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Doctorate in Educational Psychology 2018

**Gaining the voices of young people using Person Centred  
Planning: Exploring ways to engage young people with  
Additional Learning Needs in making decisions about their  
future.**

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## **Abstract**

Educational legislation in the UK has promoted the use of Person Centred Planning to gain the views of young people and involve them in making decisions about their provision (DFE, 2014; Welsh Government, 2015). However, there is a gap between the legislation and current practice in education (Holtom & Lloyd-Jones, 2014; Norwich & Eaton, 2015). Previous research has found young people are not meaningfully engaged in making decisions, particularly young people with additional learning needs (Lundy, 2007; Norwich & Eaton, 2015). However, the extent to which Person Centred Planning facilitates the engagement of young people in decision making has not yet been explored and the evidence base is limited (Ratti et al, 2016). This research paper aimed to explore participant's perceptions of Person Centred Planning as a tool to engage young people. Semi-Structured Interviews were used to explore the experiences of young people, parents, school staff and Educational Psychologists in relation to Person Centred Planning meetings, focusing specifically on the engagement of young people in the process. A thematic analysis of the whole data set found four common themes across the data, these were 'power', 'familiarity', 'presence of young person' and 'creativity and adaptation', however the experiences of each participant group varied. Young people's engagement in decision-making processes was limited, due to a lack of familiarity with the approach and established power hierarchies. The findings also highlighted the difficulty of applying one approach to a heterogeneous group such as young people with additional learning needs.

## Summary

This thesis is structured in three distinct sections.

Part A is the detailed literature review, this focuses on the current context of Person Centred Planning in educational settings. As this research focuses on engagement in decision making the literature review also explores the application of theories of engagement in education. The potential and perceived barriers of supporting young people with additional learning needs are also considered. A critical review of the current research into the implementation of Person Centred Planning in educational settings, makes it possible to identify the gaps in the existing literature. It also considers methodological differences that may limit the data that has been gathered.

Part B is the empirical study that attempted to address identified gaps in the literature. The study gathered the views of all individuals involved in Person Centred Planning meetings; young people, parents, school staff and Educational Psychologists. A semi-structured interview approach was used with all participants and questions were adapted to ensure that they were accessible to all participants. The research was conducted in 5 four Educational Psychology Services across England and Wales and the participants were from a range of educational settings. Young people involved in the research were aged between 10 and 19 years. The transcriptions of the interviews were coded and analysed by the researcher using thematic analysis and the results are discussed.

Part C is the critical review of the process of empirical study, separated into two distinct parts. The first section encompasses the contribution to knowledge and the contributions of the findings of this research, these are discussed in terms of the role of the Educational Psychologist, relevance to Educational Psychology practice and the practice and knowledge of the researcher. The second section of the review provides a critical account of the research practitioner and research process. This includes reflections on the researcher's personal development, ethical considerations and researcher's impact on the process.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

EP: Educational Psychologist  
ALN: Additional Learning Need  
PCP: Person Centred Planning  
DFE: Department for Education  
DOH: Department for Health  
WG: Welsh Government  
UNCRC: United Nations Conventions of the Rights of the Child  
HM: Her Majesty  
SEND:COP: Special Educational Needs Code of Practice  
DFES: Department for Education and Skills  
UK: United Kingdom  
ASC: Autism Spectrum Condition

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**Part A: Literature Review**

## 1. Introduction

Gaining the views of young people has become an increasingly prevalent theme in both research and legislative literature following the introduction of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (UNICEF, 1989). The UNCRC is an international human rights treaty that provides statements of rights covering all aspects of children's lives to promote equality for all children regardless of individual differences. Despite this, the rights of young people continue to be debated, including their involvement in making decisions about their needs and the support they require to achieve their aspirations. Involving young people in the decision-making process has been found to develop lifelong skills that allow them to take control of decisions in adulthood (Shevlin & Rose, 2008, Larkins et al; 2015).

In educational settings, active participation in decision-making has been found to facilitate young peoples' positive relationships with school staff and their peers (Baroutsis et al; 2016) and increase their engagement with learning (Harding & Atkinson, 2009). Although there has been an increase in the active participation of young people in the decision-making process, it has been found that there is a gap between legislation and the implementation of these approaches in practice (Lundy, 2007). The recent Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (SEND:COP) from the UK Government (DFE, 2014) guides educational practitioners working with young people with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and promotes the use of Person Centred Planning (PCP) as a tool to involve young people in decision-making. However, the evidence base for PCP is limited (Ratti et al; 2016).

PCP developed over the last 30 years in the United States and has been successful in improving communication and gaining an understanding of patients' needs in health settings (Sanderson, 2014). The implementation of PCP in educational settings is increasing, however research conducted within educational settings has identified a number of barriers to implementation. The extent to which young people have the capacity to make these decisions is debated, particularly in regards to young people with ALN. ALN is a term used to categorise a diverse population of individuals with a range of different needs. It is thought that Educational Psychologists (EPs) working with young people with ALN are well placed to help support the implementation of PCP and facilitate the use of the approach in schools (Corrigan, 2014). However, there is a debate in the literature about the appropriate role of the EP in the process of ascertaining young people's views and engaging them in the change process (Ingram, 2013).

A search of the literature found a lack of current research investigating the extent to which PCP enables young people with ALN to meaningfully engage in making decisions about their educational needs. It is argued that further research is needed to explore whether meetings that adopt a PCP approach facilitate the engagement of young people with ALN in making decisions.

### 1.1 Structure of Literature Review

The following literature review is a narrative and explorative summary based on information from 80 references. The review begins with an introduction of the historic and current legislative context within education systems in England and Wales. Following this, it reflects on the terminology used to describe the process and the impact this may have on the way young people are engaged in making decisions about their educational needs. The review uses existing literature to discuss the importance of engaging young people in the decision-making process and the impact it can have on their psychological well-being. Different psychological theories of engagement are discussed with relevance to educational settings. Research into the additional factors that potentially arise when working with young people with ALN is also considered.

The review completes with a critical analysis of current research that has been conducted on the implementation of PCP in educational settings, focusing specifically on the methods used to explore how PCP has impacted the change process for young people and how it has engaged young people in making decisions. The review concludes with the aims of the current research.

### 1.2 Search Terms and Sources Used

Initially, a broad search of the literature was conducted on Google Scholar, using the key terms 'person-centred planning' and 'gaining the voices of children and young people'. These searches returned a large number of results that provided a starting point for analysis, however not all of the literature was relevant to the research area and some results were not published in peer-reviewed journals. Boolean searches, using the operators 'AND' and 'OR', were conducted in an attempt to return specific and relevant literature. The electronic databases PsycINFO, Educational Resources Information Centre (ERIC) and the British Education Index (BEI) were used to conduct these searches (appendix T). The key search terms used during these searches were; 'Young People'; 'Decision Making'; 'Education'; 'Person Centred'; 'Educational Psychology'; 'Voices of Young People'; 'Person Centred Planning'; and 'Special Educational Needs'. These searches made it possible to narrow the

data to literature that was more specific to the research area. The search term 'Voices of Young People' was changed to 'Young People" AND/OR 'Decision Making'. This helped to widen the search to look at a range of methods that had been found to be successful in engaging young people in decision-making. Searches of the literature were conducted between November 2015 and December 2017 (See Appendix T).

### 1.3 Inclusion and Exclusion of Literature

Although specific search terms were used to narrow the data retrieved from database searches, a large amount of literature was found. Therefore, inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied. The inclusion of data was decided upon using a number of criteria. Firstly, data was only selected if research was conducted in educational settings. As the legislative changes that promoted the used of PCP in education were made in 2014, the results of the searches were arranged chronologically; with more recent data being prioritised for inclusion. There was little research conducted in the United Kingdom post-2014, therefore, research studies conducted in countries with similar educational contexts were included in the literature review. Little research focused specifically on the impact of PCP in improving young people's engagement with decision-making.

Section 7 of this literature review focuses on five research articles exploring PCP in educational settings. These studies were carefully selected to explore the range of research methods that had been implemented. The recency of research was considered and research conducted in the past 5 years was selected. However, it was important to consider the participants included in the research, therefore, research including young people, EPs, parents and/or school staff was prioritised, resulting in the inclusion of some less recent research (Hayes, 2004). The research included in this section is summarised in figure 5 allowing the section to focus on a critical analysis of the research and the methods used.

## 2. Current Context

### 2.1 Legislative History

Ensuring that children have the opportunity to express their views is not a new concept and it has become increasingly emphasised in legislation. Article 12 in the UNCRC (UNICEF, 1989) stated that all children and young people have the right to express their views in decisions that affect them to ensure their best interests are the primary factor in all decisions made. It proposes that this can be achieved directly; giving the child the opportunity to voice their opinions in any proceedings or indirectly; through a representative. The UNCRC (UNICEF, 1989) stresses the importance of respecting children and young people's views regardless of their individual needs. Kikelly et al. (2005) described the two principles of Article 12 in the UNCRC (UNICEF, 1989) the first being the right of children and young people to express their views and secondly the right for their views to influence decisions made. Since this time, legislation from the UK government has reinforced the rights of children and young people, encouraging practitioners to involve them in decision-making.

The SEND: COP issued in 2001 (DFES, 2001) brought the rights of the child to the forefront of policy by providing advice on improving pupil participation in decision-making. The legislation reinforced the importance of child involvement and acknowledged the unique contribution of young people. The 'Every Child Matters' (ECM) Green Paper (DFES, 2003) brought the concept to the attention of all practitioners committed to meeting children's needs in education, health and social care. The paper emphasised the rights of children and the role practitioners can play in ensuring rights are achieved and addressed the importance of practitioners working together to create plans that meet the individual needs of children. The ECM paper (DFES, 2003) also stated that agreeing plans with young people was important to the process. Additional documents produced by the government such as 'Valuing People' (DoH, 2001) and 'Putting People First' (DoH, 2007) have stressed the importance of considering all aspects of young peoples' lives in addition to education (Small, Raghavan & Pawson, 2013).

Despite the introduction of legislation, it has been argued that there have been few changes to practice (Lundy, 2007). Rudduck and Fielding (2006) discussed the influence of new legislation on increasing the popularity of student voice and felt it had led to surface compliance from practitioners. They expressed concern that practitioners focused on the methods used to gain young peoples' voices rather than why it is important to gain their voice. An annual report published by the Office of the Children's Commissioner (2012) reported that young people felt they were not listened

to in the decision-making process and their views were not acted upon consistently. Shevlin and Rose (2008) argued that practitioners had made efforts to address legislative expectations, however, implementing the principles involved in gaining young peoples' perspectives had proved to be difficult in practice. Rudduck and Fielding (2006) proposed that the gap between legislation and practice was due to the vast number of initiatives introduced in education and increasing pressure on practitioners.

## 2.2 Current Legislation in England and Wales

An updated SEND:COP (DfE, 2014) introduced in England reinforced the importance of the participation of children, young people and parents in decision-making. In the revised SEND:COP (DfE, 2014) there is emphasis on the participation of young people in decision-making both at an individual and strategic level. The legislation states that children, young people and parents must be involved in all discussions and decisions about their support. The legislation is aimed at practitioners working in education, health and social care settings.

At the time of writing, the Welsh Government (WG) were considering an updated SEND:COP which also proposes changes to processes in place for meeting the needs of children and young people with ALN (WG, 2015). One of the key proposals is 'the importance of the child and the child's parent or the young person participating as fully as possible in decisions' (WG, 2015, pg 6).

The Codes of Practice produced by Governments in England and Wales aim to put young people at the centre of the planning process and making decisions about their future. The approaches that are recommended for assessment and planning are described as 'person-centred' (DfE, 2014; pg 148) and parents and young people are expected to be at the heart of all discussions regarding how individual needs should be met. The implementation of PCP approaches aims to increase the emphasis on the views of young people (Sanderson, 2000).

## 2.3 History of Person Centred Planning

The term 'person-centred approach' was coined by Carl Rogers (1959), placing its foundations in humanistic psychology. Rogers recognised a subjectivity in people's experiences and individuality in the way that people make meaning from their interpretations of these experiences. He believes that people's experiences of reality forms part of every individual's private view of the world. Raskin and



Rogers (2000) pertains this phenomenological world of the person as being central to psychological movements and functioning. As perceptual understandings of an individual are unique, it would not be viable for others to make assumptions about their aspirations and support needed, therefore it is argued that they should be central to the process. Person-centred approaches aim to value the unique meanings that people derive from their subjective experiences (Chen, 2001). It is thought that providing individuals with the opportunity to explore their experiences, heightens their sense of awareness of themselves and their needs. Rogers (1989) believes it is important to let people have this chance to explore their subjective experiences to develop their awareness.

Prior to its emphasis in educational settings, PCP has been introduced in health and social care settings. PCP has been influential in health care settings following its inclusion in the core principles of the National Health Service reforms in 2000 (DoH, 2000). Sanderson (2014) reported that PCP has improved communication and provided deeper understanding of patients' needs, helping staff tailor care to meet individual needs. It has also been used with social care services (Dowling, Manthorpe & Cowley, 2007), beginning in learning disability services and then spreading to all adult social care services. The use of PCP in social care settings dates back to a White Paper published in 1989 (DoH, 1989) which promoted the idea of individuals having greater involvement in their lives and services needed. PCP has also been used to support young adults transitioning from child to adult services (Mansell & Beadle Brown, 2004). Research in 2007 found that the term PCP was being widely used across social care services and identified some examples of good practice in services. However, it was found that the approach had not been implemented as part of standard practice across all settings, indicating an inconsistency in implementation (Dowling, Manthorpe & Cowley, 2007).

#### 2.4. Principles and Definitions of Person Centred Planning

PCP is not a standardised approach or intervention (Ratti et al; 2016), instead it is an umbrella term covering a variety of techniques that share a number of underlying principles (Mansell & Beadle Brown, 2004) which focus on sharing power and promoting community inclusion (Sanderson, 2002). Sanderson (2000) provides an approach to PCP that can be applied to educational settings. Her interpretation of PCP consists of 5 key features, introduced in Figure 1.

**1.) The person is at the centre**

*Due to the subjectivity of individuals' experiences (Rogers, 1989) it would not be viable to make assumptions about their wants and needs, or try to interpret their views. Therefore, individuals need to be at the centre of all decisions made, importantly Rogers advocates that everyone should be regarded as potentially competent (Rogers, 1986). All people involved in the process need to be committed to a shared power. The person should be at the centre of the entire process including decisions about the type of meeting that would be helpful, planning the meeting and who should be invited. They should also choose the location and time of the meeting. Giving these decisions to individuals helps to shift the locus of control towards them (Sanderson, 2000) and promotes the idea of shared power.*

**2.) Family members and friends are partners in planning**

*Sanderson (2000) believes that it is important to share power with families and community as they are likely to be key to supporting the person. Often family and friends are committed to the process and are supportive of the individual's needs. Involvement in the planning process strengthens connections and relationships. There is an assumption that these people will want to contribute to a plan.*

**3.) The plan reflects what is important to the person, their capacities and what support they require;**

*Person centred planning approaches encourage people to focus on what the person is capable of and then use this information to decide on how they can access support themselves. This is based on positive psychology, with the approach encouraging practitioners to focus on an individual's strengths rather than deficits (Holtom & Lloyd-Jones, 2014). Links could also be made to solution focused approaches, where the individuals are empowered to make changes based on their strengths and previous positive experiences. This moves away from a traditional approach that focuses on needs and what services can provide support (Sanderson, 2000). It is thought that all individuals require support, not just those with additional needs. It is the level of support required that needs to be discussed and how the individual can be responsible for deciding what support they need. The role of the professional is different from a more traditional approach. In PCP the professional is considered to be an expert in the problem-solving process, rather than an expert about the individual. It is important that professionals do not own the process, but they are able to communicate what is technically possible. The equality of relationship between the client and therapist is a key requirement described by Rogers (1986), the*

*therapist should not be acting as an expert.*

**4.) The plan results in actions that are about life, not just services, and reflects what is possible, not just what is available.**

*The planning process encourages all involved to commit to action. The support decided upon should be led by the individual's aspirations rather than what services can provide. As Rogers explains, clients should focus on their subjective understanding, encouraging them to think about the present and future to help them achieve personal growth (Rogers, 1951). This type of approach may make it possible for services to be led by people's needs. Making communities more inclusive rather than just making services better. It is hoped that this type of approach will improve individual's sense of belonging in the community and improve meaningful connections between them and others.*

**5.) The plan results in on-going listening, learning and further action.**

*Sanderson (2000) emphasises that PCP is more than a meeting, it is an ongoing process of constant listening and reflection. It acknowledges that aspirations are likely to change in response to the different experiences people are subjected to. Therefore, patterns of support will need to change. It is important that different approaches are tried to find out what works. This will need to happen over time and people will need to continue to work together in a person-centred way.*

*Figure 1: Principles of Person Centred Planning (Principles taken from Sanderson; 2000, and expanded upon by J.Kirwan)*

Sanderson is arguably one of the most prolific individuals in making Roger's person-centred approaches accessible and relevant to education, health and social care settings. She has produced numerous materials that can be accessed online to support practitioners to use PCP in schools, she also offers training and support for educational professionals in implementing the approach. In educational settings, it is hoped PCP will encourage on-going dialogue between children and adults (Atkinson, 2014). The adoption of PCP in education should encourage practitioners to place individual needs of young people at the centre of the decision-making process.

## 2.5. Implementation of Person Centred Planning

The implementation of PCP in education aims to create opportunities for young people, parents and professionals to work together in the decision-making process and gather a range of perspectives (Holtom & Lloyd-Jones, 2014). A review of pathfinder projects in South Wales (Holtom & Lloyd-Jones, 2014) found some parents felt PCP was successful in providing a holistic picture of their child, focusing on all aspects about the young person rather than just problems. However, other parents reported frustrations about a focus on young people's strengths, feeling it was more important to look at problems and needs.

A similar review was conducted of pathfinder projects (Norwich & Eaton, 2015) following the new SEND:COP (DfE, 2014) in England. Pathfinder projects were initiated by the Government to trial certain elements of the proposed SEND:COP (DfE, 2014). Individuals involved in pathfinders reported limited involvement of young people despite the introduction of the new SEND:COP (DfE, 2014). This was taken as an indication of a need for further support to implement the principles of PCP in education. When discussing the introduction of new legislation, Rudduck and Fielding (2006) suggested that to ensure legislation is acted upon practitioners need to understand the importance of the changes. Promoting understanding of PCP and the importance of engaging young people in decision-making amongst educational practitioners may serve to improve the implementation of the legislation. There is a lack of research exploring the current understanding of educational practitioners in regards to PCP and young people's engagement in making decisions. Research of this nature may help to raise awareness and develop practitioner understanding.

## 3. The Voices of Young People

### 3.1. Voice as a Social Construct

The term 'voice' is socially constructed (Komulainen, 2007) and remains open to interpretation by different practitioners (Black, 2011). 'Voice' could be taken in a literal sense to mean giving young people the opportunity to express their views. However, Robinson and Taylor (2007) argue that the term refers to more than spoken words. Instead they argue that it refers to an increased awareness of the views and perspectives of young people. They argue that the term 'voice' is too simplistic to describe the complex and deeper level of communication. Komulainen (2007) agrees 'voice' is too simplistic to encompass the complex processes involved in decision-making and ensuring young

people's views are respected. It perhaps undervalues the importance of the listener in being reflective and reflexive in decoding information shared by young people in the decision-making process (Lewis, 2010).

An awareness of differing constructions of 'voice', may influence methods used to gain voice and the extent to which it influences decisions made. It is argued that an understanding of the complexities underlying this simplistic term may encourage practitioners to move beyond a surface level of compliance with legislation (Black, 2011). To encourage a deeper understanding of the term, it may be helpful for practitioners to understand underlying motives and principles that have stimulated the rise in prominence of young people's 'voices' in legislation.

### 3.2 The Importance of Giving Young People a Voice

Robinson and Taylor (2007) argue that gaining young peoples' voices should be about more than just following legal requirements or raising standards and achievements in education. They believe that practitioners should make a moral decision to change practice because of the positive impact it can have on young people in the short and long term. Engaging young people in making decisions is thought to have a number of benefits, both educationally and in personal development.

#### 3.2.1. Educational Benefits

Research has found that the relationship young people have with school can determine the type of learner they become (Hayes, 2012). There has been an increase in the use of school councils to involve young people in decision-making, (Aston & Lambert, 2010) however, young people who are more confident in communicating their views are more likely to engage with these formal structures. This can lead to an increase in the engagement of young people from more dominant groups and potentially the alienation of other groups of students (Kelly, 2003) such as those with ALN.

Research conducted by Baroutsis et al. (2016) found that active participation in decision-making facilitated young people's connection to schooling and helped improve relationships between teachers and their peers. The research was conducted in an independent school in Australia that supported pupils who had been excluded from mainstream settings. They adopted a unique framework to involve young people in making strategic decisions about the school. Young people expressed that previously they felt disconnected from school because their voices had not been

heard. Pupils and staff reported that the implementation of the framework had given them a sense of belonging in school. The researchers (Baroutsis et al; 2016) acknowledged that although the framework was successful, the research took place in an independent school with a small number of pupils. They felt it was unrealistic to expect this level of participation in mainstream settings, limiting the ability to generalise the approach to other settings. However, the research highlights the positive impact engaging young people in decision-making has on their wellbeing and connectedness with education and perhaps the importance of flexibility in choosing approaches suitable for each individualistic setting.

A systematic review of PCP in educational settings (Ratti et al; 2016) looked specifically at the use of PCP to support young people with ALN. They found from a review of 16 studies that PCP had a moderate positive impact on some individuals. In particular, it improved their ability to make every day decisions and participate in their community.

### 3.2.2. Benefits for the Young Person's Psychological Well-being

In a reflective recount of Narrative Counselling experiences, Winslade and Monk (1999) describe how giving people the opportunity to listen to how they are talked about can influence how they begin to think of themselves. Engaging young people in conversations about their life can help create a life narrative. They argue that engaging young people in discussions to co-construct life narratives can change the way young people view a situation. The co-creation of a positive narrative encourages engagement in decision-making by changing their perception of an impossible situation to a challenge that can be met. A decreased reliance on professionals can also lead to an improvement in self-perceptions of their own competence and ability to generate solutions (Winslade & Monk, 1999).

Research has found that gaining young people's views can increase motivation, independence, personal control and helps to develop meta cognitive skills (Harding & Atkinson, 2009). It can also positively affect self- esteem and self-development outcomes (Sabo, 2003). It may also support the development of autonomy, which can affect the ability to engage in decision-making in later years (Leach, 1994). As recent research has found (Baroutsis et al; 2016), engaging young people in decision-making can also help to develop a sense of belonging in school. Maslow (1943) argues that belonging is a need that humans require in order to progress towards self-actualisation.

