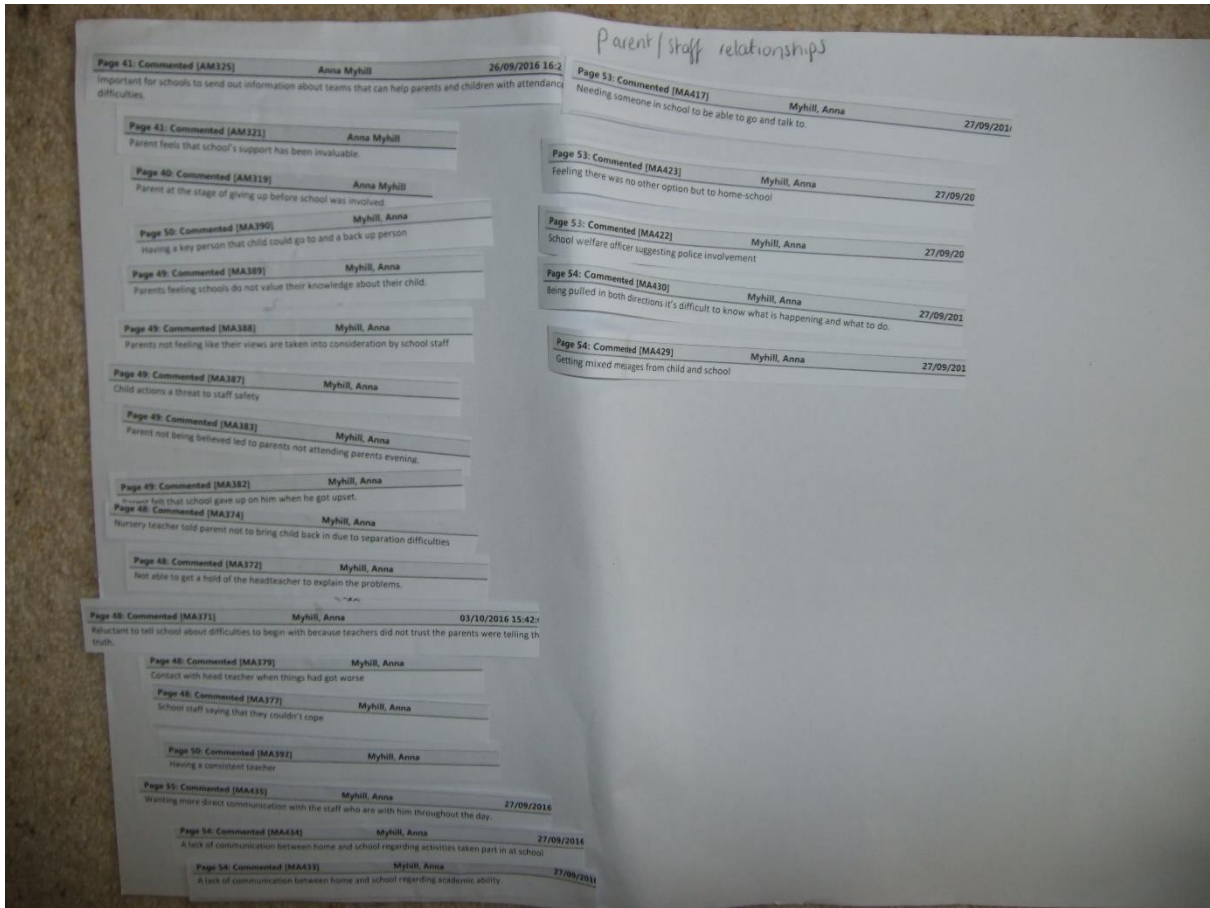
Personal Issues

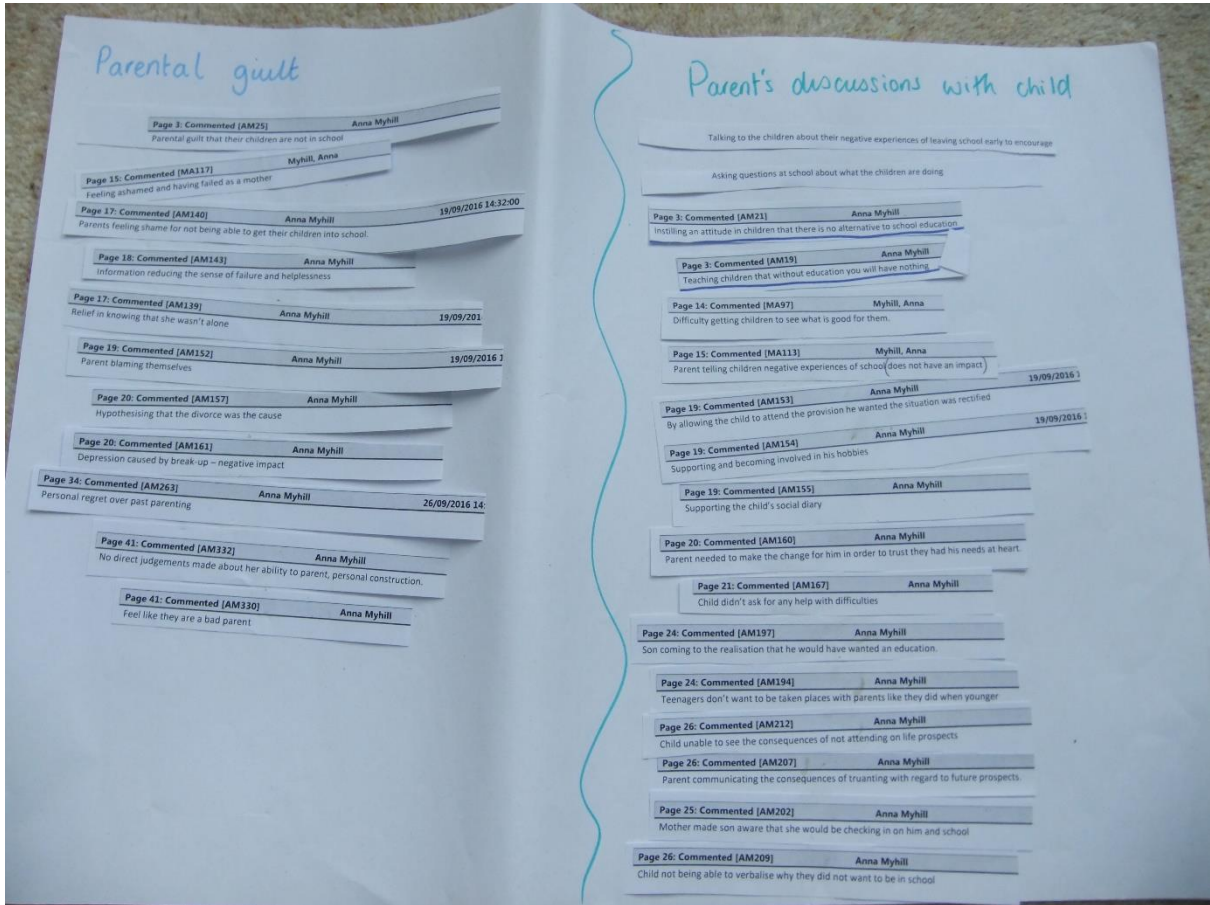
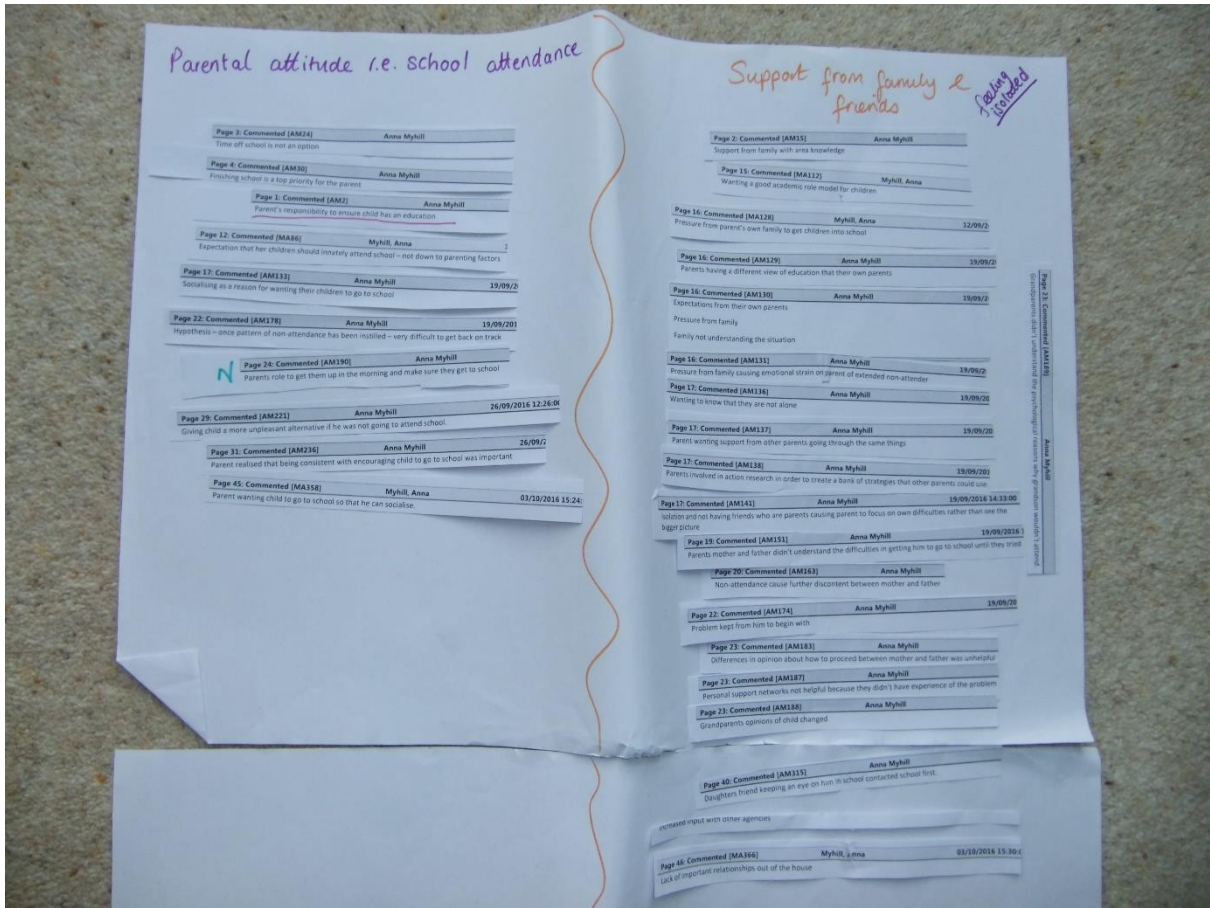
- Page 55: Commented [MA442] Myhill, Anna 27/09
Parent's emotional health suffered when child refused school and there was a battle with school
- Page 55: Commented [MA441] Myhill, Anna 27/09
Lack of confidence in ability to teach
- Page 55: Commented [MA440] Myhill, Anna 27/09
Wanting to know that they are doing the best for their child socially and academically
- Page 55: Commented [MA439] Myhill, Anna 27/09
Parent wanting to know that they are doing a good job of teaching
- Page 55: Commented [MA438] Myhill, Anna 27/09
No rigidly defined ways of meeting children's needs
- Page 55: Commented [MA437] Myhill, Anna 27/09
Having work and pedagogy checked by professional