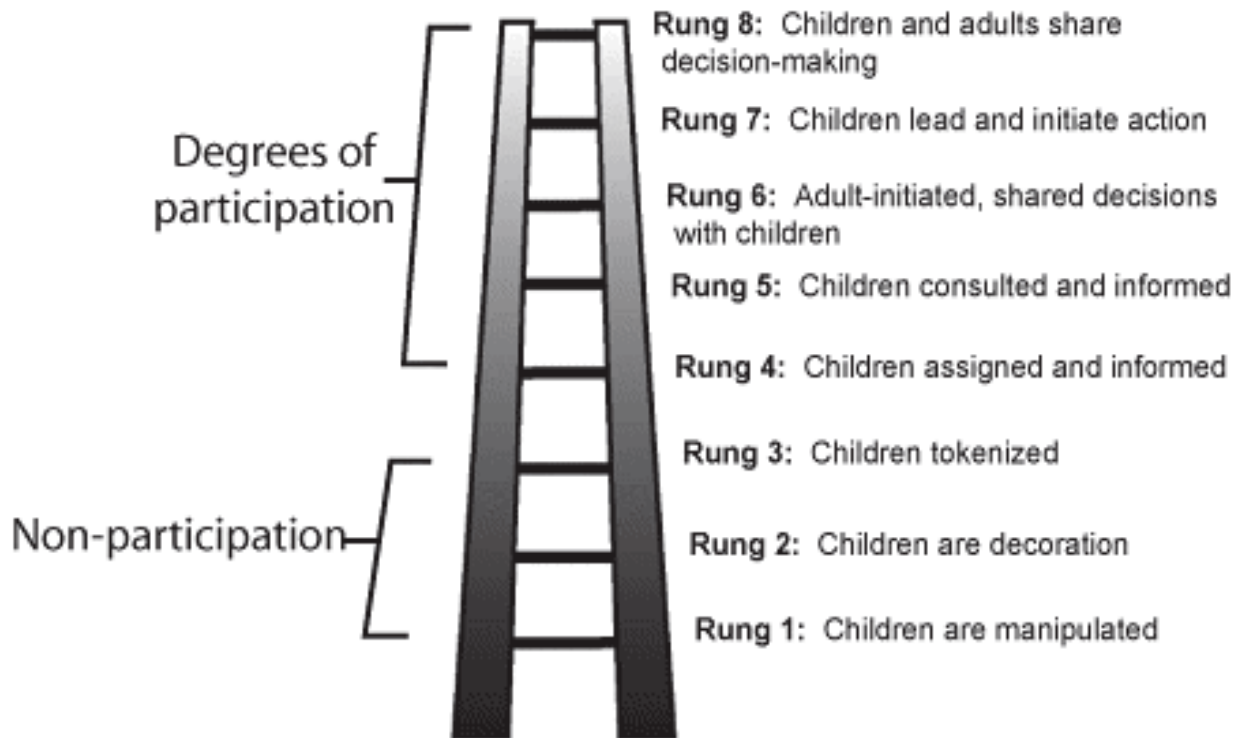
Lewis (2010) reflected on the impact of engaging young people and giving them a role in making decisions about provisions needed. She found that young people welcomed the opportunity to take a role in the process; expressing their views and preferences. It has been argued that in order for young people to experience and develop a sense of agency they need go beyond making contributions and take ownership of the decision-making process (Larkins et al; 2015). The principles of PCP promote this ownership (Sanderson, 2000). Research conducted in a secondary school setting (Keddie, 2015) found that a project involving pupils in teacher's performance management reviews increased pupil confidence. To develop pupil agency it was found that it was important that their feedback was acted upon and integrated into practice. PCP approaches allow for young people to express their views and contribute to decision-making during meetings. However, if views are not acted upon and integrated into practice, this sense of pupil agency may not be achieved.

#### 4. Levels of Engagement in the Decision- Making Process

As discussed previously the term 'voice' refers to more than spoken word (Robinson & Taylor, 2007) and encompasses complex processes involved in decision-making and respecting the views of young people (Komulainen, 2007; Lewis, 2010).

There are a range of theories describing different levels of participation young people can experience in the decision-making process. The various models of participation emphasise the complex and challenging nature of engaging young people (Kellett, 2011). An awareness of these theories makes it possible to reflect upon the nature of young people's involvement in decision-making in educational settings and the role PCP can play in promoting engagement. Three of these theories have been selected for discussion in this section due to their influence on the literature and relevance to educational practice.

#### 4.1. Ladder of Participation



Adapted from Hart, R. (1992). *Children's Participation: from Tokenism to Citizenship*. Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.

*Figure 2: Ladder of Participation (Hart, 1997)*

Hart (1992, 1997) used a ladder metaphor to describe levels of young peoples' involvement in decision-making processes. It was intended to describe the process of young people as societal citizens in making decisions about policies affecting their community. However, the stages can be applied to describe young people's involvement in decisions about their educational needs. Hart's Ladder of Participation (LoP) consists of eight stages, describing non-participation and degrees of participation. The degrees of participation start with tokenistic participation and progress to shared decision-making. Ultimate participation as described by Hart is 'child initiated shared decisions with adults' (Hart, 1992, p.8). This emphasises the importance of young people initiating a project, as this initiation is thought to indicate a desire and motivation for change.

Recent research conducted within education uses the term tokenism to describe young peoples' current involvement in decision-making using PCP techniques (Holtom & Lloyd-Jones, 2014). This indicates that PCP approaches might not facilitate a shared decision-making process. The extent to



which young people initiate PCP meetings in educational settings is unknown, however if Hart's model is followed this would be important to facilitate ultimate participation.

Hart (1997) claims that young people should share the decision-making process with adults as this is more meaningful and powerful than making decisions on their own. According to Hart (1997) the role of the adult is important to the decision-making process, especially adults who are attuned to the desires and needs of the young person. This is acknowledged in the key principles of PCP, where family members and friends are considered to be partners in the planning process. Hart (1997) discussed the importance of developing young people's confidence and competence in order to facilitate their ability to participate. It is suggested that this could be achieved through practice and increased experience of the process. Using a standardised approach such as PCP may help young people to become familiar with the process, which could result in an increase in confidence to participate.

4.2 Pathway to Participation

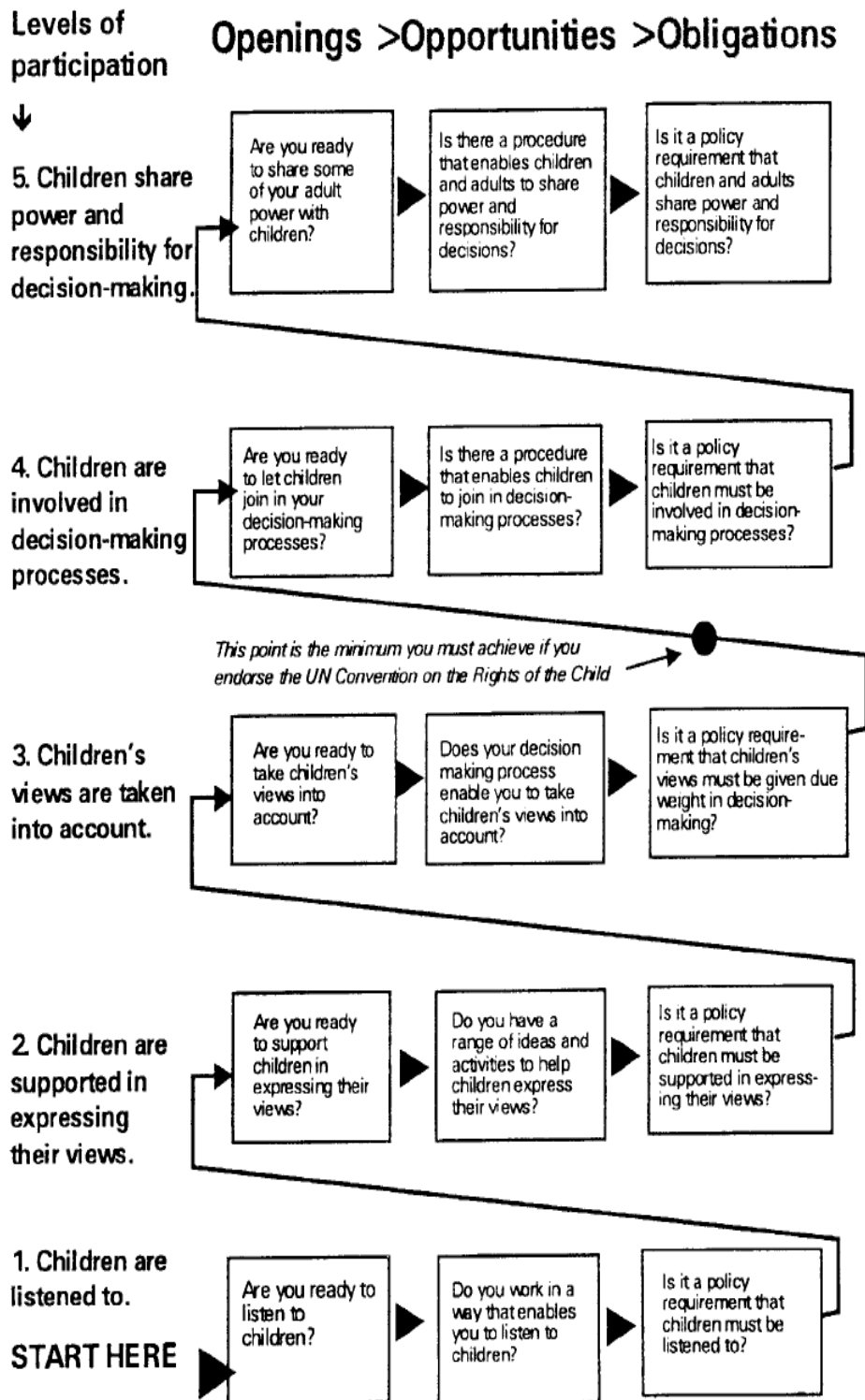


Figure 3: Pathway to Participation (Shier, 2001)

Shier's Pathway to Participation (2001) focuses on processes required to achieve participation in all organisations that work with young people. The model differs from Hart's (1992, 1997) as it considers the desire and ability of practitioners and young people to become involved in the process. It stresses that young people should not be forced to take responsibility if they do not want to or if they feel it is inappropriate. In agreement with Hart (1992, 1997), Shier (2001) claims that young people should guide the process.

The initial stage of the model signifies the importance of listening to young people and as practitioners progress through the pathway they are encouraged to increasingly involve young people in decision-making and ultimately share power and responsibility. Listening to young people is separate from taking views into account; this supports the notion that gaining the voice of young people is about more than just the spoken word (Robinson & Taylor, 2007) and acknowledges the complexity of the process (Komulainen, 2007). Shier (2001) distinguishes between the active involvement of young people in the decision-making process and the opportunity for them to have power over the decisions made. In order for this to be achieved, the power between adults and young people needs to be shared. More research is needed to explore whether PCP approaches facilitate this active involvement and shared power.

#### 4.3. Pyramid of Student Voice



Figure 4: Pyramid of Student Voice (Mitra, 2006)

Mitra's theory of engagement (2006) was developed to describe how young people could become engaged in personal and strategic educational decisions. At the 'Being Heard' stage, Mitra (2006) describes adults as gathering information about the views of young people and interpreting the meaning of data, deciding on outcomes without further consultation with young people. Mitra (2006) proposes that, at the time of the research, this was the most commonly seen aspect of participation in educational settings. The second stage of the pyramid 'collaborating with adults' places emphasis on working together. At this stage young people are listened to and encouraged to engage in problem solving, developing closer connections between young people and adults. 'Building capacity for leadership' is at the top of the pyramid, this is where young people can practice and assume a leadership role. To achieve this, young people decide on processes used and have ownership about what is discussed. This is at the top of the pyramid because it is thought to be the most effective form of participation but the least commonly seen (Mitra, 2006).

Mitra's (2006) work emphasises the importance of relationships between young people and adults in facilitating the change process. Mitra (2006) proposes that the voices of young people should be gained by working in collaboration with adults in an attempt to co-create reform or change. In order to facilitate this co-creation, strengthening the ownership young people have of the change process is seen as important. This is similar to the importance that Hart (1992,1997) places on young people initiating the change process.

#### 4.4. Definition of Participation and Student Voice

The theories discussed above (Hart, 1992, 1997; Shier, 2001; and Mitra, 2006) emphasise that meaningful participation is about more than the presence of a young person at a meeting. Young people need to be provided with opportunities to make shared decisions with adults (Hart, 1992,1997). Shier (2001) states that in order for this to be achieved adults need to be ready to share their 'adult power' (pg. 111). It is thought that this shared power can be facilitated by procedures and policies in place to enable participation and make it a legal requirement. PCP has been recommended as a procedure to encourage participation and is included in educational policies produced by UK governments. However, there is limited research into the extent to which PCP can facilitate this shared power. As Mitra states, student voice goes beyond 'being heard' (pg. 7), voices should be heard in collaboration with adults thus reinforcing the concept of shared power (Shier, 2001) and decisions (Hart, 1992, 1997). Ultimately Mitra argues that young people should be

supported to lead decision making processes and have ownership of the change process in order for their voices to be heard in a meaningful way and have power in the decision making process.

#### 4.5. Implications for Educational Practice

All three models (Hart, 1992,1997, Shier 2001, Mitra 2006) propose that young people should initiate and choose processes used to facilitate change and have ownership of the decision making process. PCP is an approach and process that has been suggested in legislation for implementation by educational practitioners (DfE, 2014; WG, 2015). If young people do not initiate the process and the approaches are predetermined it brings into question whether PCP can facilitate meaningful participation. Currently, there is limited research into the extent to which PCP allows for the achievement of meaningful participation for young people; linking PCP to theories of engagement.

#### 4.6. Research into Levels of Engagement in Educational Settings

The tokenistic involvement of young people was discussed in research conducted by Holtom & Lloyd-Jones (2014). The research was commissioned by the WG to investigate perceptions of individuals involved in Individual Development Plan (IDP) pilot projects across five areas in South Wales (Holtom & Lloyd-Jones, 2014). IDPs are created by people closely involved in supporting young people to detail the support they might need in education, health and social care. Researchers explored the involvement of young people in IDP meetings; which use a PCP approach. The extent, nature and impact of young people's participation was mixed across pilot areas.

Practitioners reported a lack of confidence in deciding when it was appropriate to involve or not involve young people. Several parents agreed it was important for young people to have a voice but they felt it was important that they were given a choice about how their voice was obtained, with some questioning whether it was ethical for them to attend the meeting if they were not comfortable. It was felt that on occasions when young people choose not to attend meetings, it could still be possible to ensure that their voices were heard through an advocate. Perhaps giving young people a choice about how their views are gained and their attendance at meetings is part of empowering young people to lead the process, something thought to be required for meaningful participation (Hart, 1992,1997; Shier, 2001; Mitra, 2006). The research highlighted that young people were not always meaningfully engaged in decision-making using PCP and there was little awareness about ways to achieve this.

Research conducted by Horgan, Fforde, Parkes and Martin (2015) found opposing views were held by practitioners and young people about the level of participation in school contexts. School staff placed importance on formal decision-making structures in schools and felt schools supported young people to express their views. However, young people involved in the research reported that schools were hierarchical, undemocratic and ineffective in representing their views. PCP provides a structured and more formal approach to decision-making, however this may not engage young people if it is imposed on them; and may reinforce the perception of a hierarchical structure. In order to explore this it would be important to gain young people's views about PCP, giving them the opportunity to reflect on its ability to meaningfully engage them in decision-making.

## 5. Supporting Young People with Additional Learning Needs to Engage in the Decision-Making Process

### 5.1. Definition of Engagement in Decision Making

To engage is to 'participate or become involved...establish(ing) a meaningful... connection (Oxford Living Dictionaries, 2018). As participation theories suggest, to become meaningfully engaged young people need to have shared power (Shier, 2001) and be involved in making shared decisions (Hart, 1992, 1997). Therefore, engagement goes beyond young people having the opportunity to simply voice their views. It requires a collaborative process (Mitra, 2006) in which young people can become involved in conversations about their needs, having the opportunity to offer suggestions and ideas and being supported to make decisions. For young people it is important to build their capacity to engage in decision making processes in collaboration with others who can support them. By facilitating engagement this will enable them to make decisions about their own needs and the provision required to help meet these needs.

### 5.1.1. Engaging Young People with Additional Learning Needs

An awareness and a reliable understanding of young people's needs is important to equip services to meet their distinct, individual needs (Head, 2011). Gardner and Crockwell (2006) found that schools who work in partnership with pupils are more likely to look at external barriers that can be influenced and changed, rather than locate problems within children.

As the UNCRC (UNICEF, 1989) is non-discriminatory it is important that all young people are included and given the opportunity to engage. Listening to all children is a key principle that can help achieve inclusion (Messiou, 2002). However, young people's participation rights can be limited by perceptions of capacity, age (Mittler, 2004) or status in society (Kendrick, Steckley & Lerpiniere, 2008). Young people with ALN are at risk of being perceived as lacking capacity to engage with or lead the process, which could lead to them being overlooked (Rose, 2005) or labelled as hard to reach. Perceived and imposed limits on capacity can lead to tokenistic involvement rather than meaningful engagement in decision-making (Kikelly et al; 2005). This is particularly concerning as young people from marginalised populations, such as those with ALN, are more in need of having their voices heard (McLeod, 2001).

Young people categorised as having ALNs cannot be treated as a homogenous population. Individual needs within the population are likely to differ greatly and therefore their ability to access and engage in decision-making is also likely to differ. In light of this, young people will potentially benefit from different methods to enable them to engage (Beresford, Rabiee & Sloper, 2007). Although standard procedures are likely to meet the needs of the majority of young people (Gardner & Crockwell, 2006), they might include more dominant groups who are more likely to engage and be listened to (Kelly, 2003). Alternative and flexible approaches could be needed to meet the needs of pupils who may have ALNs. This brings into question whether a universal approach such as PCP can or should be applied to engage all young people with a variety of additional needs.

Individuals, both young people and adults, may need support to develop resources and skills to enable them to meaningfully participate in decision-making (Schier, 2001). This is particularly relevant when working with vulnerable and harder to reach populations, such as young people with ALNs (Head, 2011). Further research is needed to understand common challenges faced by practitioners, parents and young people when engaging young people. An awareness of the

challenges faced would make it possible to consider ways to facilitate meaningful participation for all young people, including those from marginalised populations.

## 5.2 Potential Challenges

### 5.2.1. Individual Needs

Young people's ability to communicate varies greatly depending on a variety of factors including personality (Hill 2006), physical and sensory needs (Shevlin & Rose, 2008), communication skills (Hayes, 2004) and cultural differences (Larkins et al; 2015). Within mainstream education settings verbal communication is often relied upon to share ideas and elicit views from young people. However, this may not be the most accessible approach for all young people. Young people with profound or multiple learning difficulties can have additional barriers impacting on verbal communication (Lacey & Oyvry, 2013), making it more challenging to gain their views (Hayes, 2004). This could potentially lead professionals to question a young person's capability of engaging in decision-making (Mittler, 2004) rather than thinking about ways of adapting the process to meet individual needs. It may be more effective for practitioners to focus on developing the processes relied upon to elicit young people's views and developing young people's ability to engage. Baroutsis et al. (2016) believe that all young people should be treated as if they have the capacity to engage in decision-making. They argue that excluding vulnerable young people from this process based on perceptions of capability could be regarded as discrimination.

A consideration of differences in young people's communication styles and potential ambiguities that might arise during communication (Komulainen, 2007) is important when thinking about engaging young people in meetings about their needs. Beresford, Rabiee and Sloper (2007) conducted research with young people with Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) and found that factors such as anxiety and ability to cope with change can affect their ability to engage with adults. During PCP meetings young people are encouraged to engage in discussions to reflect on their strengths and needs. However Beresford, Rabiee and Sloper (2007) found that young people with ASC find this challenging due to differences in self-awareness. In addition, discussions about abstract concepts such as aspirations and desires, that are common in PCP approaches, could be difficult for young people with ASC to access. Young people with ASC benefitted from visual resources, such as photos or visual maps, to support them to focus and engage in discussions about their needs. During their research Beresford, Rabiee and Sloper (2007) reported difficulty building a full picture about a young



person from one visit alone, particularly when discussing sensitive and personal issues. To overcome this they felt that it would be necessary to complete a number of repeat visits. This brings into question the effectiveness of a standalone PCP meeting. Support may be needed over time and with repeated meetings a young person may become more confident to engage. The implementation of a consistent approach such as PCP may help young people develop familiarity and confidence.

### 5.2.2. Attitudes of Adults Working with Young People

The implementation of Article 12 of the UNCRC (UNICEF, 1989) depends on adults working with young people (Kilkelly et al; 2005). In their models of participation, Hart (1992, 1997), Shier (2001) and Mitra (2006) emphasise the importance of shared power between adults and young people when making decisions and the idea of young people having control over the process. To achieve this it is important that young people are able to feel at ease to voice their true opinions without fear of being judged or reprimanded.

The power relations that potentially exist between young people and adults can make it difficult for young people's voices to be listened to (James et al; 1998). Robinson and Taylor (2007) argued that power influences all aspects of social communication and schools have established hierarchical structures that are difficult to remove. Some adults working in educational settings fear that giving young people increased control in decision-making might undermine their authority (Kilkelly et al; 2005).

Rudduck and Fielding (2006) found that adults working in educational settings tended to prefer young people's views to remain silent, largely due to feelings of anxiety about negative comments that might be made about their practice. Young people also expressed that they would prefer to remain silent due to anxiety about the fear of retaliation from adults if they made negative comments, or the fear of saying something that could be perceived as being wrong. One young person in the research suggested that they would prefer to write down their ideas so that they could avoid being shouted at. PCP principles focus on young people's views being at the centre of the approach (Sanderson, 2000) however, this research highlights that not all school professionals may be willing to facilitate this approach. If young people do not feel comfortable in attending meetings or voicing their opinions, their voices may need to be gained in alternative ways.

### 5.2.3. Direct vs. Indirect Involvement

Article 12 in the UNCRC (UNICEF, 1989) states that young people's views can be sought directly or indirectly. As discussed previously, some young people might not feel comfortable attending a meeting about their needs (Holtom & Lloyd-Jones, 2014), therefore their views may need to be represented indirectly. However, there is a debate in the literature about the efficacy of indirectly seeking views. Kelly (2003) argued that to reliably understand a young person's reality, views should be sought directly. A reliance on interpretations from adults or asking someone to speak on behalf of young people can be problematic (Fielding 2004). It is thought that an indirect approach can result in inferences being made about a young person's views and assumptions being made (Lloyd-Smith & Tarr, 2000).

Personal advocates can represent young people and help them engage in the process of change (Ravet, 2007) by involving young people before and after meetings to obtain their views. McKay (2014) reported that professionals, particularly when working with young people with ALN sometimes rely upon an advocate approach. It is thought that the role of EPs and other adults in educational settings is split between acting as an advocate and as supporting young people by guiding their views (Aston & Lambert, 2010). Ingram (2013) discussed the EP dilemma that arises from the conflict between these different roles. Relying on an interpretation of views as presented by another adult could be disempowering for young people, particularly if there is a mismatch between real and reported views (Ingram, 2013). This brings to question whether any adult known to a young person can be relied upon to act as an advocate for the voice of the child, and whether this approach facilitates or impedes young people's engagement in decision-making.

### 5.3. Meaningful Engagement for all Young People

Lundy (2007) reflected on data collected by Kilkelly et al. (2005) to create a new model conceptualising Article 12 from the UNCRC (UNICEF, 1989) and important factors to facilitate young people's engagement in decision-making. The model does not indicate one singular approach is best to facilitate engagement. In contrast, it promotes the idea that young people should have a choice about how they express their views to increase the opportunity for ownership and meaningful participation. This idea is supported by Norwich and Eaton (2015) who reported that one singular approach is unlikely to meet individual needs. In order for PCP to be implemented successfully, it is thought a range of PCP techniques would be needed to allow for increased flexibility. Models of

participation (Hart, 1992, 1997; Shier, 2001; Mitra, 2006) emphasise that young people should be given opportunities to lead the process of change. However, although this may be best practice, it may be unrealistic to expect educational practitioners to be knowledgeable about and implement a wide range of strategies along with the other demands of their role.

Hayes (2012) believes that adults working with young people need to modify practice to meet individual needs of all young people they work with. They also emphasise the importance of increasing the flexibility of approaches used and adapting them for individuals. The adoption of a singular approach, such as PCP, may not encompass this flexibility and therefore may not be appropriate. There has been an increasing amount of research into methods such as prompt cards, visual cues, adapted language, video tours, peer interviews, role play, pictures, written responses, taped questions that can be used to support young people with a range of communication styles (Cambridge & Forrester-Jones, 2003; Hill, 2006; Mazzotti, Kelly & Coco, 2015). It may be possible to use these approaches in amalgamation with PCP to increase flexibility and facilitate engagement.

#### 6. Findings from Research that Includes the Voices of Young People.

Completing participatory research is not a new concept and has proved to be helpful in discovering young people's perceptions about the support they need (Hill, 2006). As all young people are individuals with unique needs and perspectives it is important that their views are sought (Lloyd-Smith & Tarr, 2000). Some researchers have involved participants in discussions about how they would like their views to be gained prior to the research and the suggested methods were employed in the subsequent interviews (Emond, 2002). Interestingly, this research did not conclude that there was an overall best method to gain views. However, it was found that generally young people were more engaged in consultations that were for shorter time periods and perceived as being fun.

Aston and Lambert (2010) recognised an irony in the lack of research that attempted to gain the views of young people and their role in decision-making, particularly given the emphasis on listening to young people's views. Therefore they conducted research to explore young people's perceptions of their involvement in decision-making, specifically focusing on developing from tokenistic involvement. PCP techniques were used to elicit views of young people as it was felt that this would provide an alternative method to traditional ways that may have intimidated young people. Aston and Lambert (2010) found that young people needed to feel that attempts to seek their views were a positive experience, where the issues were of interest to them and they felt that their input at the

meetings was influential. They recommended the use of person-centred procedures to support schools in seeking the views of young people due to the success of the approach in their research. However, although PCP was recommended, the research did not specifically evaluate the effectiveness of PCP in educational settings.

Hill (2006) identified a wide range of different methods to engage young people; however they found that the most important factor was giving young people control about how to express their views. Larkin et al. (2015) found that rather than focusing on the methods that should be used to engage young people, the most effective way of engaging young people was to start from their priorities. In a meta-analysis into the participation of young people, Black (2011) proposed that in order to engage young people in decision-making it was important that they should be involved in the policy making process. It was thought that they should have the opportunity to contribute to policy rather than being subjected to policy changes. This was particularly relevant for young people from marginalised groups, it was deemed important to make the outcomes of their participation more visible to these young people. All of these factors can help to give the process authenticity, a factor that is thought to make the process more significant to the young person (Rudduck & Fielding, 2006).

## 7. What is Known about Person Centred Planning in Educational Practice

The adoption of PCP in educational practice is not a new concept (Hayes, 2004). The work of individuals such as Helen Sanderson (2000) has facilitated this process by developing person-centred practice in health, social care and education. However, the implementation of the principles and philosophy of PCP in the field of ALN is still thought to be limited (Corrigan, 2014). Although PCP aims to place the young person at the centre of all decisions made (Sanderson, 2000) research has found that the adoption of PCP approaches does not automatically result in a reduction of tokenistic involvement (Holtom & Lloyd-Jones, 2014). An analysis of the research that has explored the use of PCP within education and ALN can help to understand the limits to its implementation and identify areas for further research. Figure 5 provides a descriptive summary of the methods and findings of key research papers, detailing what is already known about PCP practice in educational settings.

Authors	Participants	Method	Analysis	Conclusions
Hayes (2004)	Attendees to PCP review including young person	Adults completed structured questionnaire - Likert scales Young person - verbal feedback	Comparison of Likert Scale scores Review of discussion with young person	Positive response from all involved Graphic element helped understanding and concentration Preparation work with young person helped to build confidence PCP child-centred, fun and accessible, gave all professionals chance to contribute
Hagner et al (2012)	47 Young people, 16 -19 years with ASD transitioning from specialist secondary school to adult life.	Randomised Control Trial. Two groups; group 1: PCP techniques, group 2: no additional support. Checklist during meeting observation. Pre and post measures: Expectations Survey, Arc Self-determination scale, Vocational Decision-Making Interview-Revised.	Paired t-tests (one-tailed repeated measures) used to compare pre and post scores within groups.	Group 1 reported significantly higher in all variables. $P < 0.05$ . Group 2 no change in variables measured Researchers concluded that PCP approaches were successful and should replace existing planning models transition in educational settings.
Kaehne & Beyer, (2014)	One local authority in the UK. Young people with ALN leaving secondary setting.	Analysis of 44 completed Person-Centred plans Telephone Interviews with family member involved, closed response options and open-ended questions used in interview schedule.	Documentary analysis of all person-centred plans Data from interviews triangulated with results from documentary analysis.	PCP positive impact on some aspects of transition planning Shift in topics discussed during the transition planning process PCP engaged young people and gave them and their parents the opportunity to articulate their needs. Meetings had a positive impact on the attendance of professionals at the meetings, increased support and involvement. Implementation of PCP does not automatically result in changes to the strategic planning of services. meeting attendees limited the goals agreed upon in meetings (educational bias).
Corrigan (2014)	6 young people; 5-15 years 43 adults; parents, professionals, EPs.	Longitudinal: Two data points, following initial meeting and following review meeting. (range 6 -10 weeks) Questionnaires; Likert Scales and open-ended questions focusing on PCP as a method to support transition or reintegration and young people's development across outcome areas.	Likert Scale responses compared Thematic analysis used.	Questionnaires: participants reported positive changes to various educational aspects and overall social and emotional wellbeing. Use of champions provided scaffolding and facilitated engagement of young people Barriers may prevent implementation of PCP in educational settings; school ethos, facilitator skills, time and capacity, local authority demands. EPs felt PCP more appropriate in schools with existing inclusive ethos and culture. PCP can be diluted to fit within the existing structures. Constraints of local authority made it difficult to meet wishes expressed by young people. Need for training in schools and change to existing ethos that support traditional models.
White & Rae (2016)	16 Young People (10-11 years and 13-14 years), transition period year 9 and year 9.	Mixed Methods design: Semi-structured interviews with parents and young people. Parents interviewed after review, young people interviewed before and after review. Scaling questions and locus of control scale used with young person before and after.	Thematic analysis of interview data Quantitative data was represented using descriptive statistics.	Prior to meetings participants felt daunted and apprehensive about unfamiliar process Person Centred Reviews seen as collaborative and reassuring approach, structure was helpful Feeling that the meetings encouraged openness and honesty Meetings impacted on young people's self-esteem, because of positive nature and strengths focus Described as a relaxed but structured approach Young people were very positive about the meetings Some parents felt the meetings were too long and not accessible to children. Meetings did not change perceptions about the locus of control or feelings regarding education.

Figure 5: Summary of Research into PCP in Educational Practice.

Research conducted by Hayes (2004) evaluated the use of visual annual reviews to support the transition process for a year 6 pupil. The research findings indicated how additional adaptations to a meeting, such as the use of visual techniques, change the way PCP is implemented and impacts on the success of the approach. In this research, it was thought that the visual adaptations facilitated the young person's understanding of the meeting. This research reinforces the idea that an awareness of a young person's needs is important to help adapt approaches to meet their needs (Head, 2011). In this research example, professionals focused on changing external barriers (the meeting format) (Gardner & Crockwell, 2006) and maintained the perspective that the individual was potentially competent in engaging (Rogers, 1986). Although this visual approach was successful in engaging the young person in this research, this provides only one case study. As young people with ALN are a heterogeneous population, generalisations should be made with caution. Further research is needed in a range of settings to explore the different approaches and adaptations that have been successful in engaging young people. This research does however demonstrate that different methods are likely to facilitate engagement for young people (Beresford, Rabiee & Sloper, 2007). The approach adopted in this research was designed by the Educational Psychology Service, however it is not clear whether other educational practitioners, for example those working in schools, would have the confidence to make similar adaptations to PCP, or the knowledge that the PCP could be adapted. They may not have the confidence to be experts in the problem-solving process (Sanderson, 2000) and they are expected to lead the implementation of PCP. Rather than questioning the standardised processes of PCP, such as those produced by Sanderson, they may question the young person's capability to engage (Mittler, 2004).

The randomised control trial design used by Hagner et al. (2012) explored the impact of PCP meetings for young people leaving secondary school. The research paper is helpful as it provides information about a larger range of adaptations that were made to the PCP meetings to support individual's needs, such as breaks during the meetings and the use of video calling. Acknowledging the importance of knowing about the individual needs of young people (Head, 2011) and involving young people in making decisions about how they engage in meetings (Sanderson, 2000). Researchers also acknowledged the importance of supporting young people to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to facilitate the process, as they may not be able to engage initially. The research provides a unique perspective on PCP as it adopts a purely quantitative research design. This is helpful as it provides some tangible measures of the impact PCP had on a range of factors, providing an evidence base for PCP that is currently limited (Ratti et al; 2016). However, this quantitative approach does not provide an insight into pupil's experiences of the meeting. Also, the

quantitative methods used to ascertain pupil views were self-report techniques and standardised measures that did not allow for flexibility in ascertaining young people's views. Previous researchers have found that this flexibility is important, particularly when working with young people with ALN (Emond, 2002; Hill, 2006; Larkin et al; 2015). Researchers acknowledged that not all participants had sufficient literacy skills to interpret and respond to the questions on the surveys independently and needed adults to interpret for them. This indirect involvement of young people can be problematic as it relies on adults to interpret their views (Fielding, 2004). As Kelly (2003) argues it is not possible to reliably understand a young persons reality when their views are not sought directly.

Kaehne and Beyer (2014) conducted research funded by the DoH to explore how PCP could influence outcomes for young people. The research found that services were having difficulty meeting demands made by the young people in meetings. As Sanderson (2000) claims, services in the community need to adapt to meet the needs of young people and should be led by their needs. PCP approaches encourage people to think about what is possible rather than what is available so that aspirations are not limited. Perhaps services in the wider community are not in the position to adapt the services they offer, or they are not aware of the need to do this. Kaehne and Beyer (2014) also found that mostly educational professionals attended the meetings, resulting in goals that focused on educational needs. The first principle of PCP is that the person is at the centre of the process (Sanderson, 2000). This can include allowing the young person to choose attendees, perhaps making outcomes more relevant to the young person's needs and aspirations, providing a more holistic picture of what is important to them. This research did not seek the views of young people or professionals involved in the meeting. Instead the findings are based upon content analysis of completed plans and telephone interviews with parents or carers. This does not provide information about experiences of PCP meetings from a range of perspectives and does not give young people the opportunity to express their views. The use of telephone interviews in this research is interesting as their impact on data quality is debated within the literature (Novick, 2008). Some believe that the technique provides limited information about emotions and more sensitive subjects (Groves, 1990). It is also thought to limit the ability to build rapport with participants (Smith, 2005), perhaps advocating the use of face to face interviews.

Research conducted by Corrigan (2014), added to existing literature as it explored the views of young people, parents and professionals following PCP meetings. The research found positive effects of PCP on educational aspects and overall social and emotional wellbeing for young people. All participants views were ascertained using questionnaires with Likert scales. Participants rated

statements about the principles of PCP (taken from Holburn, 2002) and open-ended questions were used to provide qualitative data. A number of barriers to the implementation of PCP were identified, these included systemic barriers such as school ethos and local authority demands, and practical barriers such as time and staff capacity to implement PCP approaches. Corrigan (2014) talks about how PCP approaches can be diluted to fit with the school's ethos, however there is little understanding of how diluting the approach affects the implementation of all five principles of PCP described by Sanderson (2000). Existing structures and ethos' within schools, such as power hierarchies (Robinson & Taylor, 2007) were found to support more traditional models of pupil engagement, rather than PCP. Corrigan (2014) also found, similar to Kaehne and Beyer (2014), that constraints imposed by local authorities made it difficult to meet the aspirations of young people with the services available. The questionnaire approach used in this research may have guided the way participants reflected on the meeting limiting their focus to the predetermined areas. Some interesting points have been raised in this research, however as questionnaires were used it was not possible to explore these any further with participants. This would have been possible if interviews had been conducted and this may prove to be a useful approach to gain further insight into the issues raised.

White and Rae's (2016) research focused on how PCP meetings could change young people's perspectives on their locus of control. They used a locus of control scale before and after the meeting, however the analysis of responses did not reveal any significant differences. They also completed semi-structured interviews with parents after the meetings and young people before and after the meetings. The semi structured interviews and thematic analysis resulted in rich information about participants experiences of the meetings. Participants talked about how meetings were daunting at first as they were unfamiliar to them. However, they felt that the relaxed but structured approach facilitated openness and honesty, perhaps due to the shared power of meeting attendees (Sanderson, 2000). They also felt that the focus on young people's strengths was important as it helped to increase their self-esteem (Sabo, 2003). The meetings were described as not always being accessible to children, indicating the importance of increased flexibility in using the approach (Hayes, 2012). This research provides more details about how young people and parents experienced the meetings, semi-structured interviews were successful in providing further details about these experiences.



## 8. The Current Research

There is a divide in the literature about the efficacy of PCP in educational settings (Kaehne & Beyer, 2014). As government legislation promotes the use of PCP approaches in supporting young people with ALN (DFE, 2014 & WG, 2015) it is important to understand barriers and facilitators to its implementation in educational practice. Research conducted with participants from pathfinder projects following government legislation has found that the implementation of PCP in educational settings is limited (Holtom & Lloyd-Jones, 2014). There is a danger that PCP could become a paper exercise (Claes et al; 2010) driven by government legislation that imposes change on school staff.

Previous research has focused on transition meetings with older pupils (Hagner et al, 2012, Kaehne & Beyer, 2014), or with young people with specific ALNs (Hagner et al, 2012). Research into the use of PCP in mainstream settings with primary and secondary aged children has been conducted but its generalisability and validity is affected by small sample sizes (Hayes, 2004) or the research methods used (Corrigan, 2014). The use of quantitative measures (Hagner et al, 2012) has made it possible to evaluate the impact of PCP approaches by looking at several outcome factors. The research findings advocated the use of PCP in improving outcomes for young people (White & Rae, 2016). However, the validity of the results may have been limited by participants' ability to access the measures used. Quantitative methods do not create the opportunity to explore young people and adults' constructions of the meetings and the impact on their engagement in decision-making.

Qualitative techniques have been used to gain the views of young people following PCP meetings, however the methods used may have limited the information gained. A reliance on questionnaires to gather views of people involved in the meetings (Corrigan, 2014) may have limited information given, due to the use of closed questions and rating scales. Where interviews have been conducted (Kaehne & Beyer, 2014) the reliance on telephone interviews may have impacted on the quality of information gained (Novick, 2008; Groves, 1990) and the participant base was limited (White & Rae, 2016).

Individual interviews have been successful in exploring young people's experiences of meetings about their needs (White & Rae, 2016). Young people were able to engage in individual interviews despite having different ALNs. Interviews may be more effective in facilitating discussions about their own experiences and it may help them to be open and honest. Further research using these methods might be helpful to explore perceptions about use of PCP to engage young people with ALN

in meetings. This type of research could help to inform techniques and approaches used, whether this be in place of PCP or to support PCP.

In current research, there is little focus on the impact of PCP in engaging young people in the decision-making process. It is important that further research acknowledges that the voice of the child is more than the spoken word (Robinson & Taylor, 2007). It is important to recognise the complexities that are involved in the decision-making process (Komulainen, 2007) and use theories of engagement (Hart, 1992,1997, Shier, 2001, Mitra 2006) to explore how PCP can facilitate the ultimate participation of young people.

Therefore, this research will use semi-structured interviews to explore participants experiences of PCP meetings, looking specifically at attendees' perceptions of how PCP approaches facilitated engagement for young people. Participants will be encouraged to reflect on meetings they have experienced to think about how young people were engaged in the decision-making process. Interviews will also give participants the opportunity to reflect on their own role, and the roles of others within the meetings. The use of open questions and the semi-structured approach will also make it possible to explore participants constructions and other factors that may arise.

### 8.1 Relevance to Educational Psychology Practise

Research of this nature is of importance to EPs as government legislation promotes the use of PCP by all practitioners in educational settings.

There is little research that gains the unique perspectives of the EP, particularly in the role they feel they can play in the implementation of PCP within schools. Research has indicated that this could be a systemic role rather than acting as facilitators at individual meetings (Corrigan, 2014). This research will explore the role of the EP within the LA and the context of the school. Given that EPs use a variety of methods to elicit young people's views (Harding & Atkinson, 2009) they are well placed to reflect on the efficacy of PCP techniques and their ability to engage young people in making decisions.

## 8.2 Research Questions

This research aims to answer the following questions:

- 1.) What are the influences of having young people in PCP meetings?
- 2.) What are participants' views of how PCP meetings facilitate the engagement of young people in decision-making?
- 3.) What can support young people to engage and participate in decision-making using PCP approaches?
- 4.) What is the perceived role of the Educational Psychologist in facilitating PCP approaches?
- 5.) What are (if any) the barriers to the implementation of PCP approaches in educational settings?

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**Gaining the voices of young people using Person Centred Planning: Exploring ways to engage young people with Additional Learning Needs in making decisions about their future.**

**Part B: Empirical Research Study**

## **1. Abstract**

Educational legislation in the UK has promoted the use of Person Centred Planning to gain the views of young people and involve them in making decisions about their provision (DFE, 2014; Welsh Government, 2015). However, there is a gap between the legislation and current practice in education (Holtom & Lloyd-Jones, 2014; Norwich & Eaton, 2015). Previous research has found young people are not meaningfully engaged in making decisions, particularly young people with additional learning needs (Lundy, 2007; Norwich & Eaton, 2015). However, the extent to which Person Centred Planning facilitates the engagement of young people in decision making has not yet been explored and the evidence base is limited (Ratti et al, 2016). This research paper aimed to explore participant's perceptions of Person Centred Planning as a tool to engage young people. Semi-Structured Interviews were used to explore the experiences of young people, parents, school staff and Educational Psychologists in relation to Person Centred Planning meetings, focusing specifically on the engagement of young people in the process. A thematic analysis of the whole data set found four common themes across the data, these were 'power', 'familiarity', 'presence of young person' and 'creativity and adaptation', however the experiences of each participant group varied. Young people's engagement in decision-making processes was limited, due to a lack of familiarity with the approach and established power hierarchies. The findings also highlighted the difficulty of applying one approach to a heterogeneous population such as young people with additional learning needs.

## 2. Introduction

### 2.1. Legislative Context

Ensuring that children are given the opportunity to express their views has become increasingly emphasised in legislation. The United Nations Conventions of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (UNICEF, 1989) provides protection of children's rights in all aspect of their lives, promoting equality for all children regardless of individual differences. Article 12 in the human rights treaty states that all young people regardless of their individual need have the right to express their views in all decisions affecting them (UNICEF, 1989). This can be achieved directly; giving the child the opportunity to voice their opinions in any proceedings or indirectly; through a representative.

Current and proposed educational legislation in England and Wales reinforces the importance of the participation of young people in decision-making (DFE, 2014; Welsh Government (WG), 2015). The Codes of Practice put young people at the centre of the planning process when making decisions about their future. The recommended approaches are described as 'person-centred' (DfE, 2014; pg 148) and parents and young people are expected to be at the heart of all discussions regarding how individual needs should be met.

### 2.2. Person Centred Planning

The term 'Person-centred approach' was coined by Carl Rogers (1951), placing its foundations in humanistic psychology. Rogers recognised a subjectivity in people's experiences and individuality, believing that experiences of reality form part of every individual's private view of the world. As perceptual understandings of an individual are unique, it would not be viable for others to try and make assumptions about aspirations and support needed, therefore they should be central to the process. Person-centred approaches value the unique meanings that people derive from subjective experiences (Chen, 2001), providing individuals with the opportunity to explore their experiences. Rogers (1989) believes it is important to let people have the chance to explore subjective experiences to develop an awareness of themselves.

Prior to it's emphasis in educational settings, Person Centred Planning (PCP) has been introduced successfully in health and social care settings. Sanderson (2014) reported that PCP has improved communication and provided a deeper understanding of patients' needs in health care settings, helping staff to tailor care to meet individual needs. However, research found that although the

term PCP was used widely across Social Care Services the approach had not been fully implemented (Dowling, Manthorpe & Cowley, 2007).