Opinions about school

- Page 50: Commented [MA391] Myhill, Anna
Utilising the child's interests to help reduce anxiety
- Page 49: Commented [MA386] Myhill, Anna
Parent worried that child will not be able to release frustration at school
- Page 48: Commented [MA381] Myhill, Anna
Child got used to going to school for the morning and leaving at dinner time
- Page 47: Commented [MA366] Myhill, Anna 03/10/2016 15:37
Improvement when child had begun to trust and open up to another adult
- Page 50: Commented [MA395] Myhill, Anna
Praise focussed on task
- Page 50: Commented [MA394] Myhill, Anna
Getting immediate positive feedback about ability in subject that interests them
- Page 50: Commented [MA393] Myhill, Anna
Competition to motivate child to with activities
- Page 52: Commented [MA410] Myhill, Anna 27/09/20
Child coming to the realisation that they would like to go back to school after being home tutored
- Page 55: Commented [MA436] Myhill, Anna 27/09/2016
Wanting some standards to be set for home schooling
- Page 53: Commented [MA418] Myhill, Anna 27/09/2016
Child segregated after difficulties but did not help
- Page 54: Commented [MA432] Myhill, Anna 27/09/2016
Perceived emotional mistreatment by staff
- Page 53: Commented [MA416] Myhill, Anna 27/09/2016
Wanting intensive, long term emotional support for her child
- Page 54: Commented [MA431] Myhill, Anna 27/09/2016
Perceived lack of quality of education
- Page 52: Commented [MA405] Myhill, Anna
Routine is now more flexible now home schooled
- Page 55: Commented [MA444] Myhill, Anna 27/09
Wanting an alternative provision for children with emotional and social needs







Parental Helplessness

Parent feels their encouragement made a difference
 Page 31: Commented [AM217] Anna Myhill 26/09/2016

Parent admits that there were days in which she thought her child was never going back to school
 Page 12: Commented [AM242] Anna Myhill 26/09/2016

Parent would like to see how other parents manage similar situations
 Page 35: Commented [AM268] Anna Myhill 26/09/2016

Parent asking social services for help since parent had reached their limit
 Page 34: Commented [AM285] Anna Myhill 26/09/2016

Parent feeling like the situation will not change
 Page 38: Commented [AM292] Anna Myhill

Parent runs out of strategies to try and feels helpless
 Page 41: Commented [AM321] Anna Myhill

Parent needs other people to make referrals for her for additional support
 Page 41: Commented [AM324] Anna Myhill

Parent can't see other agencies having any effect on son
 Page 45: Commented [MA349] Myhill, Anna 03/10/2016 15:18

Encouraging child to do homework is fruitless
 Page 51: Commented [MA407] Myhill, Anna

Parent felt as though their encouragement made a difference
 Page 53: Commented [MA420] Myhill, Anna 27/09/2016

Parent feeling helpless and unsupported
 Page 52: Commented [MA414] Myhill, Anna 27/09/2016

Parent noticing improvements and progress with social anxiety after being home schooled

Discussion with child

Mixed messages from parents - parents demonstrated that they did not get good results but were able to make up for this later in life
 Page 31: Commented [AM231] Anna Myhill 26/09/2016

Focus on the progress of friends to encourage child to go to school
 Page 38: Commented [AM294] Anna Myhill

Child distressed when he is shouted at for missing school
 Page 39: Commented [AM301] Anna Myhill

Parent has no intention to follow through with the threat
 Page 39: Commented [AM305] Anna Myhill

Mother shouts at child if he wants her help and she is busy
 Page 39: Commented [AM306] Anna Myhill

Shouts at mother when he has had a bad day
 Page 38: Commented [AM304] Anna Myhill

Child is able to ask for help with homework when needed
 Page 39: Commented [AM300] Anna Myhill

Parent threatening child in order to get them up and helping
 Page 40: Commented [AM338] Anna Myhill

Parent blunt with child regarding the consequences of not going to school
 Page 44: Commented [MA346] Myhill, Anna

Child shutting down lines of communication with parents
 Page 48: Commented [MA378] Myhill, Anna

Parent-child relationship break down
 Page 46: Commented [MA361] Myhill, Anna 03/10/2016 15:28

Child not responding to more general reasons why he should attend school
 Page 45: Commented [MA355] Myhill, Anna 03/10/2016 15:21

Child not seeing the benefit of school
 Page 45: Commented [MA354] Myhill, Anna 03/10/2016 15:21

Child can't see the benefit of school
 Page 46: Commented [MA361] Myhill, Anna 03/10/2016 15:22

Parent's communication not helping child's anxiety
 Page 45: Commented [MA337] Myhill, Anna 03/10/2016 15:20

Conversation needs to highlight the fears but give strategies to adopt if they come true and who will make sure they don't happen
 Page 45: Commented [MA356] Myhill, Anna 03/10/2016 15:22

Feeling like the situation has worsened since parents have encouraged him more
 Page 45: Commented [MA351] Myhill, Anna 03/10/2016 15:16

Parent believes child is making excuses for not wanting to do homework
 Page 45: Commented [MA350] Myhill, Anna 03/10/2016 15:15

Parental ability in supporting social anxiety in child
 Page 52: Commented [MA411] Myhill, Anna 27/09/2016

Parent realised the importance of keeping a good relationship with child
 Page 51: Commented [MA404] Myhill, Anna

Parent / child struggles

Helplessness around her daughter not going to school
 Page 8: Commented [AM51] Anna Myhill 07/09/2016 15:52:00