The implementation of PCP approaches increases the emphasis on the views of young people (Sanderson, 2000), focusing on shared power and promoting community inclusion (Sanderson, 2002). The term covers a variety of techniques (Ratti et al; 2016) that share underlying principles (Mansell & Beadle-Brown, 2004). Sanderson (2000) claims that PCP approaches consist of 5 key features;

- the person is at the centre;
- family members and friends are partners in planning;
- the plan reflects what is important to the person;
- the plan results in actions that are about life and reflect what is possible, and;
- the plan results in on-going listening, learning and further action.

In educational settings, it is hoped that PCP will encourage on-going dialogue between young people and adults (Atkinson, 2014). The adoption of PCP in education should encourage practitioners to place individual needs of young people at the centre of the decision making process. However, the evidence base for PCP in education is limited (Ratti et al; 2016).

### 2.3. Implementation of Person Centred Planning in Education

Despite the introduction of legislation, it is argued that there have been few changes to practice (Lundy, 2007, Office of the Children's Commissioner, 2012). Research has theorised that this may be due to difficulties implementing the principles to gain young peoples' perspectives (Shevlin & Rose, 2008) or the vast number of initiatives introduced in education and increasing pressure on practitioners (Rudduck & Fielding, 2006).

More recently, reviews of pathfinder projects completed in educational settings in both Wales (Holtom & Lloyd-Jones, 2014) and England (Norwich & Eaton, 2015) have found that despite the new legislation there continues to be limited involvement of young people in decision making.

### 2.4. Importance of giving Young People a voice.

Robinson and Taylor (2007) argue that gaining young peoples' voices should be a moral decision, made because of the positive impact it can have on young people, rather than an act to comply with legislation.

Engaging young people in the decision-making process can have positive effects on their relationships with school, teachers and learning (Hayes, 2012, Baroutsis et al, 2016). It can also promote motivation, independence, personal control, development of meta-cognitive skills (Harding & Atkinson, 2009), self-esteem (Sabo, 2003), and the development of autonomy (Leach, 1994). For young people to experience and develop a sense of agency, it is thought they need go beyond making contributions and take ownership of the decision making process (Larkins et al; 2015) and see their views acted upon and integrated into practice (Keddie, 2015).

## 2.5. Theories of Engagement

Models such as Hart's Ladder of Participation (1992, 1997), Mitra's Pyramid of Student Voice (2006) and Shiers Pathway to Participation (2001) have been used to describe the different levels of engagement young people experience in decision-making processes.

The three models (Hart, 1992,1997, Shier 2001, Mitra 2006) propose that in order to achieve higher levels of participation, practice needs to move beyond just listening to the voices of young people. Instead young people should initiate and choose processes used to facilitate change and have ownership of the decision-making process. As PCP has been suggested in legislation (DfE, 2014; WG, 2015); it could be argued that the approach is imposed on young people rather than allowing them to choose. This brings into question whether PCP approaches can facilitate meaningful participation.

## 2.6. Current Research into the Use of Person Centred Planning in Educational Settings.

The literature about the efficacy of PCP in educational settings is divided (Kaehne & Beyer, 2014). Some research has found PCP can positively impact on outcomes for young people (Hagner et al; 2012) and has facilitated engagement of young people in decision-making (Kaehne & Beyer, 2014; Corrigan 2014). Research has found that adaptations and flexibility towards PCP approaches can make it more accessible for young people (Hayes, 2004, Hagner et al, 2012). This is particularly important when working with young people with ALN (Beresford, Rabiee & Sloper, 2007). It is important to focus on making the changes to external systems (Gardner & Crockwell, 2006), rather than make assumptions that young people are not capable of accessing meetings (Mittler. 2004).

However, research has identified many barriers to the implementation of PCP in educational settings. Both systemic barriers such as the schools' ethos (Corrigan, 2014) and limitations imposed by what services can offer (Corrigan, 2014, Kaehne & Beyer, 2014), as well as practical barriers such as limited time and staff capacity (Corrigan, 2014) have been found to impact on the implementation of PCP (Corrigan, 2014). Further research is needed to explore how PCP engages



young people in making decisions about their needs and to explore participants experiences of using PCP.

## 2.7. The Current Study

Government legislation promotes the use of PCP approaches in supporting young people with additional learning needs (DfE, 2014 & WG, 2015) therefore it is important to understand barriers to its implementation in educational practice.

This study intends to address methodological limitations of previous research by gaining the views of young people, parents, practitioners working within a variety of educational settings and Educational Psychologists (EPs). There is limited current research using qualitative data collection techniques and methods of analysis to explore people's experiences of PCP meetings focusing on how they facilitate meaningful engagement for young people.

## 2.8. Research Questions

- 1.) What are the influences of having young people in PCP meetings?
- 2.) What are participants' views of how PCP meetings facilitate the engagement of young people in decision-making?
- 3.) What can support young people to engage and participate in decision-making using PCP approaches?
- 4.) What is the perceived role of the Educational Psychologist in facilitating PCP approaches?
- 5.) What are (if any) the barriers to the implementation of PCP approaches in educational settings?

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Ontology and Epistemology

This research adopts a relativist approach to explore individual's constructions (Burr, 2003) regarding the engagement of young people in decision-making. Relativism adopts the view that there are no absolute truths and places emphasis on the exploration of perceptions as providing subjective evidence for reality. Constructivist epistemology guides decisions made regarding the research design of this project. Constructivist epistemology requires research methods that explore participants' constructs through discussions or interactions (Creswell, 2003). Therefore guiding the decision to use semi-structured interviews to explore individual participants' experiences of a PCP meeting they have attended. Semi-structured interviews give flexibility to explore participants' individual constructs while maintaining a focus on the research aims. These individual experiences will be compared and used to identify ways that practitioners can help to meaningfully engage young people in PCP meetings.

#### 3.2. Participants

Participant Group	Number of Settings involved	Total Number of Participants
Young People	4 (2 Specialist setting, 1 mainstream Primary School, 1 mainstream Secondary School, 1 Further Education College)	5 (Male, 19 years, Male, 18 years, Male 16 years, Female, 10 years, Female, 14 years)
Parents	3 (2 Specialist Setting, 1 mainstream Primary School, 1 mainstream Secondary School)	4 (Female)
School Staff	4 (1 mainstream Primary School, 2 mainstream Secondary School, 1 Specialist Setting 0-25.)	4 (4 Female) (3 SENCo, 1 Class teacher)
Educational Psychologists	4 EPs (2 in Wales, 2 in England)	4 (2 Male, 2 Female)

Figure 6: Information about Participants

### 3.3. Sampling of Participants

Participants were selected for this research based on their attendance at PCP meetings. Some participants had attended the same meetings, for example, meeting A had been attended by 4 different participants (Figure 7). However, due to time constraints it was not possible to continue this pattern for all participants and participants were selected on an opportunity basis, with a stratified sampling approach to ensure that participant groups were equally represented with a similar number of participants in each group. Figure 7 below shows the meetings that were attended by different participants and whether these were held in England or Wales.

Meeting	A Wales	B Wales	C England	D England	E Wales	F England	G Wales	H England	I England	J Wales
Participant Group										
Young Person	•		•	•	•	•				
Parent	•				•			•	•	
School Staff	•				•		•	•*	•*	
Educational Psychologist	•	•	•							•

Figure 7: Attendance of Participants at Meetings. (\*same participant attended both meetings.)

### 3.4 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participants had attended PCP meetings that were arranged and conducted independently of the researcher.</li> <li>- All participants needed to be able to articulate and express their views in some way.</li> <li>- All participants needed to be able to understand the interview questions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Meetings were not included if they had been problematic or relationships between attendees in the meeting had been fraught, as this may have changed the focus of the interviews to the contentious issues, rather than the engagement of young people.</li> <li>- Participants were not included if it was thought they may be at risk of psychological harm from answering questions or attending an interview, e.g. if it was felt it may elevate levels of anxiety or other mental health concerns.</li> </ul>

Figure 8: Details of Participant Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

### 3.5 Procedure

All participants completed consent forms prior to interview (see Appendices F-I). The 17 interviews were conducted over a 3-month period, and lasted approximately 20 – 60 minutes each. Interviews were arranged at times and places that were convenient for each participant. They took place in 3 different local authorities, one in England and two in Wales. All interviews followed a semi-structured approach, allowing for structure to address the specific research questions but also the flexibility for participants to offer their own interpretations of experiences allowing for a personal narrative to develop (Galletta, 2013)(see Appendix J for interview questions). Each interview was audio recorded and then transcribed by the researcher and made anonymous within two weeks (see Appendix K for sample transcript).

### 3.6 Method of Analysis

Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used to identify key codes in the interview data. Initial codes were developed and organised into themes for each participant group before a general analysis was completed. This allowed for all participant groups to be equally represented within the general analysis. A general analysis across all groups made it possible to highlight common themes that had arisen across participant groups giving a holistic view of the meetings. Thematic analysis was chosen due its flexibility and compatibility with constructionist epistemology (Braun & Clarke, 2006), it also allows for a 'rich and detailed...account of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, pg 5). For a detailed account of the thematic analysis process please see Appendix N.

### 3.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was granted by the School of Psychology Ethics Committee from Cardiff University, ensuring that research conformed to the ethical principles of the British Psychological Society, the Health Care Professions Council and the Ethics Committee at the University.

Ethical Consideration	Actions taken by researcher
Gatekeeper permission	Gatekeeper permission was sought from Principal EPs (appendix A), head teachers (appendix B) and parents of young people under the age of 18 (appendix G and D).
Informed Consent	School staff, parents and young people were provided with information sheets (appendix C and E) about the research before consenting to their contact details being shared with the researcher. In addition to this, all participants gave informed consent individually prior to commencing the interviews.
Debrief	All participants were debriefed following interviews, debriefs gave information about the research aims and the way the data will be used. It also included contact details for the researcher and research supervisor, should they want to find out more about the research (see Appendices L and M for debrief forms).
Right to withdraw	Participants were made aware of their right to withdraw at anytime when they gave consent to take part in the research (appendices F – I). They were also reminded of this at the beginning of the interviews (appendix J). Participants had the right to withdraw from the research up until the data had been made anonymous. They were given information about the procedure for doing so and contact details were provided on debrief forms. Participants were provided with the final date on which their data would become anonymous and they would no longer be able to withdraw.
Confidentiality and anonymity	All data collected during the interviews was kept securely and confidentially on password encrypted devices. Data was transcribed and made anonymous two weeks after the interview date. Once transcribed, all audio recordings were deleted.
Risk of Psychological Harm	<p>Meetings that were considered to be of a personal or contentious nature were not included in the research. Educational Psychologists and school staff used their professional judgements to decide whether it was appropriate to ask them to participate in the research.</p> <p>Participants were asked to reflect on meetings that included personal details about themselves or the young person. Prior to the interview, EPs were asked about whether other participants were at risk of psychological harm from taking part in the interviews and the researcher monitored all participants' wellbeing during interviews. If participants showed signs of distress, procedures were in place to terminate the interview and withdraw from the research entirely or suspend the interview. They would also have been signposted to appropriate support. Questions selected for interviews were designed to avoid personal details and information; any information that could reveal participant identity was removed from the data or made anonymous during transcription.</p>

Figure 9: Ethical Considerations

#### **4. Analysis and Results**

A thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was conducted on the qualitative data collected from interviews (see appendix N for details). Primarily, initial codes were identified for each participant group (see appendices O - R for initial codes generated for each group). Following this, a general analysis was completed to explore participants' experiences of PCP meetings. An inductive approach to analysis was adopted; it was based on the information that was contained within the data rather than any theoretical understanding or pre-existing structure. Inter-rater measures were not sought during the analysis, however, regular supervision was used to review and critique all codes and themes.

Four themes were constructed from the data (Figure 10). Although themes were consistent amongst participant groups, there were differences in opinion within and between participant groups. Differences are discussed throughout the analysis, with quotes included to illustrate each subtheme.



Figure 10: General Thematic Analysis

#### 4.1. Theme 1: Power

The theme of 'power' was evident in discussions from all participant groups, although the term 'power' was not used, it impacted on the effectiveness of PCP in engaging young people in decision-making. There were differences in perceptions about who should have the power to make decisions about young people's needs in PCP meetings. For example one parent thought that decisions should only be made "within parental limits" due to the young person's age (15 years) (parent 3, lines 188). Although it was acknowledged that working collaboratively with young people promoted equality, it was felt this was not established practice. School staff were aware of the importance of listening to the voices of young people but often used their power to overrule decisions; "need to involve them (young people) but not always give them the casting vote. Hear their voice, but their voice is only part of it" (school staff 4, lines 88-9). It was acknowledged that all views should be given equal consideration, but parents and school staff felt adults should make final decisions.

##### 4.1.1. Subtheme 1.1: Top Down Influences

Some school staff and EPs felt that PCP approaches had been imposed by the Local Authority and Government, and there was a perception that some schools "don't feel comfortable with" the change (EP 1, line 396). PCP was regarded as something that school staff felt they "have to roll with...(and) have to change" (school staff 1, line 222) indicating a feeling of top down power influencing their practise. School staff that recognised the underlying principles of PCP saw the importance of changing practice to adopt the approach; "it is about changing me as SENCO, I need to change what I am doing, to make the change for everybody" (school staff 2, lines 361-2). Other school staff were more uncertain about the change in approach and focused on the barriers to its implementation. Barriers such as within child factors (e.g. age and cognitive ability) prevented school practitioners from implementing the approach with all young people, as they felt the approach was only appropriate for "about 2/10 of the younger children...and with Key Stage 2 children probably 6/10" (school staff 1, lines 60-3). Other external pressures such as a lack of time and resources had prevented schools from implementing the approach.



#### 4.1.2. Subtheme 1:2: Hierarchy

Established hierarchical structures within schools were thought to have prevented the achievement of equality in meetings, as they could become “a school telling them (young people) off...an exclusion type approach” rather than a PCP meeting (EP 2, 243-5). EPs and parents reported that power relationships between school staff and young people were evident during meetings, making it difficult for young people to refuse suggestions from school staff, with perceptions that it “is it too cheeky to say no to a teacher.” (parent 1, line 44). The role of the school in making logistical decisions and hosting meetings was thought to reinforce this power with a feeling that “it’s not the child’s meeting or the family’s meeting, it’s the school’s meeting” (EP 1, 366-7) being prevalent across participant groups.

#### 4.1.3. Subtheme 1.3 Established Ethos

EPs reflected on how the ethos within a school could prevent or promote the success of PCP. Some schools that were not yet “into that way of thinking about the strengths of the child” (EP 3, line 53) had difficulty seeing the efficacy of the approach. Schools with poor communication generally were also perceived to struggle more with applying a PCP approach (EP 1, line 174-6) as they had difficulty understanding why PCP would be helpful. However, it was also recognised that schools could have a person-centred ethos without calling it PCP (EP 4, lines 385-8). Parents felt that to engage young people it was important that they are “always being asked (their) opinions in things and what (they) might like to try. Not just at (their) annual reviews” (parent 3, lines 172-3). This indicated the importance of a continued commitment to engaging young people, not just at standalone meetings. It was thought that it might “take time for them to get their head round that this is a different way of working (EP 2, lines 110-11), this was particularly felt to be the case for secondary school staff who were reported as thinking the approach was “babyish” and did not “work for secondary schools” (EP1, line 162-8)

#### 4.1.4. Subtheme 1.4: Advocacy

All participant groups discussed advocacy as a way of supporting young people to have their voices heard. There was agreement that advocates should represent young people if they chose not to attend meetings. Parents, school staff and EPs all felt that they were well placed to act as advocates. Parents felt they were well placed to act as advocates as they often “knew (them) best” (parent 3, line 141). However, young people’s views on parents as advocates varied, some felt parents have “lots of options and...know what would help” (young person 1, line 147) where as others felt that their parents did not listen to them and would dominate discussions (young person 4, lines 165-7). Young people who had worked with EPs felt they were suitable advocates as they worked with their best interests at the centre and made sure they were “listened to” (young person 2, line 214). Young people did not mention school staff as potential advocates, although staff felt they acted in that role “I tend to...speak to the pupil before and present the view of the pupil myself...me being the advocate there in the meeting” (school staff 4, lines 135-136). However, young people felt unanimously that they were best placed to make decisions themselves, as it was their life and their future.

#### 4.1.5. Role of Adults

Young people felt it was helpful when adults gave them options to choose from, so that if they were “struggling with something then they think of things I can do” (young person 1, lines 74-75) and they knew what was available. They felt adults were there to provide options rather than make decisions. Young people reported it was helpful when adults “asked (them) all of the questions and checked everything was OK with (them), not just what the adults said” (young person 3, lines 37-9), this helped them to feel more involved. EPs felt that they were “generally the only person (in the meeting) that is directing my conversation (at the young person)” (EP 4, line 45-46) . Young people also felt it was important that adults helped to prepare them “before the meeting, (to tell them) what would happen (young person 3, lines 37-9).

## 4.2 Theme 2: Familiarity

Familiarity impacted on young people's ability to engage with PCP meetings as it affected their sense of safety and comfort with the process and during the meetings.

### 4.2.1. Subtheme 2.1: Approach

The introduction of PCP approaches resulted in feelings of uncertainty and anxiety in participants. School staff reported uncertainty about using a new approach; "during the first meeting I remember sitting there and thinking oh my god I feel so uncomfortable" (school staff 2, lines 356-7). However, these feelings subsided as they became more familiar with the approaches. Staff also felt that "sometimes (young people) are a little bit nervous to start with because it is all about them" (school staff 2, line 111). Young people also reported a change in attitude after they had attended meetings (young person 1, lines 102-105), reporting increased interest in attending meetings about their needs. Participants observed that young people's engagement increased over time as they became familiar with PCP. Familiarity was also important for school staff to develop their confidence to facilitate and manage meetings.

### 4.2.2. Subtheme 2.2: Preparation

Preparation improved familiarity and supported young people's engagement in meetings, it was identified as important to "make sure that everyone knows what question is going to be asked so that they have a response" (EP 2, line 141-142). School staff agreed that there needs to be preparation work...for guys who have communication difficulties and more complex needs...to have the support and the opportunity to think prior to (the meeting)" (school staff lines 248-251). Participants discussed different approaches to preparation, these were largely influenced by available time and adult support. Generally, specialist settings were able to provide more personalised approaches due to a higher staff to pupil ratio. It was consistently reported that preparation work with young people should be completed by adults familiar to the young person. Preparation was important for all meeting attendees to "skill(ing) the adults up about what will happen, making sure they are really clear about their roles in that process, (EP 4, lines 198-9) and to experience PCP tools used in meetings. This helped manage expectations of school staff and encouraged them to understand the ethos of PCP meetings; thus preventing adults from coming to meetings with their own agendas. Young people found preparation before meetings to be important what would happen and...to answer the questions that he was going to ask in the meeting"

(young person, 3, line 38 -40). It could also help young people to think about their aspirations and what they “wanted to go forward with” (young person 4, lines 54-6) prior to being in a more formal meeting situation.

#### 4.2.3 Subtheme 2.3: Organisation and Planning

Organisational factors promoted familiarity for young people. Inviting familiar attendees impacted on confidence, making sure young people knew why attendees were there and how they supported them. If they were not sure why people had been invited young people reported feeling ““it was a bit weird, because (they) didn’t know them and they were talking about (them)” (young person 5, line 37-8). Familiar venues could also impact on the nature of a meeting and a young person’s willingness to engage. Venues such as staff rooms could make meetings more formal, whereas classrooms or familiar rooms in the school were more relaxed. It was found to be important to ““to do some work around asking the child...where they want the meeting to take place” (EP 1, lines 346 - 347). One parent recalled an experience where all of the professionals came to the house for a meeting and felt that this was “proper PCP” (parent 3, line 326). Alternative venues like this were thought to be more relaxed environments, which could support engagement. The young people involved in this research did not consider changes in venue.

#### 4.2.4. Subtheme 2.4: Relationships

Relationships between attendees were important, with familiar relationships helping young people feel relaxed. Having a “close relationship” between young people, parents and school staff was thought to help young people feel more “comfortable” in meetings (parent 2, 195-7). It was thought that “even if someone had a PCP then it (is) still about who (is) supporting them and the relationship between them and people supporting them that makes it...person centred” (school staff 3, lines 241-3). Seeing people work collaboratively was thought to reassure young people that people were working together to meet their needs, and helped establish trust in the people supporting them. “Most importantly it (was) about...interaction and relationship with other children” (EP 4, 395-6) to help establish familiarity and trust. Relationships were impacted upon by difficulties in getting professionals to attend regular meetings.

### 4.3. Theme 3: Presence of the Young Person

#### 4.3.1. Subtheme 3.1: Openness

There was a feeling that young people's presence in meetings could limit the openness of conversations, with people feeling they needed to be "more guarded when the young person is in the room because obviously they can't speak as freely" (school staff 4, 65-6). School staff and EPs felt that during some meetings about contentious issues, such as social care (EP 4, line 102-4), "it may be seriously inappropriate" (school staff 1, line 150-1) to have young people present. However, one EP spoke about how one of the strengths of having a child involved in one of those meetings is having honest dialogue...it's not a secret anymore or something to be ashamed of. It's out in the open, and maybe that makes them more secure." (EP 4, lines 465-71). School staff felt they were more careful about what was said when young people were present and they could not address all issues that needed to be discussed. Typically, young people attended the beginning, positive parts of the meeting and left when adults discussed the "nitty gritty" (school staff 3, line 212). There was a sense of tokenistic involvement of young people from school staff with perceptions such as "they can be a part and their views can be heard and then they can go off then and we can discuss the meat on the bones of how we are going to achieve what they need. I don't think they often need to be involved in that part of the discussion" (school staff 4, lines 179-83). Sometimes "they've got to have another meeting afterwards to rearrange things and sort everything out" (EP 2, lines 65-6). Young people would not be present in these follow up meetings; "J would have her meeting to explain it with (other agency) and then I would have a separate meeting too" (parent 1, lines 112-3)". In contrast to this, parents felt able to "talk about sensitive issues and that's OK" (parent 2, lines 197- 8) and young people could not see any reasons why they would not attend meetings, with a view that "I should be there really, if they're talking about me" (Young Person 5, line 105-6).