Not being able to do educational activities together at home due to child's anxiety
 Page 8: Commented [AM52] Anna Myhill

Lost communication between parent and child
 Page 8: Commented [AM53] Anna Myhill

Isolation from the rest of the family unit
 Page 8: Commented [AM54] Anna Myhill

Homework used as a way of interacting with children
 Page 12: Commented [MA82] Myhill, Anna

Parent would like more homework
 Page 12: Commented [MA81] Myhill, Anna

Parent's frustration with their children
 Children not following parent's direction
 Parent feels it's mainly the schools responsibility to educate her children
 Page 12: Commented [MA87] Myhill, Anna 1

Children spending more time with friends than with the family
 Page 13: Commented [MA91] Myhill, Anna 1

Parent feels helpless even with new strategies she tries to encourage them to go to school
 Page 20: Commented [AM158] Anna Myhill

Child knowing that non-attendance would upset parents
 Page 20: Commented [AM159] Anna Myhill

Embarrassment due to being a headteacher/ teacher
 Page 20: Commented [AM162] Anna Myhill

Being at child's beck and call when child wasn't attending
 Page 20: Commented [AM165] Anna Myhill

Felt that having more time together could have helped the situation
 Page 22: Commented [AM175] Anna Myhill 19/09/2016

Job conflicts with ability to be available to child to motivate him
 Page 22: Commented [AM176] Anna Myhill 19/09/2016

Wanting to have taken a more physical approach with him
 Page 22: Commented [AM177] Anna Myhill 19/09/2016

Understanding that the more physical approach could have led to truancy
 Page 22: Commented [AM179] Anna Myhill

Link with teenage angst
 Page 24: Commented [AM195] Anna Myhill

Child preferring to spend time with friends

Child doesn't like travelling, therefore experiences constrained to near home
 Page 31: Commented [AM235] Anna Myhill 26/09/2016

Prefer to spend time with friends rather than parent
 Page 31: Commented [AM232] Anna Myhill 26/09/2016

Parent not knowing how best to support child with homework
 Page 31: Commented [AM230] Anna Myhill 26/09/2016

Parent realising that forcing child into school was having a detrimental effect
 Page 37: Commented [AM278] Anna Myhill

Parent would need to scream and shout to get children out of bed
 Page 39: Commented [AM299] Anna Myhill

Parent is hindering his ability to attend
 Page 39: Commented [AM286] Anna Myhill

Parent having to physically take the child to school before child can
 Page 38: Commented [AM296] Anna Myhill

Parent doesn't understand the importance of the child going at their own pace
 Page 39: Commented [AM302] Anna Myhill

Parent feeling that their child does not listen to them
 Page 39: Commented [AM307] Anna Myhill

Realising that sometimes the parent does not always phrase things positively
 Page 38: Commented [AM290] Anna Myhill

Child not trusting parent
 Page 38: Commented [AM289] Anna Myhill

Parent feeling their child doesn't trust them
 Page 43: Commented [MA338] Myhill, Anna

Complicated morning routine relying heavily on the parents
 Page 44: Commented [MA342] Myhill, Anna

Difficulty sleeping affects ability and intention to go out on trips with parents
 Page 44: Commented [MA347] Myhill, Anna

Needing to be around mother
 Page 49: Commented [MA385] Myhill, Anna

Parent worried about the behaviours directed at them
 Page 52: Commented [MA406] Myhill, Anna

More opportunity to build a trusting relationship: *Home schooled*
 Page 48: Commented [MA380] Myhill, Anna

Child not being able to experience trips without parent coming along
 Page 51: Commented [MA400] Myhill, Anna

Child tending to do solitary activities at home

Wanting more interaction with the children

*Some disputes,
Opinions re. outside agency support*

Page 10: Commented [MA711]	Myhill, Anna	
Gap in provision for children with suicidal thoughts		
No early intervention for children with mental health difficulties		
Page 10: Commented [MA89]	Myhill, Anna	
Difficulties in accessing mental health professionals		
Page 10: Commented [MA70]	Myhill, Anna	
Difficulties in maintaining support after moving counties		
Page 10: Commented [MA73]		
Gaps in the EWS/ how the EWS works		
Page 11: Commented [MA75]	Myhill, Anna	1
Support for parents in referral to CAMHS/ other mental health support agencies		
Page 11: Commented [MA76]	Myhill, Anna	12
Parents struggle alone		
Page 11: Commented [MA77]	Myhill, Anna	12
Passing the buck		
Wasting time by having to go through gatekeepers		
Page 13: Commented [MA92]	Myhill, Anna	
Feeling that nothing can change without outside agency help		
Wanting help from an outside agency		
Page 15: Commented [MA118]	Myhill, Anna	
Having a social worker is useful		
Page 21: Commented [AM168]	Anna Myhill	
EWS wasn't able to improve his attendance		
Page 21: Commented [AM169]	Anna Myhill	
EWS threatened prosecution		
Page 23: Commented [AM184]	Anna Myhill	
Not having faith in the family G.P.		
Page 23: Commented [AM185]	Anna Myhill	
Support from school staff rather than agency was key		
Page 26: Commented [AM208]	Anna Myhill	
Parent's feeling helpless - calling for support from police		
Page 28: Commented [AM220]	Anna Myhill	26/09/2016 12:25:00
Frequent check ins by the education welfare officer was beneficial.		
Page 32: Commented [AM244]	Anna Myhill	
Support for the parent from multiple agencies		