#### 4.3.2. Subtheme 3.2: Engagement

Young people felt being invited to meetings helped them to be more engaged in the decisions that were being made, one young person reported that from "being in the meeting I could get involved and speak, say what I think I want to do" (young person 1, 29 -30), they "appreciate(d) having the time to keep people updated" (young person 2, line 88). Some adults, particularly school staff, felt that some young people "are just sitting there for the sake of it and... they can't be engaged" (school

staff 3, lines 175- 7) in these cases they felt they should not be in meetings. However, those who had experienced meetings over time recognised an increase in contributions and engagement of young people; “the first time...she didn’t have the attention span to be in the meeting... she was nowhere near engaging as she is now” (parent 4, lines 189 -94). Experiences such as “they come into the room and say hiya, and then everyone is like, there’s the voice of the child aren’t they happy.” (EP 1 line 328-9), confirmed the continued tokenistic engagement of young people, especially when they are not invited to attend full meetings. It was thought young people with different needs would engage in different ways and meaningful engagement for one young person would be different for another young person. One parent felt their son was "included in as big a way as possible, I don't think it is tokenistic at all" (parent 3, lines 195-6). Strategies such as giving young people roles in the meeting, continuously checking back, limiting use of jargon and preparation all supported young people to engage in the meetings.

#### 4.3.3. Subtheme 3:3: Empowering

Young people reported meetings as “empowering” experiences as “(they) get to say what (they) think and what (they) want and people listen to (them)” (young person 3, line 7-9). It was important to be a part of discussions to, “pick out the things I want to do...(to) feel more involved” (young person 3, line 9) . The process of choosing what they wanted and generating action plans all facilitated engagement and empowered young people. The structure of PCP meetings was thought to be important for this; "the way the meeting has been styled means that she has the opportunity to say what she wants to happen and has actioned these things" (parent 4, lines 23-5). With a feeling that “they (young people) are at the centre of it and they feel it is about them and they get to have their say and get to listen and ask questions" (school staff 2, lines 131-2). Meetings were felt to be successful in "empowering people to say what is needed and solutions" (EP 2, line 164), this was empowering for all meeting attendees including young people as everyone was given an opportunity to share what they felt was needed.

#### 4.3.4. Subtheme 3.4: Positivity

EPs, young people and parents thought that PCP meetings were a “more positive process” changing the “focus of meeting(s)...from this is a problem...to find solutions” (EP 3, lines 10-13). This positivity was a welcome change to previous approaches. When reflecting on meetings, young people and parents tended to remember the positive aspects of the meetings, such as "they said what they

thought I was good at and what I had done well" (young person 5, lines 28-9) and "talking about things he likes to do and he is good at" (parent 3, lines 37-8). One member of school staff felt that "a more positive spin is placed on things when the children are in the room," (school staff 4, line 76-7). However, school staff did not always see this positivity as helpful, as they felt it may "may give the wrong impression that they (young people) are amazingly able" (school staff 3, lines 205 – 208). EPs felt that "medical professionals...(were) very uncomfortable about the focus on the positives of the child and what they could do" (EP 3, 46-9).

#### 4.4. Theme 4: Creativity and Adaptation

It was felt by some participants that "a blanket approach" such as PCP "doesn't work" (school staff 3, 194–5). Participant groups discussed the importance of thinking creatively and adapting approaches to elicit young peoples' views and encourage engagement. Participants reflected on adaptations to PCP meetings and how these supported the engagement of young people.

##### 4.4.1. Subtheme 4.1: Needs of the Young Person

It was felt that meetings needed be adapted on an individual basis, making sure that it is "unique to the young person, (and) flexible" (parent 4, lines 223-4). One member of school staff felt that there were "children for whom it (PCP) is not at all appropriate and never would be" (school staff 1, line 28-9). Individual differences such as mental health, cognitive ability, and age impacted on adult's expectations of how young people would engage and the support needed. It was not expected that "every young person (would) be able to contribute necessarily in a formal way" (parent 3, 308-9). For example one young person reported having difficulty engaging in discussions about their aspirations which "made it difficult" he felt that this "wasn't other people's fault it was my fault" (young person 4, lines 55-7). Talking about the future was thought to be difficult for some young people when they "can't communicate them very well" (parent 3, line 127). It was thought that there were different ways to facilitate engagement of young people which were unique to each individual. However, preparing for different "modes of communication...can be quite limited" (EP 4, lines 80-1) due to time constraints.

#### 4.4.2. Subtheme 4.2: Needs of the School

School staff and EPs reflected on how schools adapted and changed PCP meetings to meet the needs of the school. It was felt that "in it's (PCP) purest form...it's great but it won't work" (school staff 3, 131-2), therefore school staff had adapted PCP approaches "so that it is purposeful and... serve(s) a function" (school staff 3, lines 228- 9)". Schools who had more experience of using PCP had "picked up the elements (they) particularly like(d), but (found) some of the things, ...parents... find challenging" (school staff, 2, lines 9 -10), in this example the school had changed the written approach due to the limited literacy skills of some of the parents they worked with. Terms such as "PCP light" (EP 1, lines 8) were used to describe schools who had used some of the features and tools from PCP approaches. One EP talked about a PCP continuum from the really explicit PCP tools to the things that we might do implicitly all the time" (EP 4, lines 33 - 5). One school suggested an implicit use of PCP as it had "become part of the ethos of (the) school (school staff 3, lines 228- 9)". All schools that participated in this research were using PCP approaches in different ways to support their practise.

#### 4.4.3 Subtheme 4.3: Role of the Educational Psychologist

Perceptions of the EP role differed. School staff were not always sure whether "an EP coming in (to meetings) would be appropriate" (school staff 1, lines 294-5) and preferred to use EP time for other purposes such as individual assessment. However, it was thought that they could be helpful in complex cases, in a specialist or expert role. Parents felt EPs could "give a different perspective, a non-education perspective" (parent 3, line 267) providing a more holistic view of the needs of a young person. EPs generally saw themselves as having a "systemic (role), in training and organising rather than the day to day... not...the operative stuff" (EP1, lines 220-1), supporting school staff to develop their confidence in using PCP approaches. Young people felt that an EP could help them to engage in the meetings by making "sure that he asked me all of the questions and checked everything was OK with me, not just what the adults said", (young person, 3, line 37-8). They felt that EPs "listen to what I have to say and say it exactly how I have said it" young person 1, line 208) supporting them to engage and encouraging other adults to listen to them.



## 5. Discussion

### 5.1 Overview

This research study explored whether PCP meetings including young people impacted on experiences of engagement in decision-making. Interviews with attendees of PCP meetings explored participants' experiences and the engagement of young people. The themes constructed from the data are discussed below in relation to each of the research questions generated from a comprehensive literature review. The discussion establishes links between data from the thematic analysis to existing literature and previous research findings.

### 5.2 Research Question 1

*Does the presence of young people in PCP meetings impact on the meeting? If so, how?*

The presence of young people impacted upon several aspects of the meetings. Conversations were adapted to match the verbal and cognitive abilities of young people. Young people with ALN differ in communication styles (Lacey & Oyvry, 2013) and participants in this research recognised the importance of making discussions accessible for all (Head, 2011). Adaptations and checking back with young people aided understanding and facilitated engagement.

Young people's presence made meetings more positive, focusing on strengths and achievements rather than deficits and problems. Positivity can increase feelings of competence, self-esteem (Sabo, 2003) and support the development of autonomy (Leach, 1994). Perhaps PCP meetings construct positive life narratives for young people, encouraging engagement as situations no longer seem impossible (Winslade & Monk, 1999). Discussions about personal strengths encourages practitioners to think about the external barriers to change rather than focusing on within child factors (Gardner & Crockwell, 2006). Perceptions of the helpfulness of positive meetings differed, with complaints that the needs of a young person were not always accurately reflected. This is influenced by different agendas people bring to PCP meetings, rather than holding a meeting to empower young people, they may be seen as opportunities to access additional provision and support. This emphasises the need to ensure that meeting attendees are aware of the principles of PCP and the purpose of meetings.

The presence of young people in meetings limited perceptions of the ability to talk openly about issues. There was a sense of discomfort at the prospect of talking about more sensitive or contentious issues in front of young people. EPs and school staff expressed uncertainty about whether conversations about contentious issues such as social care or parenting, were appropriate for young people to be involved in. However, it may be important to involve young people to help normalise issues and demonstrate that adults want to provide support. This may prevent potential feelings of isolation and promote trusting relationships between adults and young people. Vulnerable groups of young people are at risk from disengagement with education (Kelly, 2003) so it is important to develop connectedness in relationships, inviting them to participate in discussions and having their voice heard can facilitate this (Baroutsis et al; 2016). Parents and young people could not identify any reasons why young people could not be involved in discussions, they did not view any issue as too contentious. Young people and parents did not feel presence impacted on openness and felt that as meetings are about them, they should always be there, regardless of the meeting content. This difference in opinions could lead to possible tensions between the groups.

### 5.3 Research Question 2

*In the participants' experiences, do PCP meetings facilitate the engagement of young people in decision-making?*

Due to constructions regarding young people's capacity to engage and the ability to talk openly, it was common for young people to only attend part of the meeting (Mittler, 2004). Typically, they attended positive discussions, rather than engaging in decision making and action plans. These imposed limits indicate that adults continue to make decisions, reinforcing hierarchal power relationships between adults and young people in schools (Robinson & Taylor, 2007). Limited attendance prevents involvement in decision-making and imposes limits on capacity to engage (Kilkelly et al; 2005). In order for young people to meaningfully engage they need to experience meetings and become familiar with processes. Although at first they may not be able to engage, this could be learnt over time. PCP currently increases the amount voices are 'being heard' (Mitra, 2006), but it remains questionable as to whether this practice is allowing them to be meaningfully engaged. If the power and responsibility to make decisions is not shared (Sanderson, 2000) and there are few opportunities to contribute to discussions it will be difficult to move beyond this.

PCP promotes collaborative, shared decision making between adults and young people (Sanderson, 2000), facilitating equality in decision-making (Hart, 1997). There are continued experiences of established power relationships and lack of equality (James et al; 1998). Young people felt nervous

about refusing suggestions from school staff (Rudduck & Fielding, 2006) and meetings were still seen as for the school rather than the young person. School staff and parents often made decisions on the behalf of young people or superseded decisions, further reinforcing these power hierarchies. Although procedures and policies are in place to facilitate shared decision making, adults may not be ready to share power (Shier, 2001). If power is not shared, young people are more likely to disengage from the process.

PCP meetings can be empowering experiences for young people, due to increased ownership of plans (Larkins et al, 2015). Increased ownership and being able to keep action plans provides a sense of agency in making sure actions are implemented (Keddie, 2015).

Engagement increases when young people make logistical decisions prior to meetings, such as who is invited and where meetings are held. Involvement in logistical decision-making could give young people leadership capacity (Mitra, 2006) and opportunity to initiate action (Hart, 1997). This was not yet found to be established practice and young people had not considered factors such as alternative venues. There was a general feeling that ultimately meetings still belonged to schools rather than young people. Perhaps schools are not ready to relinquish this power.

#### 5.4 Research Question 3

*How are young people supported to engage and participate in decision-making using PCP approaches?*

The heterogeneity of a population such as ALN is inevitable and therefore it is important to adapt PCP approaches to support the individual needs of young people (Beresford, Rabiee & Sloper, 2007). An understanding of young people's needs is important for this to be successful (Head, 2011).

Advocates can support indirect (UNICEF, 1989) engagement for young people when they chose not to attend meetings or if their ALNs might affect their ability to engage in meetings (Ravet, 2007, McKay, 2014). It is uncertain about who is best placed to act as advocates, but it is important they know the young person well, listen to their views, and check back to agree actions with them (Ingram, 2013). Young People describe EPs as effective advocates, as they check back to ensure discussions focus on their wishes and needs. Previous research has found advocacy can be problematic as it relies on interpretations (Fielding, 2004) and may not provide reliable representations of the young person's views (Kelly, 2003). Ultimately, to create a sense of agency the young person should be leading and making shared decisions with adults (Hart, 1997), perhaps

supported by advice from adults (Aston & Lambert, 2010), if they chose to use an advocate this their decision.

Familiarity can support young people and adults to engage. Preparation helped familiarise attendees with PCP structures, practice questions and construct answers. Young people with ALNs may have difficulty thinking about abstract concepts such as future aspirations so preparation could support them with this (Beresford, Rabiee & Sloper, 2007). Young people with ALN are at an increased risk of being overlooked as having the capacity to engage in these discussions (Rose, 2005) however, with support and guidance they could develop these skills.

#### 5.5 Research Question 4

*What is the perceived role of the Educational Psychologist in facilitating PCP approaches?*

Perceptions about the role of EPs in PCP remains undetermined. EPs can help provide a holistic picture of the young person rather than focusing on educational attainment, this can be helpful given the lack of representation from health and social care professionals at meetings. EPs do not always have the opportunity to attend PCP meetings as schools prefer to use allocated EP time for individual casework. When EPs do attend meetings, they are expected to act in an expert role as information givers and problem solvers.

EPs identified systemic roles in developing staff confidence and familiarity with PCP approaches. As school staff are expected to implement PCP it is important that they are confident and understand the principles of the approach. An understanding of the underlying principles of PCP and the ethos behind the approach could also support staff to see the importance of engaging young people (Rudduck & Fielding, 2006). Previous research found that schools with inclusive ethos' and cultures were more likely to see the benefits of PCP (Corrigan, 2014). Therefore perhaps supporting school staff to identify PCP approaches they were already using and how they were already engaging young people in making decisions would help develop confidence.

#### 5.6 Research Question 5

*What are (if any) the barriers to the implementation of PCP approaches in educational settings?*

A number of barriers to the implementation of PCP have been identified and considered throughout this discussion. School staff were more likely to identify barriers, perhaps due to perceptions regarding the top-down implementation of PCP. Mainstream settings in particular, felt a lack of time and resources made it difficult to adapt meetings and prepare young people for meetings, both

crucial factors in facilitating engagement. Where PCP approaches were more embedded, all staff, including leadership teams, embraced PCP (Ratti et al; 2016). Where PCP had been implemented for 3-4 years a familiarity and confidence was developed, and PCP was a constantly evolving process; adapting to meet the ever-changing needs of the schools.

Negative responses from health care professionals acted as barriers to PCP implementation as the positive nature of the approach was not always welcomed. Despite PCP being more established in health care settings (Sanderson, 2014). Perhaps training is needed to support health professionals to apply the approach to educational settings.

### 5.7 Strengths and Limitations

Strengths	Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Age range of young people interviewed (10-19)</li> <li>- Range of settings involved (Mainstream, Specialist, Primary and Secondary)</li> <li>- Semi-structured interviews provides unique dimension to the literature.</li> <li>- Reflective exploration that acknowledges uniqueness of participant's experiences of PCP meetings.</li> <li>- Further understanding of engagement of young people in decision-making and how this links to literature on engagement (Hart, 1992, 1997; Shier, 2001, Mitra, 2006).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Did not explore engagement with younger age groups or why early year settings were not using PCP.</li> <li>- Opportunity sample meant those who took part in the research may have particular interest in PCP and positive views of PCP.</li> <li>- Schools in the research had implemented PCP, this may not be entirely representative of current educational practice.</li> </ul>

*Figure 11: Strengths and Limitations of the Research*

### 5.8 Future Research

Future research is needed to explore how constructions of age and ability impact on how young people are engaged in decision-making and how their voices are gained. This research could not recruit young people under the age of 10 years, due to participants' perceptions of capability to engage in PCP meetings and interviews, this needs to be explored to see how younger children

might be supported to engage in PCP meetings. This research found that engagement was an evolving process, longitudinal research could further explore how engagement changes with time and age.

Power hierarchies and its influence on PCP needs further exploration. Exploration of power structures within schools is needed, particularly in regards to how this might impact on relationships between young people and adults, and perceptions of autonomy and capability.

Literature on levels of engagement suggests that it is important for young people to have a leadership role in the process (Hart, 1992,1997, Schier, 2001, Mitra, 2006). Future research is needed to explore this, to find out how engagement changes when young people are able to initiate meetings and make choices about processes used.

#### 5.9. Relevance to the Practice of Educational Psychologists.

The findings of this research have a number of implications for EP practice. It is important for EPs to have awareness of how schools perceive populations such as ALN and consider their aspirations for these young people, including their ability to become autonomous and make decisions. It is important that EPs challenge schools and encourage them to think about why young people are not invited to meetings, perhaps the role of the EP is to ask those questions and provoke these thoughts. EPs can encourage schools to think about perceptions of pupil capability and reasons why they may not include young people in all meetings. This research should also encourage EPs to reflect on their own perceptions of young people in meetings and why this may not be part of standard practice, is this due to constructs regarding age or capability? Are meetings considered to be too contentious? Or is it part of preserving adult power? Standard practice is to hold all meetings and consultations about the young person rather than with the young person and it is important to challenge and question this practice rather than continue to work in the same way.

## 5.10 Conclusion

PCP provides a positive approach to meet the needs of young people, focusing on external factors that can be adapted and changed (Gardner & Crockwell, 2006). PCP has been criticised for this positivity with the presence of young people limiting perceived openness.

This research has found that factors such as the relationships between young people and adults, existing power hierarchies, familiarity with processes and the complex nature of populations such as ALN can influence engagement in PCP meetings. Adaption of PCP approaches can help meet the needs of educational settings and individuals while still maintaining underlying principles. Facilitating the engagement of young people in decision-making goes beyond the implementation of one specific approach, such as PCP. It is important to engage young people in all processes, not just meetings, giving young people the opportunity to initiate decision-making processes (Hart, 1997) building capacity for leadership (Mitra, 2006). This type of ongoing engagement may help to overcome potential power hierarchies, providing a shared approach to decision making (Hart, 1997).

There are barriers to young people's meaningful engagement in decision-making. Practical barriers such as time constraints, lack of resources, lack of knowledge and confidence in using PCP were identified. In addition, perceptual barriers were also identified, including; constructions of young peoples' capability to make decisions, power dynamics and the concept that young people should not be engaged in conversations about more sensitive topics. Further support is needed to support practitioners to understand the underlying principles of PCP and identify the importance of relinquishing or sharing ownership of the process. Adults working with young people may not be ready to share their adult power with young people (Shier, 2001). It is important to acknowledge the empowering impact of PCP, on young people and the development of their sense of agency in decisions throughout their lives. The term 'voices of young people' is open to interpretation (Black, 2011) and perhaps 'meaningful engagement' should also be a flexible concept, with awareness that meaningful engagement is likely to be different for individuals with different needs.

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**Gaining the Voice of Young People using Person Centred Planning: Exploring ways to engage young people with Additional Learning Needs in making decisions about their future.**

**Part C: The Critical Review**

## 1. Introduction

This Critical Review reflects on the research process and its impact on my practice as a researcher and applied psychologist. The review is separated into two distinct sections. The first section is entitled “Contribution to Knowledge”; this focuses on how the research process has contributed to an overall understanding of Person Centred Planning (PCP) and young people’s engagement with decision-making. To achieve an understanding of the research contributions, this part of the review clarifies how the research addressed gaps in the literature and discusses the rationale for each research question. Following this, the contributions of the findings of the research are discussed, considering how it has contributed to my understanding of role of the Educational Psychologist (EP) and how this is relevant to general EP practice.

The second section of this review entitled “Critical Account of the Research Practitioner”, discusses the research process, including decisions regarding the development of the research topic, methodological decisions, ethical issues, data analysis, supervision and how these were impacted on by my own epistemological beliefs and principles.

The two sections are concluded with an overall summary.

## 2. Contribution to Knowledge

### 2.1. Research Rationale

When initiating the research process, I completed a comprehensive search of existing literature that explored the process of gaining the voices of young people. There was evidence that this had become a growing research area since the introduction of legislation by the United Nations Conventions of the Right of the Child (1989). This legislation was internationally recognised and had been arguably one of the most influential articles in promoting the rights of young people; advocating their involvement in decision-making. More recently, PCP and the engagement of young people in decision-making has become a central part of educational legislation introduced in England in 2014 (DfE, 2014) and proposed in Wales (WG, 2015). Despite this there was thought to be little change to practice in educational settings (Norwich & Eaton, 2015; Holtom & Lloyd-Jones, 2014).

There has been a plethora of research that reinforces the importance of seeking the voices of young people, particularly looking at the positive impact it can have on their outcomes and engagement with education (Harding & Atkinson, 2009; Lewis, 2010; Hayes, 2012; Larkins et al, 2015; Keddie, 2015; Baroutsis, 2016).

### 2.2 Gaps Identified in Current Research

#### 2.2.1 Person Centred Planning as a Facilitator to Engagement.

There was little research that had been conducted following the implementation of the recent education legislation (DfE, 2014; WG, 2015) to explore experiences of using PCP to support young people with Additional Learning Needs (ALNs). A meta-analysis of 16 studies into the use of PCP with individuals with ALNs concluded that that there was a limited evidence base for PCP in educational settings (Ratti et al; 2016). Neither had there been any research that linked PCP approaches to participation literature such as Hart's Participation Ladder (1992, 1997) and other theories of engagement based in educational literature (Shier, 2001; Mitra, 2006). The extent to which PCP could help to facilitate engagement for young people had not been explored.

### 2.2.2. Implementation of Person Centred Planning Techniques when Working with Young People with Additional Learning Needs

There has been a large amount of research exploring the challenges involved when working with young people with ALNs. There is a general agreement within the literature that one singular approach may not be the best way to facilitate engagement for these young people (Lundy, 2007) due to the complexity and diversity of their ALNs (Hayes, 2012). Research has focused on a range of methods such as prompt cards, visual cues, adapted language, video tours, peer interviews, role play, pictures, written responses and taped questions (Cambridge & Forrester-Jones, 2003; Hill, 2006; Mazzotti, Kelly & Coco, 2015). There was a lack of research into how these adaptations could be used alongside PCP. The research also brings into question the efficacy of applying a blanket approach such as PCP to meet the needs of such a heterogeneous population.

### 2.3 Methods used in Current Research Involving Young People

After completing a critical analysis of previous research into the use of PCP in educational settings, I could identify how the research methods used may have limited the information obtained about people's experiences of PCP meetings. Research had used quantitative measures (Hagner et al, 2012), questionnaires (Hayes, 2004; Corrigan, 2014) or a triangulation of documentary analysis and telephone interviews (Kaehne & Beyer, 2014) to evaluate outcomes for young people. There was limited use of interviews to gain participants views (Hayes, 2004). Often in research where interviews had been used there were very limited sample sizes e.g. with one young person (Hayes, 2004) or they had used content analysis to explore pre-determined themes (Small, Raghavan & Pawson, 2013) which could have potentially limited the scope of the research findings by quantifying qualitative data. However, in a more recent study (White & Rae, 2016), interviews and thematic analysis of the data had successfully provided the researchers with an insight into the experiences of young people and parents involved in PCP meetings.

#### 2.3.1. Quantifying Experiences

Two studies had used Likert Scales in their questionnaires to gain feedback from participants following meetings (Hayes 2004; Corrigan, 2014). Likert Scales are often used in educational research to provide researchers with ordinal data (Norman, 2010) to draw conclusions from. However, their robustness can be influenced by factors such as small sample sizes, especially when



trying to use statistical analysis to understand the data (Norman, 2010). In addition to this, the quantification of participant's experiences may have resulted in the loss of data that could emerge from interviews with participants.

### 2.3.2. Participant Groups

Existing research including the views of young people was conducted predominately with participants making the transition from secondary settings into further education or employment (Hagner et al, 2012; Kaehne & Beyer, 2014). There was little research that had attempted to gain the views of a range of younger participants who had experienced PCP meetings (Corrigan, 2014). When this had been attempted, questionnaires were used to elicit their views. This could be problematic when completing research with young people with ALN as it is difficult to ascertain their understanding of written questions or ability to provide extended responses to open questions (Corrigan, 2014). Corrigan (2014) does not explain how participants were supported with this. Research conducted by White and Rae (2016) had successfully used interviews to elicit the views of young people aged 10-11 and 13-14 with ALNs. However, this research limited its participant base to young people and parents and did not explore the experiences of school staff and EPs.

## 2.4 Rationale for Research Questions

<p>Research Question 1: Does the presence of young people in PCP meetings impact on the meeting? If so, how?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•PCP approaches promote the importance of the young person being at the centre of all plans (Sanderson, 2000). Evaluations of pathfinder projects found young people were not consistently attending meetings and when they were, their presence was described as tokenistic (Holtom &amp; Lloyd-Jones, 2014). The inclusion of this research question made it possible to further explore these findings, to discover whether young people were attending meetings as part of standard practice in school. It also aimed to explore the perceived impact of young people's presence in meetings, including potential changes to the narrative used (Winslade &amp; Monk, 1999) and attitudes of adults involved in meetings (Kilkelly et al., 2005; Rudduck &amp; Fielding, 2006).</li></ul>
<p>Research Question 2: In the participant's experience, do PCP meetings facilitate the engagement of young people in decision-making?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•This research question was developed to explore the way PCP techniques could support young people to become engaged during meetings. Young people with ALN are at risk of being overlooked due to preconceptions about their capacity to engage in decision-making (Mittler, 2004). This research aimed to explore how engagement may look for different young people and explore different constructions of engagement and pupil voice across participant groups (Komulainen, 2007; Robinson &amp; Taylor, 2007). Questions were structured to encourage participants to reflect on whether PCP facilitated engagement for all young people or whether adaptations were needed (Hayes, 2012).</li></ul>
<p>Research Question 3: How are young people supported to engage and participate in decision-making using PCP approaches?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Previous research indicated that young people with ALNs benefited from differentiation of approaches to meet their needs and support them to communicate their views (Cambridge &amp; Forrester-Jones, 2003; Hill, 2006; Mazzotti, Kelly &amp; Coco, 2015). This research question aimed to explore whether, in the participant's experiences, additional adaptations were needed to support young people to engage with PCP approaches or whether other factors supported engagement.</li></ul>
<p>Research Question 4: What is the perceived role of the Educational Psychologist in facilitating PCP approaches?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•As EPs regularly work with young people with ALNs, it could be argued that they are well placed to support schools to implement PCP. Previous research indicated that EPs play a systemic role in the implementation process (Corrigan, 2014). However, this research question aimed to explore how other participant groups constructed the EP role. Specifically, it added a unique dimension to the literature by exploring how different groups perceive the role of the EP in facilitating young people's engagement.</li></ul>
<p>Research Question 5: What are (if any) the barriers to the implementation of PCP approaches in educational settings?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Research has indicated that there is a disparity between changes in legislation regarding the inclusion of young people's voices and practice in educational settings (Lundy, 2007; Holtom &amp; Lloyd-Jones, 2014; Norwich &amp; Eaton, 2015). This research question aimed to further understand this disparity and identify barriers that may be preventing PCP from being implemented in a range of school settings.</li></ul>

Figure 12: Rationale for Research Questions

## 2.5 Contribution of Findings

This research adds to the literature by providing an exploration of perspectives and experiences of people who have attended PCP meetings. The constructivist research design made it possible to explore how different participant groups constructed engagement and how they perceived the efficacy of PCP approaches. In line with the principles of PCP (Sanderson, 2000), this research includes pupil voice in collaboration with the views of parents and others.

My principles and beliefs influenced decisions made throughout the research journey. It was important to me that the research provided young people with ALNs the opportunity to express their views, removing barriers to participation in research. The semi-structured interview approach made it possible to adapt questions to meet the needs of each participant. Interview questions could be added to and expanded on to explore each participant's unique narrative and experiences (Galletta, 2013). If predetermined questions or questionnaires were used this may have limited the information shared.

The participants that took part in the research were working within or attending a range of educational settings allowing the data to be more representative of practice across settings. Adding to previous research that focused solely on specialist (Hagner et al, 2012), mainstream primary (Hayes, 2004) or mainstream secondary (Kaehne & Beyer, 2014) settings. This allowed for comparisons to be made across settings. Revealing that PCP was more established in specialist settings who were more confident in adapting the approach to meet the needs of their schools. Staff working in mainstream settings identified more barriers to the implementation of PCP and felt they lacked the resources and staff needed to implement the approach.

## 2.6 Contribution to Knowledge.

This research has gained an insight into current PCP practice, since the introduction of new educational legislation (DfE, 2014; WG, 2015). Providing further evidence of the gap between legislation and practice (Lundy, 2007; Holtom & Lloyd-Jones, 2014; Norwich & Eaton, 2015).

Providing an understanding of young people's engagement from different perspectives highlighted disparities across participant groups. Perceptions of the appropriateness of young people attending meetings varied between participant groups. It was felt that the presence of young people impacted on the openness of conversations especially regarding contentious issues such as a social care. In

contrast, young people felt they should be involved in all discussions about their needs. This difference in opinion could lead to reinforcement of the power hierarchy if young people are not given the power to choose or organise meetings. As school staff organise meetings, they have the ultimate say about inviting young people.

The research provides a current representation of how PCP can support young people to engage in decision-making. Conducting the research in a range of settings made it possible to identify how the efficacy of PCP meetings could be affected by factors such as staff's understanding of using PCP, the established ethos within schools and the resources available. Some felt that the positive nature of PCP was not helpful, as it did not allow for a realistic understanding of young people's needs. They tended to perceive PCP as a barrier to them fulfilling their agendas for meetings, rather than seeing PCP meetings as an intervention to empower young people. By exploring perceptions of PCP in practice it was possible to identify how these perceptions could be acting as barriers to its implementation.

The link to participation theories (Hart, 1992,1997; Shier, 2001; Mitra, 2006) provides a unique contribution to the literature by applying psychological theories of engagement to practice. It also makes it possible for practitioners to begin to recognise how an understanding of these theories can increase engagement for young people by building their capacity for ownership and leadership in the process. It was important to young people that they were involved in deciding who should attend meetings, and who should act in the advocate role (if needed), however there was not much evidence of this happening in practice. PCP has not yet become a collaborative and shared process. Meetings are planned by the school and generally regarded as the school's meetings, therefore young people do not yet have ownership.

## 2.7 Relevance to Educational Psychology Practice

The relevance to EP practice is integral throughout this topic, EPs are well placed to support schools to implement PCP and develop their confidence in using the approach. This research highlights the importance of supporting schools to understand the principles of PCP and the positive impact of engaging young people. EPs can help schools identify barriers to the effectiveness of PCP and begin to overcome these together. It is likely that EPs who have worked with schools over time will have developed an understanding of the ethos' and perhaps the power hierarchies that may exist. This research highlights the impact these systemic factors have on the implementation of PCP. EPs can

use this information to support schools and help make adaptations to meet the needs of specific settings. School staff may not be confident in making adaptations to PCP without support.

It was challenging to recruit participants for this research as EPs were either not involved in using PCP or not experiencing PCP as part of established practice within schools. This research found that it was not established practice for young people to attend meetings about their needs. When young people were present they did not often stay for the full meeting. Typically, they missed the decision-making parts of the meeting due to perceptions of capability to engage and the ability to talk openly while they were present. EPs can encourage school staff to think about why young people are not attending meetings, challenging constructions of factors such as capability and openness. EPs can also support practitioners to understand engagement as an ongoing process and a skill that may take time for young people to develop. It is important for young people to develop this capability to engage, both through preparation and experiencing meetings.

The research design made it possible to identify differences in perceptions of the EP role, for example as advocate, expert, information giver or as providing a holistic view. These differences in perceptions highlight the importance of being flexible in the role and being explicit with service users to establish their expectations.

## 2.8 Contribution to the Development of the Research Practitioner

My principles of providing young people with a sense of agency in the decision-making process has remained integral throughout this research. It was a significant influence that underpinned all methodological decisions, including the gathering and analysis of data. I wanted to ensure that young people were given the opportunity to be able to express their views alongside and in collaboration with other participants. This drove my decision to use the same approaches with all participants. Prior to this process, I had little awareness of how my own beliefs and principles could guide the decisions I made as a researcher and a practitioner. Ongoing personal reflection throughout the research journey has made it possible to think reflexively about how I have influenced the process and outcomes of this research.

### 2.8.1 Facilitating Communication for all Young People.

The young people included in this research had different ALNs impacting on their ability to engage with education. This ranged from young people with anxiety, ASC, profound physical difficulties and moderate learning difficulties. At the beginning of the research process, I contemplated different ways to communicate with these young people to understand their experiences. However, after research into different approaches, I recognised that all research had used different approaches, and it was not possible to find 'the best way' as that did not exist. I decided to think about what was important to me in this research process, and I wanted young people to be able to express themselves and share their experiences. I felt that strategies such as pictures and talking mats could inhibit the information they would be able to share as they would have been restricted to the vocabulary they were provided and may not have been able to express their views or opinions. All of the young people involved in this research were able to communicate and respond to questions asked verbally. Including one individual who was communicating using eye-gaze technology. It was important to give all participants time to think about their answers, and it was helpful to use supporting questions to help explore meanings and ensure I had interpreted their views correctly. This made me think about the different approaches that I use with young people in my practice as a Trainee EP. I often use approaches such as Salmon Lines (Salmon, 2003) or Blob Trees (Wilson & Long, 2009) to help structure and guide discussions with young people. However, in using these approaches I may impose a structure that focuses on issues I feel are important or should be important to them, rather than exploring what they perceive as important. All young people were able to share their unique perspective of their involvement in meetings, despite some adults involved being unsure about how "useful" the interviews would be. This was an interesting construct as the low expectations of engagement in interviews could correspond with low expectations in their ability to engage in PCP meetings.

### 2.8.2. Equality in Thematic Analysis

The quantity of information provided by young people was limited when compared to interviews completed with adults. Interviews were shorter, and I was concerned that this would mean I had less data from young people to include in the thematic analysis. However, after I completed the initial codes for each participant group, it was obvious that the data from every participant group was detailed regardless of quantity. Analysing the data in groups helped to ensure that all participant groups were included. Prior to this research process I had not considered how the distinct stages of

thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) could affect the equality of representation, especially when representing data from different participant groups.

## 2.9 Dissemination of Knowledge

Throughout the results and discussion of the data in the Empirical Research Study themes were discussed from the perspectives of all participant groups. Quotes were selected to represent all participant groups, and contrasts and similarities in perspectives were considered. There was a personal tension between ensuring that young people's voices were prominent but not influencing all the data. I experienced frustration at having to reduce the large amount of data that I had gathered to be able to fit within the constraints of the empirical write up, as I wanted to ensure that participants experiences were communicated in a holistic way. The results from this research will be used to support one local authority to implement PCP approaches in a range of schools. The local authority has identified this as an area for development within their EPS team and therefore the findings of this research will be used to guide a discussion with the team of EPs regarding the implications for practice. The results will also be used to form part of a training programme to be delivered to SENCOs in schools throughout the local authority. They will be provided with support to help them understand the principles of PCP and to think about ways to be creative with the approach to make it work in their schools. Issues that arose from this research such as 'power' will be shared with school staff in this training and people will be encouraged to think about how they can create a PCP ethos within their individual settings. It is hoped that in the future this could also be expanded to include other authorities and settings.

### 3. Critical Account of the Research Practitioner

#### 3.1 Inception of Research Project

Initially, the research ideas for this thesis focused on how the impact of language and dialogue used to talk about young people could impact on their self-concept. In previous roles in educational settings, prior to beginning the Doctorate in Educational Psychology, my experiences of labels such as ASD and ADHD had been largely negative. As a research practitioner, it was important to me to explore how this language impacted on the expectations of young people and perceptions regarding their ability. In my experience, the use of labels and diagnoses resulted in people becoming problem-focused rather than thinking about the strengths of the young person and how these could be used to facilitate change.

During the second placement of the doctorate course, I worked with a group of EPs to design and deliver a PCP training programme. I recognised the positivity of the approach and how it encouraged adults and young people to focus on strengths. Feedback from the practitioners who attended the training revealed uncertainty about the new legislation, especially regarding the time and resources to plan and conduct meetings. They were also concerned about the appropriateness of young people attending meetings and listening to conversations about their needs.

From working alongside different EPs in different Local Authorities I noticed a huge disparity in the use of PCP in practice. In my practise as a Trainee EP I had attended PCP meetings that were positive and empowering experiences for young people. However, I had also had experiences of meetings where young people were involved in a tokenistic way, for example only attending part of the meeting to share their likes and dislikes.

This sparked my interest into whether there was a continuing disparity between legislation and practice. In Wales the legislation was in the proposal stages (WG, 2015), however in England the legislation was already in place (DfE, 2014). Despite this, from conversations with my peers working in Local Authorities in England, it seemed that there was little change in practice following legislative changes.



Initial literature searches found reviews of pathfinder projects in England and Wales that highlighted practitioners concerns and a lack of evidence of PCP in practice (Norwich & Eaton, 2015; Holtom & Lloyd-Jones, 2014). In particular, research highlighted the difficulties of inviting young people to meetings and engaging them in making decisions. An in-depth literature search found that there was little research exploring how PCP facilitated engagement for young people. This limited evidence base could make it difficult to highlight to practitioners the importance of involving young people in decision-making and how PCP can support this.

### 3.2 Methodological Decisions

#### 3.2.1 Epistemology and Ontology

A relativist ontology guided methodological decisions made during this research. The concept that there is no absolute truth and reality is constructed through the subjective exploration of individuals experiences made it essential to engage in dialogue with people who had experiences of PCP meetings. This is similar to the humanistic principles underlying PCP approaches (Rogers, 1951). Direct dialogue with participants provided an understanding of their perceptions of meetings and their constructs of young people's engagement. A constructivist epistemology allowed for this in-depth exploration of perceptions due to its encouragement of the use of dialogue and interaction to explore individual constructs. An understanding of how individuals are constructing these meetings and the engagement of young people is helpful as it is likely that constructs will impact on the way they engage with meetings. If different participant groups hold different views about the purposes of PCP meetings, this may cause tension.

PCP approaches also underpinned the research process, I felt that the involvement of young people was crucial to ensure the integrity of the research. This was particularly important as previous research highlighted the irony of not engaging young people in research about them (Aston & Lambert, 2010). I wanted to make sure that this research enabled young people to express their views and for them to be given equal weighting to the views of other participants in the research. Each participant group held different views on the meetings and the appropriateness of engaging young people in conversations about their needs. Young people could not identify any reasons why they should not attend meetings. As this differed from other participant groups, young people may become frustrated by their lack of involvement.

### 3.2.2. Adding a Unique Dimension to the Literature

There was limited evidence base for the use of PCP in educational contexts (Ratti et al; 2016), and research that had been conducted was seen to be limited due to restricted participant groups or methodological decisions (Hayes, 2004; Hagner et al, 2012; Small, Raghavan & Pawson, 2013; Corrigan, 2014; & Kaehne & Beyer, 2014).

As government legislation applied to all young people from 0-25 years I felt it was important that the research should be representative of this population. Therefore, it was important that all age ranges were given the opportunity to be included in the research sample, challenging participants perceptions of the limited capacity of young people to engage.

In the initial stages of designing the research, various methods were considered. Initially I planned to record two PCP meetings one with a young person present and one without a young person present. It was thought that using Conversational Analysis to analyse both meetings could identify the impact of the young persons presence. Due to my lack of experience and knowledge of Conversational Analysis, I recognised the need to seek additional supervision and explore relevant literature. This furthered my understanding of the underlying principles of Conversational Analysis as a tool to explore the social intricacies of dialogue. It proved to be a pivotal moment in the research process. My discussions with a specialist, and a review of the research, revealed that Conversational Analysis focused on social intricacies and organisation of speech (Woofit, 2005) not allowing for a full consideration of the context (Wetherell, 1998). This was not consistent with the aims of this research, where the context of the meetings and the perceptions of participants were crucial in understanding the extent of engagement for young people. The approach was not consistent with the epistemological and ontological perspective of the research and would not have allowed for the exploration of participants experiences.

A range of different methodological approaches were considered prior to making final decisions about the research design. The use of questionnaires was considered to gain views from a larger number of participants. Online questionnaires, completed without researcher presence, would have avoided potential effects of confirmation bias (Nickerson, 1998). Questionnaires were used successfully in previous research into PCP (Hayes, 2004; Corrigan, 2014). However, it was felt that given the range of participants in this study it would be difficult to design a valid questionnaire that would be accessible to all. Participants would have varying levels of understanding about PCP and

additional personalised explanations were thought to be helpful to elicit views. I was also concerned that responses to qualitative questionnaires relied on participants' literacy skills. Therefore potentially limiting the amount of information shared, and the age and ability of participants who would be able to respond. The use of questionnaires may have also limited opportunities to ask participants to expand on answers they had given, if they needed clarity or wanted to explore any comments that had been made.

Focus Groups were considered as an alternative way of gathering information. However, given the personal nature of the meetings it was thought that participants might feel uncomfortable talking about their experiences with others, especially young people. In addition to this, educational practitioners may have felt the desire to promote their use of PCP in their school, rather than being open to talk about the barriers they had experienced. Given the range of cognitive ability of the participant group, questions needed to be adapted to meet the individual needs of each participant, including giving extended thinking time for some. This would not have been possible in focus groups, and more articulate participants may have dominated the conversations (Lederman, 1990).

After I had considered different methodological approaches and sought supervision to discuss the research proposal, it was decided that individual semi-structured interviews would be the most appropriate way to gather data. This individualistic approach allowed for questions to be adapted to meet the participants' needs and made it possible to explore different ideas and concepts that emerged during discussions (Galletta, 2013). The flexibility of the approach made it possible to create an informal, conversational atmosphere to interviews. It was important that participants were given equal opportunities to share their experiences of PCP. This gained rich data about participant's personal experiences, which had not yet been achieved in the literature. A semi-structured interview technique made it possible to plan questions carefully to address the research questions and consider how participants might interpret them.

### 3.3 The Research Process

Although school staff were willing to engage in interviews about their experiences, it was more challenging to arrange interviews with young people, especially in mainstream settings. Staff felt young people would not be able to access interviews due to their cognitive ability and ALNs. These views were consistent with the research findings where constructs of capability impacted on the perceived engagement of young people in PCP meetings. Primary and early years settings also

reported that they did not invite young people to meetings, as they were too young to engage. In contrast, specialist settings were more willing to approach young people regarding interviews, and there were fewer barriers to participation, despite young people having more barriers to communication. This was reflective of patterns in PCP practice, with specialist settings more likely to be using PCP with all pupils regardless of perceived capability.

Pilot interviews were conducted to ensure that questions were appropriate and explored the research aims. The data from the pilot interviews was included in the research project. Continuous reflections throughout the interview process made it possible to think about how I was supporting interviewees to feel at ease. This was achieved with active listening techniques (Hove & Ander, 2005) and making sure that questions were open and free from presumption (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). It was recognised that some educational practitioners were reluctant to talk about difficulties they faced in implementing PCP, as they wanted to promote their ability to use the approach in their school. In these situations hypothetical questions helped to encourage openness (Leech, 2002). Pilot interviews revealed that with parents questions needed adaptations to include less formal language and educational jargon.

Several of the parents interviewed talked openly about feeling anxious about the interview, reporting that they were worried about saying the wrong thing. They benefited from reassurance that there were no right answers and everyone's experiences would be unique. Reassuring them that the information they provided was helpful encouraged their openness and disclosure of information.

### 3.4 Ethical Issues

It was important to clarify the role of the researcher to participants, as they may not have experienced an EP undertaking a research role. As EPs are typically part of the Local Authority, it was important to emphasise the affiliation of the research to the University of Cardiff. It was important to ensure that all data was made anonymous and any information that could be linked to a local authority or educational setting was removed.

Informed consent was gained for all participants, parental consent was gained for young people under 18 years. There were two participants who were above 18 years, who were able to provide consent (Arscott, Dagnan, & Kroese, 1998). Parental consent was considered, however I felt that

they were capable of making this decision in line with the British Psychological Society Code of Ethics and Conduct (2009). As the ethos of PCP and this research was about empowering young people to become engaged in discussion, all young people were asked to make their own decisions about engagement.

### 3.5. Analysis of Data

Braun and Clarke's (2006) stages of thematic analysis were used as an established framework to provide validity to the analysis (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). I also recorded the details of the thematic analysis process (appendix N) to make the process transparent and increase the reader's trust in the findings of the research (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). When interpreting the data, I was aware of how my perceptions of PCP and engagement of young people could affect the information that I regarded as important. This interaction between my perceptions and the data was recognised, it was part of the dynamic nature of analysis and to some extent is unavoidable. However, an awareness of this interaction made it possible to 'bracket' my personal experiences of PCP and remain more sensitive to the data (Chenail, 2009; Smith, Larkin & Flowers, 2009). My beliefs regarding the use of labels and the importance of gaining the voices of young people were bracketed (Smith, Larkin & Flowers, 2009) so that I could maintain my focus on the words of the participants.

I completed the thematic analysis in various stages (appendix N), generating codes and initial themes for each participant group before the general analysis. There were common themes identified between the four participant groups (appendices O-R). The analyses for each participant group were completed sequentially, therefore, there may have been a hermeneutic relationship between each analysis (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). It is likely that the structure for each group would have influenced the following analysis. In attempt to overcome this I continually revisited the data as my comprehension of the themes evolved to check that each map reflected the uniqueness of the information provided by participant group (Chenail, 2009).

When completing the thematic analysis, the purpose of the research was at the forefront of decisions made regarding inclusion and exclusion of themes. I was mindful of including information that would be informative for practitioners; therefore information that had been that included in previous research was omitted (Braun & Clarke, 2006). When organising the data into initial themes, I found myself creating a guide for practitioners about engaging young people in meetings. However, this was inconsistent with the ontological position of my research. As a relativist piece of research,

the aim was not to find absolute truths or make grand generalisations from the data (Thomas, 2009). I was looking at individual's constructions of reality and felt experiences. This does not provide a set of principles that will work, but perhaps instead provides issues that can prompt reflection.