Page 32: Commented [AM245]	Anna Myhill	
Personal tuition from school sent home benefited		
Page 33: Commented [AM254]	Anna Myhill	
Home tuition and social services involvement was beneficial		
Page 33: Commented [AM255]	Anna Myhill	
Parental support so necessary due to abuse received from child towards parent		
Page 35: Commented [AM272]	Anna Myhill	26/09/2016 14
Blanket prosecutions for non-attendance was unhelpful.		
Page 35: Commented [AM271]	Anna Myhill	26/09/2016 14
EWO helped with finding a suitable school placement for the child.		
Page 35: Commented [AM270]	Anna Myhill	26/09/2016 14
EWO helpful as an advocate for the parent to bridge communication gap between headteacher and school		
Example of EWO as an advocate.		
Threat of court led parent to take children to school every day.		
Page 41: Commented [AM322]	Anna Myhill	
Lack of social services capacity		
Page 40: Commented [AM320]	Anna Myhill	
Misconception about social services and parent support services.		
Page 49: Commented [MA384]	Myhill, Anna	
Parents feel CAMHS is the only other option.		
Page 47: Commented [MA370]	Myhill, Anna	03/10/2016 15:38
Difficulty trusting adults from other agencies		
Page 54: Commented [MA428]	Myhill, Anna	27/09/201
Informal meetings with head of EWS to support parent		
Page 54: Commented [MA426]	Myhill, Anna	27/09/201
Increased understanding from the EWO helped		
Page 53: Commented [MA424]	Myhill, Anna	27/09/20
Parent had family support but also needed the school to work together with them.		
Page 53: Commented [MA421]	Myhill, Anna	27/09/2016
Parent threatened with court although no understanding of situation.		
Page 52: Commented [MA419]	Myhill, Anna	27/09/2016
Limited time given from support worker		
Page 54: Commented [MA427]	Myhill, Anna	27/09/201
Increase in visits from the EWO.		
Page 53: Commented [MA415]	Myhill, Anna	27/09/201
Frustration with the children's mental health system		

Parental involvement in education (attitudes)

Page 3: Commented [AM23]	Anna Myhill	
Interested in what children do at school		
Page 1: Commented [AM4]	Anna Myhill	
Ensuring children are dressed, fed and ready for school		
Wanting to help more with education but can't because of lack of homework		
Page 3: Commented [AM20]	Anna Myhill	
Parents help children work towards goals and careers		
Page 1: Commented [AM3]	Anna Myhill	
Differentiation of support in the mornings depending on need		
Page 2: Commented [AM11]	Anna Myhill	
Wanting to know what the children are doing in school		
Parent trying to increase time around others and socialisation		
Page 9: Commented [AM55]	Anna Myhill	
Parent wanting work to be sent home		
Page 21: Commented [MA74]	Myhill, Anna	1
Parents wanting work to be sent home if child is away from school		
Page 12: Commented [MA84]	Myhill, Anna	
Parent feels that homework is the only way of participating in children's education		
Page 12: Commented [MA85]	Myhill, Anna	
Bringing strategies to encourage school attendance		
Page 14: Commented [MA208]	Myhill, Anna	
Some parents not being able to help with some subjects		
Page 15: Commented [MA114]	Myhill, Anna	
Parent feeling they are not the one to encourage children due to poor outcomes		
Page 19: Commented [AM149]	Anna Myhill	
Showing an interest in the things his child did		
Page 19: Commented [AM150]	Anna Myhill	
Having a shared interest		
Page 22: Commented [AM180]	Anna Myhill	
Effect on motivation to socialise		
Page 16: Commented [MA407]	Anna Myhill	26/09/2016 11
Difficulties in helping with homework - the right way of teaching is different to the way the parent learnt.		

Parental Involvement

Page 45: Commented [MA352]	Myhill, Anna	01/10/2016 15:14
Ensuring that child knew his new routine well in advance for meeting to follow it.		
Page 16: Commented [MA365]	Myhill, Anna	03/08/2016 15:33
Parent trying to increase confidence with strangers		
Page 51: Commented [MA399]	Myhill, Anna	
Activities organised together with the parent at weekends		
Page 51: Commented [MA401]	Myhill, Anna	
Child did not attend social clubs with school		
Page 53: Commented [MA402]	Myhill, Anna	
Child did not participate in special school events such as concerts or sports day		
Page 51: Commented [MA396]	Myhill, Anna	
Parent supporting child with morning routine		
Page 51: Commented [MA397]	Myhill, Anna	
Parent being available after school		
Page 51: Commented [MA398]	Myhill, Anna	
Parent interested in what child had been doing in the day		
Page 52: Commented [MA407]	Myhill, Anna	27/09/20
Increase in confidence now home schooled, with Mum all day.		

Page 27: Commented [AM215]	Anna Myhill	26/09/2016
Parent taught children to read before school		
Page 24: Commented [AM191]		
Helping with homework		
Page 31: Commented [AM234]	Anna Myhill	26/09/2016
Parent takes child on day trips		
Page 31: Commented [AM233]	Anna Myhill	26/09/2016
Parent reads with child		
Page 31: Commented [AM277]	Anna Myhill	
Getting children up, dressed and fed		
Page 37: Commented [AM281]	Anna Myhill	
After school routine set by parent		
Page 37: Commented [AM279]	Anna Myhill	
Knowing what helped their child feel ready for school		
Page 37: Commented [AM280]	Anna Myhill	
Parent not spending much time with the child after school		
Page 37: Commented [AM282]	Anna Myhill	
Spending time playing together outdoors		
Page 37: Commented [AM284]	Anna Myhill	
Spending time playing together outdoors		
Page 38: Commented [AM286]	Anna Myhill	
Attended parent's meetings and school concerts		
Page 38: Commented [AM287]	Anna Myhill	
Attended meetings regarding children's learning difficulties		
Page 43: Commented [MA348]	Myhill, Anna	
Parents role to make sure they get to school and do their homework		
Page 43: Commented [MA337]	Myhill, Anna	
Parents responsibility to get their children to school and make sure accept it wrong		
Page 43: Commented [MA336]	Myhill, Anna	
Parent ensuring child has a positive routine		
Page 43: Commented [MA335]	Myhill, Anna	
Wasting time alone when he goes back from school		
Page 43: Commented [MA334]	Myhill, Anna	
Spending time as a family in the evenings		
Page 44: Commented [MA342]	Myhill, Anna	
Spending time with son during weekends and holidays		
Page 44: Commented [MA344]	Myhill, Anna	
Parent only going to GP appointments		
Page 44: Commented [MA345]	Myhill, Anna	
Parent and school not attending appropriate school activities		