### 3.6 Impact of the Research on Researcher's Practice

Completing this research has impacted on my expectations regarding the role of young people in decision-making. Engaging in interviews with young people with ALNs has increased my own expectations regarding their capacity to respond to questions and reflect on their experiences. A particularly pivotal moment for me in this research was interviewing a young person with profound physical difficulties who relied on eye-gaze technology to communicate. Prior to the interview I was unsure about whether this participant would be able to reflect on his experiences. However, he was able to communicate his reflections and provide his unique experiences of PCP. When working with young people previously, I may have underestimated their ability to communicate their views, and therefore I may not have given them the opportunity to have their voices heard. This is similar to the perceived experiences of school staff included in this research. It may be possible they disengage with PCP and inviting young people to meetings because they underestimate the contributions they can have. Alternatively, they may feel uncomfortable about how they will engage these young people, particularly those with ALNs. It is important to continue to challenge this established practice and think about why young people are not invited to meetings. This may be challenging at first, but as this research found, confidence for young people and practitioners can increase with repeated experiences of PCP.

On reflection, and following my experiences in this research, I aim to actively promote the idea that all young people should be invited to attend consultations and other meetings about their needs, not just PCP meetings. This research has demonstrated that engagement may look different for each young person, and although some may have difficulty contributing at first, they have a right to be provided with that opportunity. As an EP, I feel it is important to make sure that young people are involved. Although some meetings may be more explicit in their use of PCP techniques, the principles of PCP can provide an underlying ethos to all work with young people.

This research also highlighted the different expectations service users have of the EP role. I think it is important to have an understanding of this to challenge perceptions and ensure that we are able to use the flexibility of the role to the advantage of young people. Perhaps acting as an advocate for

young people at times or challenging expectations of others to encourage engagement. The EP can also play an important role in supporting adults and young people to plan for meetings and consider how adaptations can be made meet the needs of young people and increase the ability for all to engage. I feel that it is important that all service users have high expectations of young people becoming engaged in decision-making and understand the empowering effect this can have on the process of change.

#### 4. Summary

The critical review has aimed to provide an insight into the decisions made throughout the research process and a rationale for the research that has been conducted. The process of writing a critical review has provided an opportunity to reflect on how the researcher's principles impacted on the decisions made and guided the research process. It has also made it possible to consider the implications of the research process and potential outcomes on future practice.

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# Appendices

- A.) Gate Keeper Letter – Principal Educational Psychologist
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## Appendix A – Gate Keeper Letter – Principal Educational Psychologist

### School of Psychology, Cardiff University - Consent Form

Dear (insert name of Principal Educational Psychologist),

I am writing to ask for your permission to carry out research with (name of LA) Educational Psychology Service. As part of the Doctorate in Educational Psychology I am carrying out research on Person-Centred Planning (PCP) and gaining the voice of young people. I am aiming to investigate the ways young people can be meaningfully engaged in making decisions about their additional learning needs. I will also explore the role Educational Psychologists (EPs) can have in facilitating young people's engagement in PCP meetings.

If you consent to this project being completed within (name of Local Authority (LA)) I would ask Educational Psychologists from (name of LA) to volunteer to participate. They would be asked to facilitate a PCP meeting within a school they are working with. Following the meeting, they would need to attend an interview that will take approximately 45 minutes. In addition to this, a member of staff from the school, the parents and the young people will also be asked to attend individual interviews. The EP will be asked to provide contact details for these participants. The head teachers from each school will be contacted to provide gatekeeper consent for the research to take place within their school.

The information will be used solely for research purposes and the data collected will be made anonymous, therefore the Local Authority, schools and Individuals will not be identifiable. If you are interested in finding out more about the findings of the research these can be made available to you on request, once the project has been completed.

If you have any questions regarding the project or require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me. This project will be supervised by Dr Ian Smilie at Cardiff University, please see the contact details below if you wish to ask him any further questions.

Many thanks in advance for your consideration of this project. Please let me know if you require further information. I would be happy to discuss this project with you in person.

Kind Regards,

Jen Kirwan

Researcher: Jennifer Kirwan	Research Supervisor: Ian Smilie
Post – Graduate: Doctorate in Educational Psychology	Lecturer in Educational Psychology
School of Psychology	School of Psychology
Cardiff University	Cardiff University
Tower Building	Tower Building
Park Place	Park Place
Cardiff	Cardiff
CF10 3AT	CF10 3AT
	Tel: 029 2087 xxxx
Email: Kirwanjk@cardiff.ac.uk	Email: smilie@cardiff.ac.uk

## School of Psychology, Cardiff University - Consent Form

Dear (insert name),

I am currently studying for a Doctorate in Educational Psychology and I am on placement in (name of LA). As part of the Doctorate I am carrying out research on Person-Centred Planning (PCP) and gaining the voice of young people. I am aiming to investigate the ways young people can be meaningfully engaged in making decisions about their additional learning needs. I will also explore the role Educational Psychologists (EPs) can have in facilitating young people's engagement in PCP meetings.

If you consent to this project being completed within your school, after a PCP meeting has taken place in your school a member of staff from your school, parents and the young person who have all attended the meeting will be invited to attend an interview. These interviews will take place in the two weeks following the meeting. I anticipate that the interviews will take a maximum of 45 minutes and if possible would need to take place within a quiet, private room within your school.

The information will be used solely for research purposes and the data collected will be made anonymous, therefore the Local Authority, Schools and Individuals will not be identifiable. If you are interested in find out more about the findings of the research these can be made available to you on request, once the project has been completed.

If you have any questions regarding the project or require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me. This project will be supervised by Dr Ian Smilie at Cardiff University, please see the contact details below if you wish to ask him any further questions.

Many thanks in advance for your consideration of this project. Please let me know if you require further information. I would be happy to discuss this research with you in person

Kind Regards,

Jennifer Kirwan

Researcher: Jennifer Kirwan  
Post – Graduate: Doctorate in Educational Psychology  
School of Psychology  
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**GAINING THE VOICE OF YOUNG PEOPLE USING PERSON CENTRED PLANNING:  
EXPLORING WAYS TO ENGAGE YOUNG PEOPLE IN MAKING DECISIONS ABOUT  
THEIR FUTURE.**

The meeting that you have attended has followed a

**Person-Centred Planning** approach.



The key parts of this approach are :

- the person is at the centre;
- family members and friends are partners in planning;
- the plan reflects what is important to the person;
- the plan results in actions that are about life and reflect what is possible, and;
- the plan results in on-going listening, learning and further action.

Person Centred Planning is one of the principles at the heart of the new Welsh Government reforms in regards to meeting young people's additional learning needs.

A research project is being conducted by a Trainee Educational Psychologist who is currently working with (name of LA) Educational Psychology Service. The research will explore people's views about how successful PCP is in gaining the views of young people.

Taking part in this research would mean that you would be asked to talk about and share your views about this approach. The discussions will last around 45 minutes and would be arranged to take place in school at a time that suits you.

If you are interested in taking part in the research project, your contact details will be shared with Jennifer Kirwan (Trainee Educational Psychologist) and you may be contacted by telephone to discuss the research further.

*Information about Person Centred Planning can be found on internet.*

*Suggested websites include : [www.helensandersonassociates.co.uk](http://www.helensandersonassociates.co.uk)*

*[www.personalisingeducation.org](http://www.personalisingeducation.org)*

*[www.inclusive-solutions.com](http://www.inclusive-solutions.com)*

*Alternatively, for more information you can contact the researcher at [KirwanJK@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:KirwanJK@cardiff.ac.uk)*



## Appendix D - Script for initial phone call to parents

Hi

I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist working within (name of LA) this year. (Name of EP who hosted the meeting) has passed on your contact detail to me as you said you may be interested in taking part in a research project about the meeting for (child's name). As part of my Doctorate studies I am completing research on involving young people in making decisions about the support they need in school. I understand that you have recently been to a meeting about your son/daughters needs in school.

If you decide to take part, you will be asked to come into school to talk to me to share your views of the meetings and how your child was involved. This should take no longer than 45 minutes of your time. Following this, I would also like to meet with your son/daughter to find out how they felt they were involved in the meeting. This would be done within school and within the school day.

Would you be interested in taking part?

Yes

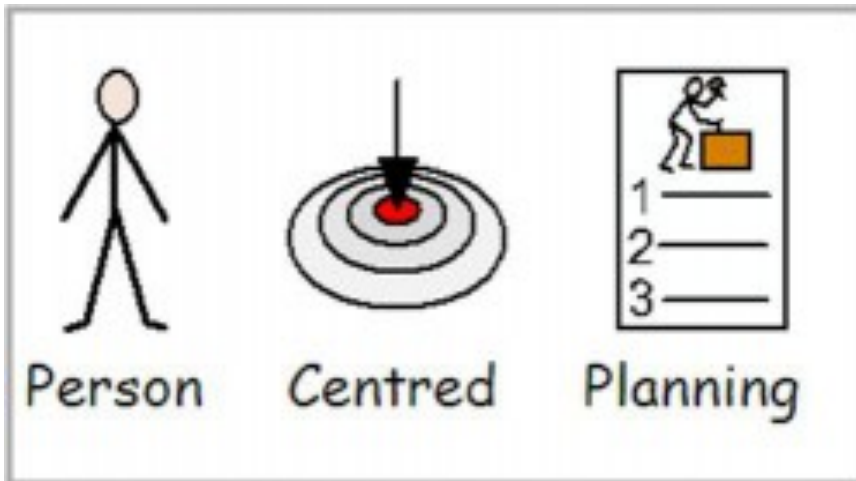
If you are happy to take part, arrange a date for interview.

No

That's fine, thanks for your time.

Unsure/would like more detail – answer any questions they may have or pass them on to relevant person.

Appendix E – Information Sheet for Young People. (Read to young people)



Person Centred Planning aims to put you at the centre of all decisions made about how to support you and help you to meet your goals.

This meeting has followed a Person Centred Approach.

I would like to meet with you to find out what you thought about this meeting and whether you feel that you have been listened to.

I am a student from Cardiff University and your views would be used as part of my research project for my University course.

Taking part in this research would mean that you would be asked to talk about and share your views. This will take around 45 minutes and would be arranged to take place in school at a time that suits you.

Are you interested in taking part?

Yes  No

Appendix F - Pupil Consent (read aloud by the researcher)

School of Psychology, Cardiff University

Consent Form - Confidential data

**For Young Person who has attended the meeting.**

I am from Cardiff University and I am doing some research about whether young people feel involved in making decisions about what they need and the ways they are supported in school.

I believe you went to a meeting all about you on (date).

I would like to speak to you today to find out more about how you feel about these meetings and whether you were listened to when decisions were made. I would like to ask you some questions about your views and how you think your voice was heard.

You don't have to take part, it's up to you about whether you want to stay or whether you want to just go back to class. You can change your mind at any time. You can ask me any questions you want at any time.

Do you have any questions?

Are you happy to take part in this research?

Appendix G - Consent Form – Parents

School of Psychology, Cardiff University

Consent Form - Confidential data

Please read the following statements and circle your answers.

I understand that my participation in this project will involve me taking part in an interview that will take approximately 45 minutes of my time.	Yes	No
I understand that during this interview I will be asked a number of questions about my experience of the meeting I have attended and how I think the voice of the young person was gained. I will also be asked to think about how young people can be involved in making decisions about their needs.	Yes	No
I understand that my son/daughter will also be asked to take part in an interview that will take approximately 30 minutes.	Yes	No
I understand that my participation in this research is entirely voluntary and I can withdraw from the research at any time without giving a reason.	Yes	No
I understand I am free to ask the researcher questions at any time during the interview and after the interview (contact details can be found on the debrief form).	Yes	No
I am also free to discuss my concerns with the project supervisor, Dr Ian Smilie at any time (contact details can be found on the debrief form)	Yes	No
I understand that the information provided will be held confidentially for a period of two weeks.	Yes	No
I understand that all of the data will be made anonymous two weeks after the interview (insert date) and that after this point no-one will be able to trace the information back to me personally.	Yes	No
The anonymised information will be kept for up to two years.	Yes	No
I understand that at the end of the study I will be provided with additional information and feedback about the purpose of the study.	Yes	No
I understand that I can ask for the information that I have provided to be deleted/destroyed or I can request access to the information at any time up until the data has been anonymised.	Yes	No

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (NAME) consent to my participation in this study conducted by Jennifer Kirwan, School of Psychology, Cardiff University with the supervision of Dr Ian Smilie.

Appendix H - Consent Form – School Staff

School of Psychology, Cardiff University

Consent Form - Confidential data

I understand that my participation in this project will involve me taking part in an interview that will take approximately 45 minutes of my time.	Yes	No
I understand that during this interview I will be asked a number of questions about my experience of the meeting I have attended and how I think the voice of the young person was gained. I will also be asked to think about how young people can be involved in making decisions about their needs.	Yes	No
I understand that my participation in this research is entirely voluntary and I can withdraw from the research at any time without giving a reason.	Yes	No
I understand I am free to ask the researcher questions at any time during the interview and after the interview (contact details can be found on the debrief form).	Yes	No
I am also free to discuss my concerns with the project supervisor, Dr Ian Smilie at any time (contact details can be found on the debrief form)	Yes	No
I understand that the information provided will be held confidentially for a period of two weeks.	Yes	No
I understand that all of the data will be made anonymous two weeks after the interview (insert date) and that after this point no-one will be able to trace the information back to me personally.	Yes	No
The anonymised information will be kept for up to two years.	Yes	No
I understand that at the end of the study I will be provided with additional information and feedback about the purpose of the study.	Yes	No
I understand that I can ask for the information that I have provided to be deleted/destroyed or I can request access to the information at any time up until the data has been anonymised.	Yes	No

Please read the following statements and circle your answers.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (NAME) consent to my participation in this study conducted by Jennifer Kirwan, School of Psychology, Cardiff University with the supervision of Dr Ian Smilie.

Signed:

## Appendix I - Initial E-mail and Consent Form – Educational Psychologists

### School of Psychology, Cardiff University - Consent Form

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

As you may know I am currently on placement with (name of LA) as part of the Doctorate in Educational Psychology. As part of the Doctorate Programme, I am carrying out research on Person-Centred Planning (PCP) and gaining the voice of young people. I am aiming to investigate the ways young people can be meaningfully engaged in making decisions about their additional learning needs. I will also explore the role Educational Psychologists (EPs) can have in facilitating young people's engagement in PCP meetings. I am writing to see whether this is something you would be interested in participating in.

If you consent to being involved in this project it would involve you facilitating a meeting using a PCP approach. Following the meeting, a member of school staff, the parents and the young person will be invited to attend an interview. You would need to ask these people at the end of the meeting if they are willing to be contacted by me, to explain the research and arrange these interviews. You would also be asked to attend an interview which I anticipate would take no longer than 45 minutes.

The information will be used solely for research purposes and the data collected will be made anonymous, therefore the Local Authority, Schools and Individuals will not be identifiable. If you are interested in finding out more about the findings of the research, these can be made available to you on request once the project has been completed.

If you have any questions regarding the project or require any further information before making a decision please do not hesitate to contact me. This project will be supervised by Dr Ian Smilie at Cardiff University, please see the contact details below if you wish to ask him any further questions.

Many thanks in advance for your consideration of this project. Please let me know if you require further information. I would be happy to discuss this research with you in person.

Kind Regards,

Jen Kirwan

Researcher: Jennifer Kirwan	Research Supervisor: Ian Smilie
Post – Graduate: Doctorate in Educational Psychology	Lecturer in Educational Psychology
School of Psychology	School of Psychology
Cardiff University	Cardiff University
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## Appendix J - Suggested Interview Questions.

As the interview was semi-structured these questions were a guide and additional questions were included to explore participants responses. The wording of the questions was adapted according to the participants' needs and level of understanding.

Script: Thank you for coming to this interview today. You have been invited to come here as part of a research project exploring ways of gaining the views of young people and involving them in decision-making. Before we begin, you should know I am recording this session so that I can listen to it later when I am writing my research report. If you are uncomfortable with this being recorded please let me know (alternative method of recording could be used – writing a transcript) and of course you are free to end the interview and leave at any time. Please say exactly what you think, all information will be kept confidentially (which means it will not be seen by anyone else) and will be made anonymous in two weeks time (this means that your answers can not be linked back to you).

### Parents

- 1.) How did you find the meeting you attended last week?
- 2.) What do you think about (child's name) being at the meeting?
- 3.) Why do you think (child's name) was invited to the meeting?
- 4.) Do you feel the meeting would have changed if (insert young person's name) wasn't there? (Prompt: can you think back to previous meetings when they have not been there? How might that of looked? Were the same things discussed, in the same way?)
- 5.) Do you think (insert young persons name) was involved in the meeting about his/her needs and provision? In what way? How do you think this could be improved?
- 6.) How do you think people could gain \_\_\_\_ (insert name)'s views? Who could do this?
- 7.) What role could the EP play in this?
- 8.) Why do you think they were at the meeting? Would it have been different without the EP there?
- 9.) Some people have described young people's presence in meetings as being tokenistic, meaning that they are not truly a part of the meeting. What do you think about that? How do you think they could become more involved in the meeting?

### Young Person present at the meeting

- 1.) Do you remember the meeting you went to last week? (name people there). What did you think about the meeting? How did you feel when you were in the meeting?
- 2.) Why do you think you were there? Do you think it was important you were there? Do you think it would have been different if you weren't there?
- 3.) Did you speak in the meeting? Were you listened to? How did you know you were listened to?
- 4.) You are invited to these meetings to include you in making decisions, do you feel that this should happen?
- 5.) How do you think people can find out your views? How would this be done? What would happen?
- 6.) Do you know much about my job and (name EP they have met with) and what they do?
- 7.) Why do you think they were at the meeting? What did they do in the meeting? Would it have been different without the EP there?
- 8.) Some people think that young people are invited to meetings but are not really listened to. What do you think about that? How do you think it could be better?

### School Staff

- 1.) How did you find the meeting you attended about \_\_\_\_ last week?
- 2.) How do you feel about \_\_\_\_ (child's name) being at the meeting? Is this common practice in school? When might you invite/not invite a young person to attend a meeting?

- 3.) Why do you think (child's name) was invited to attend the meeting?
- 4.) Do you feel the meeting would have changed if (insert young person's name) wasn't there? (Prompt: can you think back to previous meetings when they have not been there? How might that of looked? Were the same things discussed, in the same way?)
- 5.) The idea of PCP meetings is to involve young people in making decisions, do you think this was achieved? Why/why not? What barriers are there against their involvement? How was it achieved? How could it be achieved?
- 6.) How do you think young people's views should be gained?
- 7.) Would you usually invite an EP to these kinds of meetings? Why/Why not? When would you invite an EP?
- 8.) Do you think an EP can help to gain the voice of the young person? If so how? Or Why not?
- 9.) Some people have described young people's presence in meetings as being tokenistic; they are not meaningfully engaged, what do you think about that? How do you think they could be meaningfully engaged?

#### Educational Psychologist

- 1.) How did you find the meeting you attended about \_\_\_\_ last week?
- 2.) Have you used PCP meetings before? What are they like? What do you think of them?
- 3.) How do you feel about \_\_\_\_ (child's name) being at the meeting? Do you find this is common practice in schools? When might you invite/not invite a young person to attend a meeting?
- 4.) Do you feel that meetings are generally different if young people are not there? In what way are they different? What changes? Why do you think it changes? Does it make a difference to the outcomes? Does it make a difference to the way others understand xxx's needs?
- 5.) What do you think other people see as your role in these meetings? Is this always the same?
- 6.) What do you see as being your role in these meetings?
- 7.) How do you try to engage young people in meetings? What have you found to be helpful? What approaches have you found that encourage people to listen to the young person's voice?
- 8.) Some people have described young people's presence in meetings as being tokenistic; they are not meaningfully engaged, what do you think about that? How do you think they could be meaningfully engaged?

#### Colour codes show links to research questions:

- 1.) Does the presence of young people in PCP meetings impact on the meeting? If so, how?
- 2.) In the participants experience, do PCP meetings facilitate the engagement of young people in decision-making?
- 3.) How are young people supported to engage and participate in decision-making using PCP approaches?
- 4.) What is the perceived role of the Educational Psychologist in facilitating PCP approaches?
- 5.) What are (if any) the barriers to the implementation of PCP approaches in educational settings?



## Appendix K - Example interview transcript

*I: Have you used PCP meetings?*

P: Yes, many many many for more than 16 years, since 1997 when the code of practice came in.

*I: Have you noticed any changes since this new way of working has been introduced by the government?*

P: It's just coming in now isn't it, yeah. What we've always done and this goes back to 1997 onwards, if there is any child that is being supported by any outside agency then we have worked hard to a.) always invite them, paediatrician never comes but that's OK. But we've always worked really hard to get their voice and their targets when they have an educational implication.

*I: So when you say "their" voices do you mean the children's voices?*

P: No the voice of the outside agencies that support them, for example in some cases there used to be SALT involvement. So we get a circle of everybody's views and coordinate them so we meet all the needs that are on there. That's how we do it and also those targets and comments from other professionals feed into the statement, which makes the statement change. We wouldn't make comments in the speech and language part of the statement, to change what we would do is take the report from the speech and language therapist and then we would use that to modify. So in other words we are only a conduit for other professionals voices and quite rightly so because that is their job, their area of expertise. So that's what we do. Now with this new PCP there is more of a centre on children, and that is good and I can see children for whom it is not at all appropriate and never would be and I can see children who slowly would be able to take that on. I think the idea, the way I look at it at the moment and what we have taken on, is that when we have got children at an annual review what we are looking at, at the moment to slightly shift ourselves, is to bring the child in for the first part of the meeting, for the first 5 minutes to talk about all the things that are good about them and tell them what we are going to be talking about for the rest of the meeting. It's all about wellbeing and feel good factor and the IDPs are not only made by the child but they are made by the whole forum of her class mates, we ask what they like about the young person. They never go for negatives and everybody is invited to contribute. There may be a couple of things that we put in that children don't say and we would do that in another colour afterwards. So there are things that you need to know about them, but we will show it will come from us.

*I: So things are added on there if you feel you need to?*

P: Yeah for example if something is very sensitive, they definitely are shared, as it is important that all staff know these things. From that, what we also have in the statement is the objective that the LEA have put into the statement and we always discuss how we can meet those, because they slightly change. What input we can have, which brings targets. What we don't do, which would be a way forward would be to say to a child what target would you like to add on. And I think that would be really nice and a nice way to move forward.