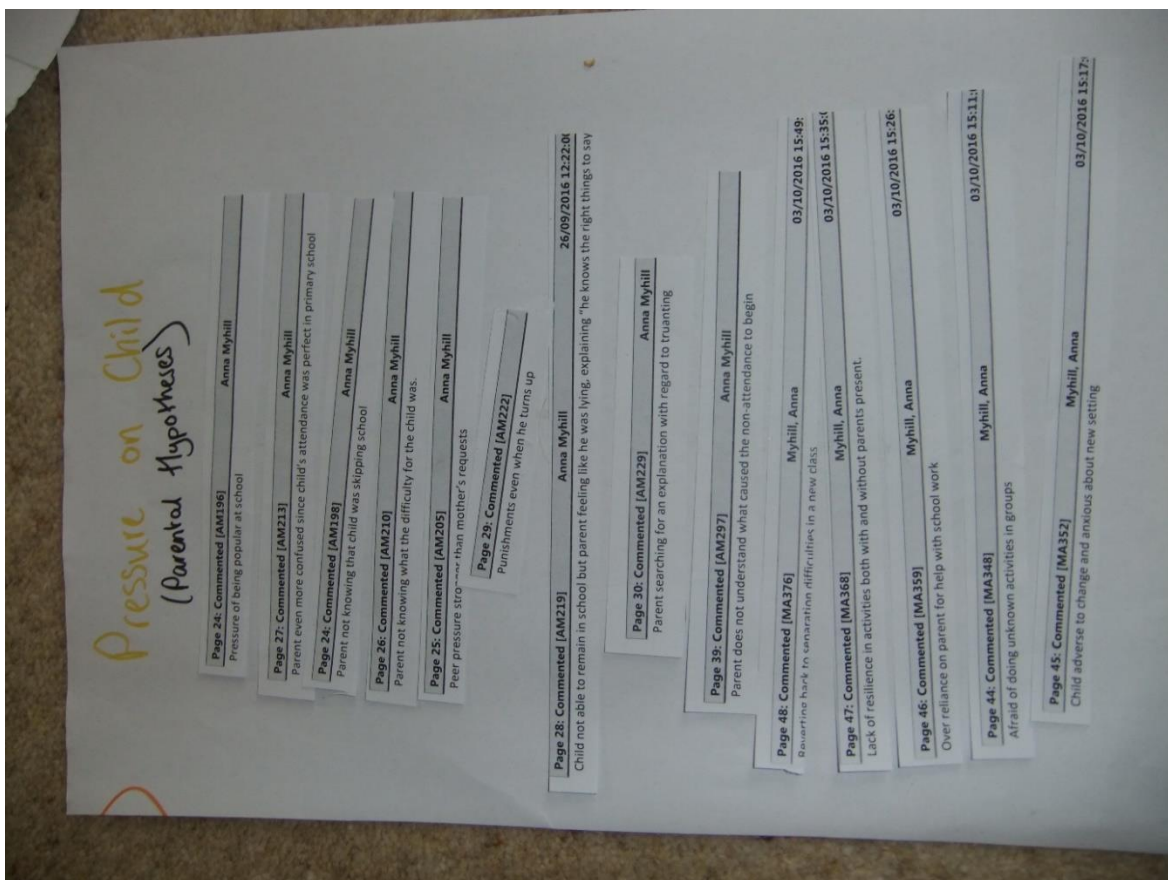
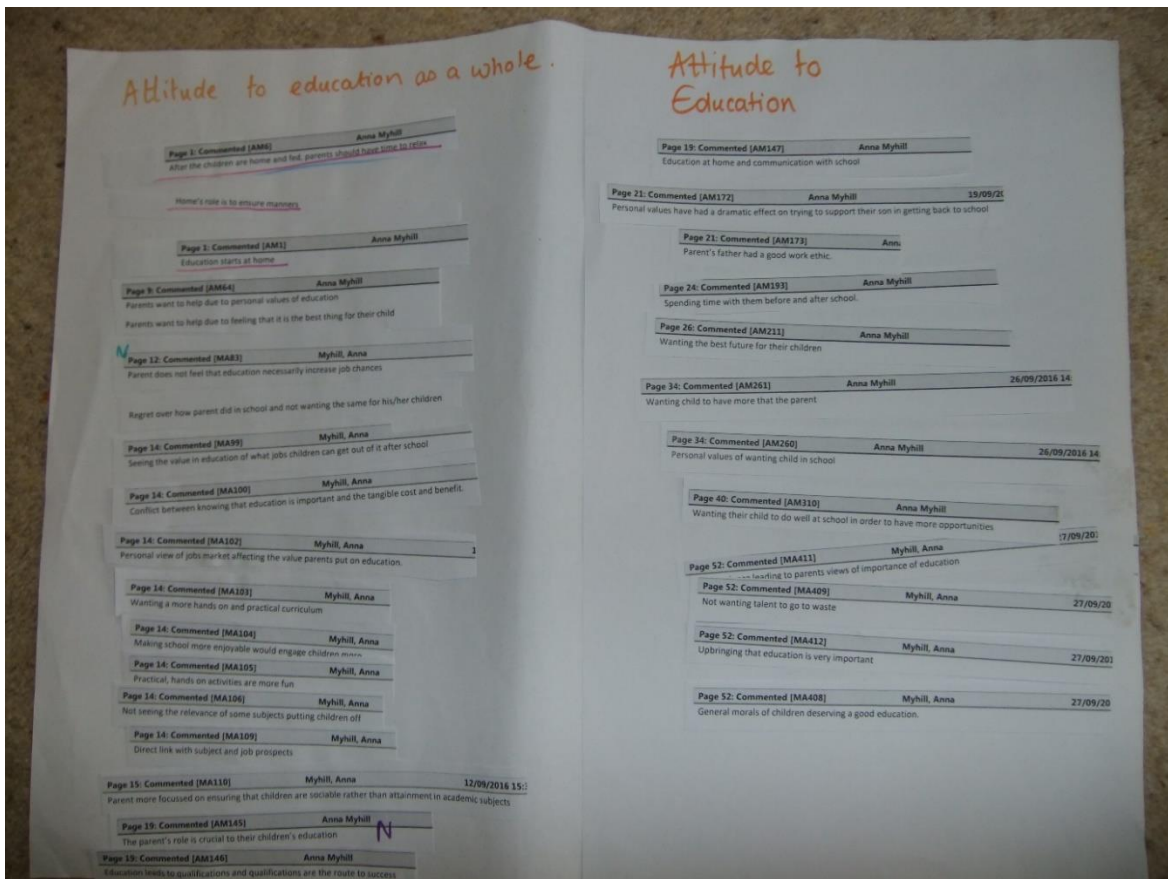


Fig. 7. Developing initial thematic analysis categories

Step 3: Refining codes

A large number of codes were created so these were refined so that each would correspond to a broader range of comments made by parents (Table 7). This made the process of generating initial themes more manageable. The example below illustrates how the refined code, ‘Parents blame themselves for their children’s non-attendance’ was created from combining a number of similar initial codes.

Table 7

Example of refining thematic analysis codes

Refined Codes	Initial Codes	Evidence
Parents blame themselves for their children’s non-attendance.	Parent hypothesises that the divorce was the cause.	I think my son saw that as a way, by not attending school, was a way of getting back at the two of us.
	The onset of the child’s depression was due to the parents’ break up.	He went through a real depressed state when he was fourteen or fifteen, due to the breakup of Mum and Dad.
	Personal regret over past parenting approaches.	I could of done certain things maybe a bit different, I was going through a bad stage myself.
	Feel like they are a bad parent.	I was at fault because I always had to up and leave earlier due to the travelling distance and the nature of my job, so I was never there to get him out of bed.
	Feeling ashamed and having failed as a mother.	I felt a bit of a crap mum basically and the fact that I couldn’t, can’t deal with it on my own and they don’t get up for me to go into school and that because they will for my mum and things and I just feel, I used to feel like the school would look down at me like I was a bad mum and thing.
	Feeling shame for not being able to get their children to school.	I mean it made me feel ashamed as well knowing that I couldn’t get them to school and like I said it did feel like it was just me.

Step 5: Define and refine themes

Table 8 illustrates the basic, organising and superordinate themes. The names were refined by checking with the data to ensure that they represented the participants' constructions.

Table 8

Defining thematic analysis themes

Basic themes	Organising themes	Superordinate themes
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Parents feel they have caused their children's non-attendance. 2. Parents feel that they should have been able to get their children to school. 3. Parents feel that they are bad parents because other parents do not have the same difficulties. 	<p>Guilt</p>	<p>Disclosure to school staff</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Parents feel that they are being blamed for their children's non-attendance. 2. Parent's feel that social services will take their children away if they are not in school. 3. Parents are prosecuted. 	<p>Shame</p>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Parents feel pressure from family members. 2. Family members do not fully understand the situation. 3. Parents feel supported by their family and friends. 	<p>Parent's support network</p>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Parent does not know who to turn to for support. 2. Parents do not know that school staff will help 3. Parents are not always believed when issues are disclosed. 4. Parents are unaware that other parents have been through the same. 	<p>Knowledge of who could help</p>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Parent feels like he/she has the parenting capacity to manage the situation. 2. Parents disclose when the they feel the situation is out of their control. 3. Parents' mental health has an effect on their ability to manage the situation. 	<p>Parental self-efficacy</p>	

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Parents who have had a negative experience of school are less likely to trust staff. 2. Parents who feel let down by the education system are less likely to trust staff. 3. Parents disclose later if they feel that education is less important to future opportunities. 	<p>Parents' experience of education/trust in school staff</p>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Parents who feel more responsible for their children's education are more likely to feel guilt and disclose personal information. 2. Some parents feel it is the school's responsibility to encourage children to go to school. 	<p>Perception of the parental role</p>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Removing privileges if child does not attend. 2. Giving rewards for good attendance. 3. Child not responding to parents' directions. 	<p>Punishment and reinforcement</p>	<p>Response to child's ESNA</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensuring child spends time with the family. 2. Enrolling child in after school activities. 	<p>Increasing child's opportunities to socialise</p>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discussing their social difficulties when at school. 2. Discussing their academic difficulties when at school. 	<p>Sharing experiences of education</p>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discussing how important qualifications are to future opportunities. 	<p>Highlighting the importance of education</p>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Handing their children over to a member of staff. 2. Pressure from school staff and EWOs to get the child into school using physical force. 	<p>Physically taking the child to school</p>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The headteacher accepting that there is a problem that the parent is working to rectify. 2. The headteacher believing the parent. 3. The headteacher using resources to help support the child and parent. 	<p>Acknowledgement by the headteacher</p>	<p>Collaboration with school staff</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Informing the school of any changes at home. 2. School staff informing the parent of any new interventions. 3. Including the parent in decision making processes. 4. Keeping each other informed increases mutual trust. 	<p>Information exchange</p>	

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Staff informing the parent of small successes. 2. Staff focussing on the bigger picture of attendance rather than trivial issues, e.g. uniform. 	School staff emphasising the positives	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Being considerate of the parents' emotional needs. 2. Understanding logistical limitations of the parents' engagement e.g. transport and jobs. 	Staff understanding the wider factors	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Staff being available at short notice. 2. One member of staff, who knows the child's case, who can be contacted daily. 	Availability of staff	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. School having an open-door policy. 2. Staff who make the parent feel like they are working together with them. 3. Staff who take the pressure of prosecution away. 4. Staff who do not blame or judge the parent. 5. Staff having the time to listen to the parent. 	Personal support	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Parents seek information about alternative provision 2. Parents change their children's provision e.g. home school, out of school education. 3. Parents' expectations of school intervention are not met. 	A change in provision	Additional support sought
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Parents seek emotional support from family members 2. Parents seek counselling for their mental health 3. Parents seek parenting support from social services. 	Emotional support for parent	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Parents refer their children to G.P. or CAMHS for mental health. 2. Systemic issues regarding multi-disciplinary working. 	Emotional support for child	

Step 6: Produce the report

The themes were included in a flowchart to illustrate the decisions parents made and their subsequent behaviours throughout their children’s ESNA. This flowchart began by thinking about the core interactions parents have during ESNA and when these interactions take place (figure 10).

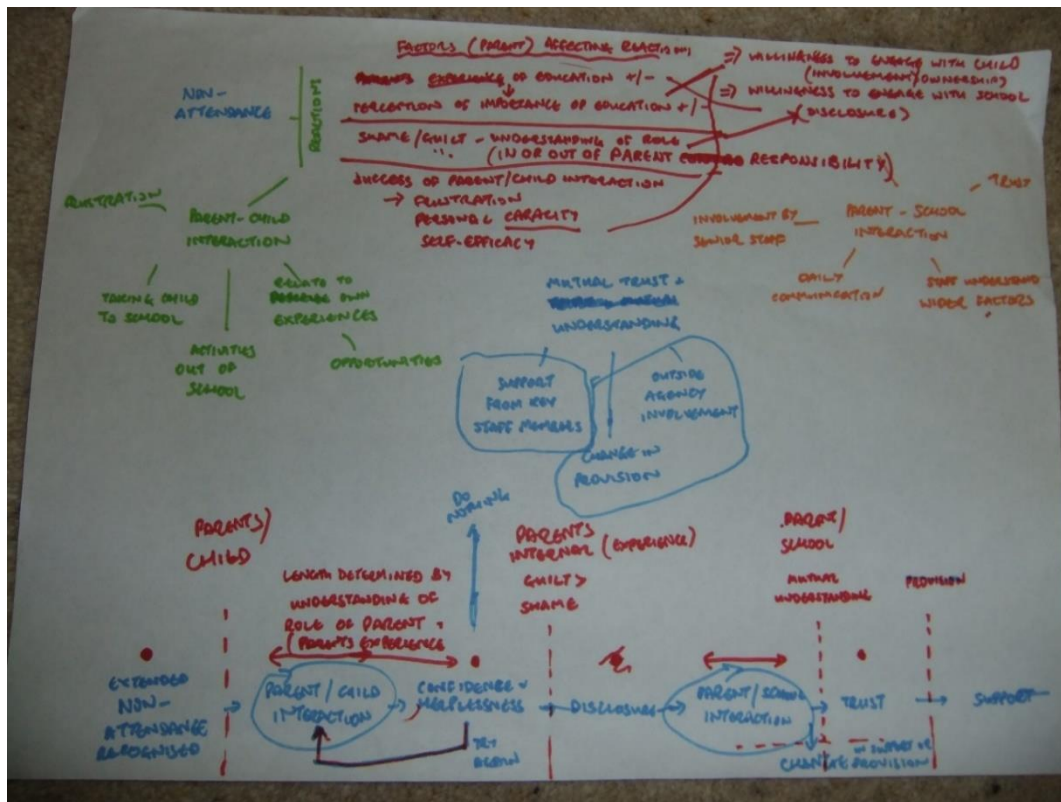


Fig. 10. Initial flow chart illustrating parents’ interactions during ESNA

This process was then refined to include how parents progressed through the stages (figure 11).

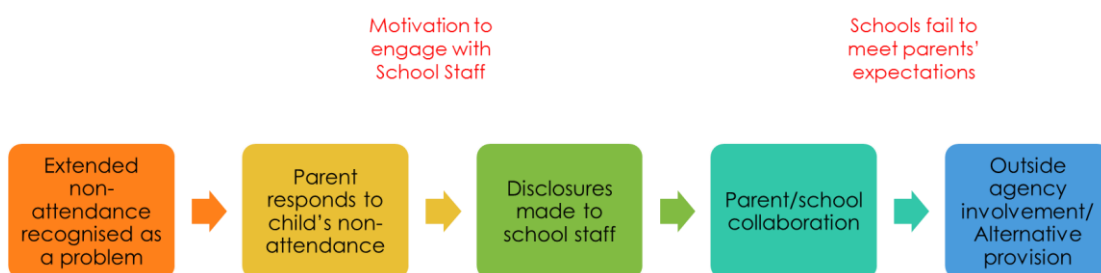


Fig. 11. Refined flow chart illustrating parents’ interactions during ESNA

The final flowchart included other decisions that parents made throughout their children’s ESNA and alternative paths that parents took depending on these decisions. (figure 6). The themes and flowchart were discussed in relation to the research questions and previous literature. (See discussion).