*I: How would you do that, would you invite them to a meeting?*

P: Well they know their targets and they get praised for them and for knowing them and making connections. So when would we do that? I'm not sure yet, but some children can't think in the abstract so they might not be able to do it. It has been done for some of the more able children, but for some they just can't. Generally, we generate those targets but they do have their input. We are open for change. I think primarily though all targets are made by teachers and pupil voice we should be moving towards so one statement can be by the children where possible and invite them to add a target. Probably on about 2/10 of the younger children would be able to do that, but with the Key Stage 2 children probably 6/10 could do it, but the other three no I wouldn't. It is really important isn't it to include pupils in their learning, rather than passively being hit on.

*I: You mentioned that for some children they wouldn't be able to come into meetings, when do you think that might be the case?*

P: For me it's the question of whether it would benefit the pupil and could the children who are non-verbal and don't understand basic questions access the meeting. I think that in a room full of adults sat round a table with quite young children who don't understand what's going on I think it could be quite daunting for them. I don't think they would get much out of the session, it would be more for the adults and that's not what it is all about, it's about what is right for them. I would say that's why we wouldn't invite certain children. We asked the question in an annual review yesterday, we asked the mum and we asked the professionals do you think it would benefit the child to come into the review and unanimously it was no, not at all. You doubt yourself sometimes about whether parents will agree with you, but they do tend to agree with us, we know their child too and we spend quite a lot of time with them. I do think there might be a couple that we could bring in for say a few minutes to say all the good things. Just to say all these

people say all these good things about you and perhaps just on its own would be a shift. Some people it throws them behaviourally if they know there is a meeting going on about them, especially when the parents are in school.

*I: Do you think the children could contribute to the meeting in some way?*

P: Not the younger children, quite a lot of them are non-verbal especially in front of adults they don't know. It can take a long time for a child to feel safe with you and its the interpersonal relationship that is key. There's one child who came to me in September and it's only the last few weeks that she has started to talk to me.

*I: In those cases, when you don't think it is appropriate for them to come into meetings, how would you make sure they are still in making decisions about what is good for them and how are their views sought?*

P: When we create the pupil profiles we teach in a circle time session, where we talk about friendships and what do we like about our friends and what do we like to play with and what are they good at. Their friends can then make positive comments about them and they can go onto the profile. Some children are fascinated with certain things for example Thomas the Tank Engine and it's important to put that in because it's a way in with him, to talk about trains. So individual preferences are logged, but if I'm totally honest, at that level their voice is really heard at the very early stage by observing their behaviours and what makes them pleased and distressed and it's more our assessment and monitoring at the beginning. There is no question, they are not short in coming forward when they need to be, they are given the opportunity 6 hours of every day to be involved, we know them inside and out.

*I: Do you think that their involvement in decision making doesn't just happen at meetings then?*

P: It does, I can think of a child now, and when asked to be removed from the class she would not, but then talking to her afterwards, she said I can't do that in front of my peers I can't be moved out, which we totally understood. So we built an understanding and code to come out of the class, so that you can save face in front of you peers. So it's about listening to them and what they want. A meeting is not the best forum for that. Some of them struggle to think about things in the past so if you asked that child about triggers you have to ask them there and then. And sometimes they don't know how to tell you how they are feeling, but if you make suggestions for them to choose from they might be able to say. When you are talking in the abstract that is really difficult for some children who maybe deal in concrete concepts that's how we teach them, visually, concretely. We use different levelling of questions, and some questions will be at a level which is higher than their cognitive level and they cannot answer or cope. So talking about meetings and contributing it's got to be done with an appreciation of that child's understanding and cognitive ability. So that they can get something out of it, but I totally accept that learning should not be put upon the child and they are dual partners where ever you can. And I think you always have to have the question in your mind of is it appropriate, can we.

*I: Some research has said that it is tokenistic and not meaningfully engaged...*

P: I mean we would never just box tick, ever, but it is important to have it there, and I think that you have to challenge people to think, is it appropriate for the child to be in it and not say, we are only talking secondary, no is it appropriate for your year ones, to be in a meeting. Maybe 99/100 wouldn't but maybe one would. So I think it's important to have these things. I could ask one of my year ones, writing their pupil profile and I can ask them what do you like, and he could tell me quite easily can you put this in. Whereas there are some year 3 and 4 children who could not answer that question. Even if they are mad on dinosaurs they would not think to say it. 9/10 children I asked could not tell me things that they liked and disliked, we had to get pictures of things they we knew they liked and disliked and give them to them and use thumbs up to say. They had to have visuals, without that they could not respond.

*I: And then would they be able to answer that question in a room full of adults?*

P: I do think it would be quite nice, you've got to ask yourself the question, but some children might see mum and the meeting won't go ahead. But you've got to know the children and it is a nice principle to, if appropriate, to bring the child in for about 3/4 minutes to share all the good things and give them praise, cut, that's fine. I think it's appropriate if the child wants to stay in and draw, you don't know what they are listening to and what they are attending to, but you have to be careful though because of the content and it may be seriously inappropriate to do that. I like the idea of them generating the target they want to and it is accepted whatever it is.

*I: What things in meetings do you think might be inappropriate?*

P: When you have social services involvement, talking about parenting and behavioural strategies with parents, asking how they deal with situations at home and talking about how we deal with it at school.

*I: Do you think having a child in the whole meeting would change the nature of the meeting?*

P: Yeah because you've got to always think of the child, whatever comes out of your mouth you've got to be thinking of the child. You have to make sure you hit the needs of the child before you even talk about the adults, you would always put the child first and you might at times need to say to adults that you'll email them about something later if it is not appropriate to say it. That's the problem though time, there is precious time when adults do need to share information. I think there would be times when we would end of not asking questions that we need to know the answers to. Not always, but in some cases.

*I: So it might affect the openness of the people in the meeting do you mean?*

P: Yeah it could, it's not always appropriate, for example think of if you were in a hospital doctors might want to talk about your health and you don't say well dialogue in front of you, you don't there are certain conversations that you wish to have professionals to move and support the patient to the best of your ability but you don't want them to have the debate at the end of your hospital bed. Well maybe you should I'm in the centre, but no sometimes it's not always the best. Do you know what I'm getting at. Sometimes as well I think the parents would feel uncomfortable talking about certain things in front of their children as well. You sometimes Mum might be very strong in front of a child but actually they want to beg to us and say actually I'm not coping, and behaviour is deteriorating and I don't know what to do about it. They wouldn't do that all of the time in front of the child. So it's common sense, knowing your children but being very open I think and professionally alive to changes, rather than, I'm not doing that. Which I must admit I had when I heard with PCP coming in that we are supposed to play music as they came into the room. I've got to be honest that's about the only thing I thought, ummm I'm finding that really difficult to find why on that one. that's the only thing I thought, I wouldn't want to do that and I felt closed on. very closed on that.

*I: I wonder why that was?*

P: I don't know, well I mean do you make it Micheal Jackson, do you make it Elgar, and to think that I have got to spend 20 minutes trying to work out what music would be best do you know what I mean? And I think I would find it distracting. I think we've got a certain type of parent here and we asked them a couple of days ago about music being played and about the child coming in to the meeting, what are your thoughts, and they laughed, why do you want to do that for? And that would be my gut instinct, parents would find it a bit bizarre, playing music. We've got very good links with parents and we make them feel at ease. We are very transparent, open dialogue, share with agencies and engage the children where we can. We don't hit on children we really do include them wherever possible. But I think it is really important to keep in your mind an awareness of how you can involve them more. Rather than it be prescriptive. It's a good agenda. I think the ethos behind it is good, but it's the practicalities that are difficult. I think it would be nice for SEN, LRBs, special units, and we have planning meeting with special units now and I think this would be a good thing to bring onto the agenda. Can anyone tell me how they actively get pupil engagement in meetings. It's good to have it there, and as I say the ethos is there but it's all in the detail. But it mustn't be closed though, not like the approach I use towards the music! Everything must be considered, thought about and seen whether it can move you on professionally. The only time I can see music being appropriate is if it is a familiar song that the child listens to everyday in the classroom, to make them feel at ease. I suppose their choice in music might give a bit of an insight into them as a person too. But I still don't know about music in an annual review meeting. Also I got the training second hand, it would be useful to go, our SENCo went not us, so maybe at the training they explain it in a way that it makes sense.

*I: It can be hard when things change and new agenda's come in,*

P: But we have to roll with it, we have to change, we've got to stay professional in our lives and got to be open to what people are saying and try it. Otherwise you get entrenched. Life does change and move on. Keep the core and move through.

*I: If it is decided that a child is not going to attend a meeting, you mentioned trying to get their views in other ways, who would then bring those views into a meeting?*

P: We do, well we interview the children in an informal way before the meeting and then from that we feed that into the annual review, that's why the pupil profiles get done before they come to us, so for example they are done by somebody who knows them well, before they start in my class. You need to know a child for a long time before you can ask things like, what's important to them, that's a really personal question to answer for a child. And some children in nursery I don't think would be able to answer and it's staff that see what's important to them and that's what is put down and we all hope that next time when it's done there will be greater contribution and we always log if we can't get a contribution and we hope over the years with the majority of children that it is going to change. I know from my son doing A-levels this whole idea of involving pupils in learning you could see how valuable it would be. But that's with older people.

*I: Do you think it's important to think about how we can get younger children to start thinking in that way?*

P: I think yes, it's something that we would review every year, and we wouldn't say that just because they couldn't participate this year they won't be able to in the future and that is a good progression, if one year they couldn't come

into the meeting and the next year they were able to. Bear in mind 4 year olds, can come in, but you wouldn't bring them in for the whole meeting. You know kids when you think of them at home, maybe during preschool, everything is primarily done for them, but you facilitate the environment to get things they like, you don't ask them you facilitate it so they have what they want. So the world that they come from is very much scaffolded around them and they don't get much say at the beginning. And I think the early years here, that's pretty much how it is and it's a small gradual shift to independence.

*I: How do you see your role in helping young people to participate in meetings?*

P: I think we go through our lives being an advocate for them and I think we are for the parents too, some parents can be nervous coming in. We are advocates for parents too, and make sure we thank and value them. I think we try and oil the wheels throughout the whole process and value the parents and pupils. We value contributions from outside agencies, we are quite tenacious to keep going, to get their views too. I think we are quite exceptional in our support of parents.

*I: Have EPs ever come to these meetings?*

P: EPs are like gold dust, it's getting better but once they have got as far as having a statement there are children out there who need EP attention, so in the real world that EP attention it goes to them. We have 1 EP for this cluster and we have a limited amount that we can use. We wouldn't say can we tweak this, there are much bigger priorities for EP input. There are a couple of children, that we need support for but it doesn't generally come through the school EP it's an outside, and it would be done by a Paediatrician referral, EP time here is already taken up with significant issues.

*I: If EPs did come to meetings, what role do you think they would have?*

P: It's never happened, the EPs are involved heavily in writing the statement. Actually, we did, no we did, but this was exceptional in terms of support and intensity. There were 10 people supporting her and the EP would discuss our strategies and we discussed attachment theories with her, didn't we, but it seemed to be more us telling her what we were doing. There were a couple of signposts that we found useful.

*I: But they haven't been to meetings as such?*

P: No.

*I: Do you think for you, it would be a useful use of EP time?*

P: If an EP said, you have 2 hours of time, I would put it somewhere else I wouldn't dream of putting that into an annual review when I know how desperate there are other priorities in the school. I think the professionals involved in our annual reviews are professionals that are involved with our children. Like speech and language therapists who have set goals with the children, I don't know whether an EP coming in would be appropriate unless there was a specialist, we were stuck and didn't know where to move forward. If we have ways of moving forward. We do have outside agencies and we do ask for advice from lots of agencies. So when we have an annual review we ask them if they have been involved in the last year and we ask for their assessment and observation, and are there any educational implications for those and we work on those. We don't need to use their time, but we do need their reports. And it's a tricky one because sometimes it can be difficult to get health to share, openly medical reports. And parents aren't on the ball with getting appointments, keeping them and knowing which professional does what. I think something we spend out time doing is teaching parents the value of letting these professionals have a role in their education. And the importance of the appointments.

*I: Do you think parents see the importance of people working together?*

P: I think they see it as distinct agencies working separately, and they might have other agendas in their lives, and don't make appointments, because of other things in their lives. But we are on it with different agencies and keeping appointments, because once you have got that engagement with an outside agency as soon as you get a DNA they go back into the pile and the waiting list and we realise how long it will take to get them back in again if we are not on top of it. We had one fantastic case that went really well, and we called an annual review and every single, 8, outside agency decided they would make time in their diary to attend, so suddenly you have got this whole big table of people, because everybody had concerns. We all tried to coordinate, we had breakfast meetings at 8am, and we did a series of those, and slowly all the issues were worked out and worked through and everything was hunky dory and the situation moved forward tremendously, it was practice at it's best. Everybody decided they needed to attend, and the agencies worked together to create plans working together so it wasn't so overwhelming for parents, like OT and SALT going to the home together. And now that is not needed and slowly the outside agencies drop off. But we could still all email to keep in touch. We do hound outside agencies for responses, we appreciate they are busy, but we will hound them to get responses.

*I: Is there anything else you wanted to add that we haven't talked about?*

P: I think involving them in decision making is definitely a goal that we must do and it comes back to people pulling together in groups to think how can we do this. Not just it's good in theory, but what does it practically look like? And what does it look like for us, because every school is different and every child is different. My class this year is totally different to the class I had this year, I don't think you can throw a model in one day and we have to sit and think practically about what will work for us and what is best for the child as well. And ask uncomfortable questions of ourselves, how do we make the child who has a cognitive level of 2, how do we help him to make decisions, how could we make the child who cannot speak make decisions for themselves. And I think we need to make the time, rather than just think no they couldn't do it. It might be that they couldn't do it this year but we must ask ourselves and colleagues who are in similar situations how they could do it, so it is really thought out rather than dismissed. It has made us think about why someone couldn't come to a meeting, what is it that would stop them from coming and what does that mean in lessons. It's having those challenges makes you question your practice and that can only improve it. Maybe we had to be told to play music in meetings to think well why! And don't be closed to it. I think it would be helpful to talk to colleagues in our cluster about this. To find out what they are doing and how are they working with it. I mean who could ever argue with the goal of, do you want children to be more involved in decision making? Nobody surely could, it's just how. I think I would like to ask before every annual review, I would like to ask how do we think we can get pupil to become more involved in their planning and as a stakeholder in their learning. Just 5 minutes, and I mean that is still time and time constraints is one thing that believe you me I do 23 annual reviews. But if we said we have 5 minutes only for this, I think that would be worth spending 5 minutes on, how can we increase their influence on their own learning path in this school. Especially when children get older, they need to value their education or they will not access it. I had a child recently who was not reading and had not been making progress and I had a chat with him and said I know that you don't like how your reading has gone back, so how are we going to fix it, and we got down to, well I know I need to stop having a tantrum every time I read and stop turning the classroom upside down, it's like a light bulb came on for him, I don't think he had genuinely thought that how his action affected his reading levels. So far this has changed things, he has had a great week. It's important that they really want to do well. And if they get stuck it doesn't matter, they can try and they can do it.

Appendix L - Debrief form for young people following interviews; will be read to young people.

Thank you for helping me with my research.

This research is looking at **Gaining the Voice of Young People using Person Centred Planning: Exploring ways to engage young people in making decisions about their future.**

I am trying to find out about ways to gain young people's views and how they can be involved in making decisions.

All of the information you have given me will be kept confidential, this means that it will not be shared with anyone. Once I have written up this interview the recording will be deleted. When written up, all of the information will be made anonymous this means that no-one will know that they are your views.

This will be done within two weeks (date \_\_\_\_\_). If you decide that you do not want your views to be in the study then please contact me, speak to \_\_\_\_\_ (SENCO) or your parents. You will not need to explain why; this is your choice. After \_\_\_\_\_ (two weeks) you will not be able to remove your information as it will be anonymous so I will not know it is yours.

My contact details are below, or you can speak to your SENCO (name) or your parents and they will be able to contact me.

If you have any questions about the project please contact me or my Research Supervisor Dr. Ian Smilie. Your parents and (name of school staff) will also have these details and can contact us for you.

Contact details:

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Email: smilie@cardiff.ac.uk

If you have any complaints about the research you can ask your parents of (school staff name) to contact the ethics committee. If you would like to contact them the details are Secretary of the Ethics Committee, School of Psychology, Cardiff University, Tower Building Park Place, Cardiff, CF10 3AT Tel: 029 2087 0360 Email: [psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk)

Appendix M - Debrief form for parents, school staff and the Educational Psychologist to be given following interviews.

Thank you for helping me with my research.

The title of this study is: **Gaining the Voice of Young People using Person Centred Planning: Exploring ways to engage young people in making decisions about their future.**

I am trying to find out about ways to gain young people's views and how they can be involved in making decisions.

All of the information you have given me will be kept confidential. Once the information from this interview has been written up all recordings will be deleted. When written, all information shall be made anonymous so it cannot be linked back to you individually. This will be completed within two weeks (date \_\_\_\_\_). Until this time the recordings will be kept confidential and held securely. If you wish to withdraw from the study then please feel free to contact me. However, once the data has been made anonymous, in two weeks time, you will not be able to withdraw.

If you wish to withdraw please use the contact details below for the researcher (Jen Kirwan). You do not need to provide an explanation for your reason to withdraw.

If you have any questions about the project please feel free to contact me or my Research Supervisor Dr. Ian Smilie.

If you have any further questions about the research please use the following contact details:

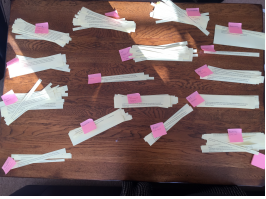
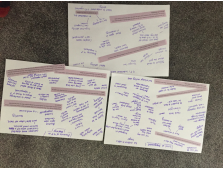
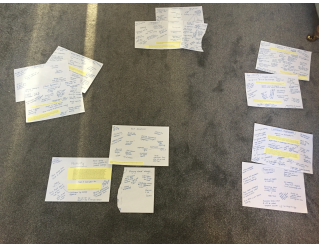

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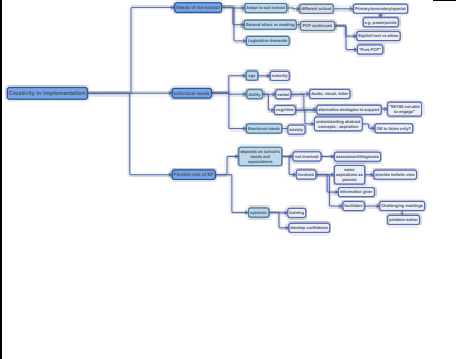
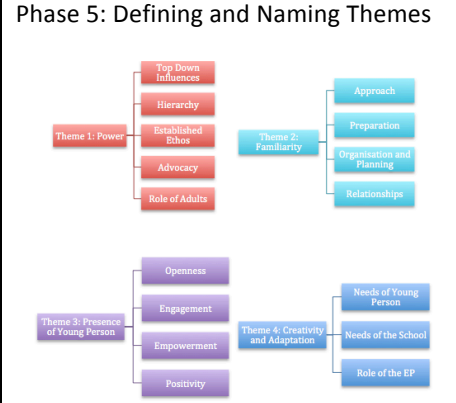
If you have any complaints about the research please contact Secretary of the Ethics Committee, School of Psychology, Cardiff University, Tower Building Park Place, Cardiff, CF10 3AT

Tel: 029 2087 0360 Email: [psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk)

## Appendix N - Process followed for thematic analysis

<p>Phase 1: Familiarise self with data</p>	<p>I transcribed the data verbatim from a total of 17 interviews. Following transcription I read through all interviews three times to help familiarise my self with the data and establish meaning. In the first read through transcripts were checked back against the original audio recordings to check for errors. On the second and third read through information was highlighted and extracted from the transcripts. These quotes and extracts were collated into four separate groups, these were; Young Person, Educational Psychologist, Parents and School Staff.</p>
<p>Phase 2: Generating initial codes</p> 	<p>On reading through all of the extracts the information that was of interest was selected by the researcher and collated into the four participant groups described above. At these stage bracketing helped to ensure that the selected data was not completely influenced by my own beliefs and interests. The information was selected for a number of reasons including, if it was recognised as having arisen throughout a number of the transcripts, if it was something of particular interest or if it was something unique that contrasted other participant views. All of the codes were collated and grouped for each participant group, using post it notes to arrange codes into groups.</p> <p>At this point there was a large amount of data included.</p>
<p>Phase 3: Searching for themes</p>  	<p>Initially, at this stage the codes taken from each participant group were organised into participant groups and then initial themes were identified. The data from young people was analysed first, then parents, school staff and EPs. This was conducted daily over a period of one week so that I could become immersed in the data for all participant groups. At this stage all potential themes were organised onto separate pieces of paper, these included data extracts and codes.</p>
<p>Phase 4: Reviewing Themes</p> 	<p>There was a period of two weeks between phase three and phase four. This was intentional, as it was hoped this break would allow for a fresh perspective when reviewing the themes. At this phase initial codes for all participant groups were revisited and some themes were merged together, the names of the themes were changed to reflect these changes.</p> <p>At this point the themes were collated to create visual maps for each participant group. These maps identified potential initial themes for each group and were grouped in a way that allowed themes to develop. This process was data driven, depending on what had been identified for each participant group.</p> <p>Common themes were identified and then initial codes were reread to ensure that the themes represented the different participant groups.</p>



	<p>After creating maps for each group and general map was produced with data representing all groups. (Appendix S) Each theme in general thematic analysis was reviewed and compared to each sub-group data set to ensure that all views were equally presented in the general analysis. At this point inconsistency and extraneous data was also noted to ensure that it would be included in the write-up.</p> <p>At this point I re-read the original data set to ensure that the themes were representative of all participant groups and to ensure that no information had been missed.</p>
<p>Phase 5: Defining and Naming Themes</p> 	<p>The themes were redefined and named following completion of the thematic map following a rest period of one week. At this stage the themes were named, ensuring that names were short and reflected all of the subthemes. The names of the theme were thought about carefully to ensure that they captured the essence of the entire theme, including all subthemes. I returned to the research questions to ensure that they were represented in the data.</p>
<p>Phase 6: Producing the report</p>	<p>After all of the themes had been completed it was possible to begin the final analysis and write up. At this point, I returned to the original data set to ensure that the extracts I had chosen to include in the write up were representative of all participant groups. I selected some new extracts that I felt were particularly representative of the theme.</p>

Appendix O – Initial codes from data from young people

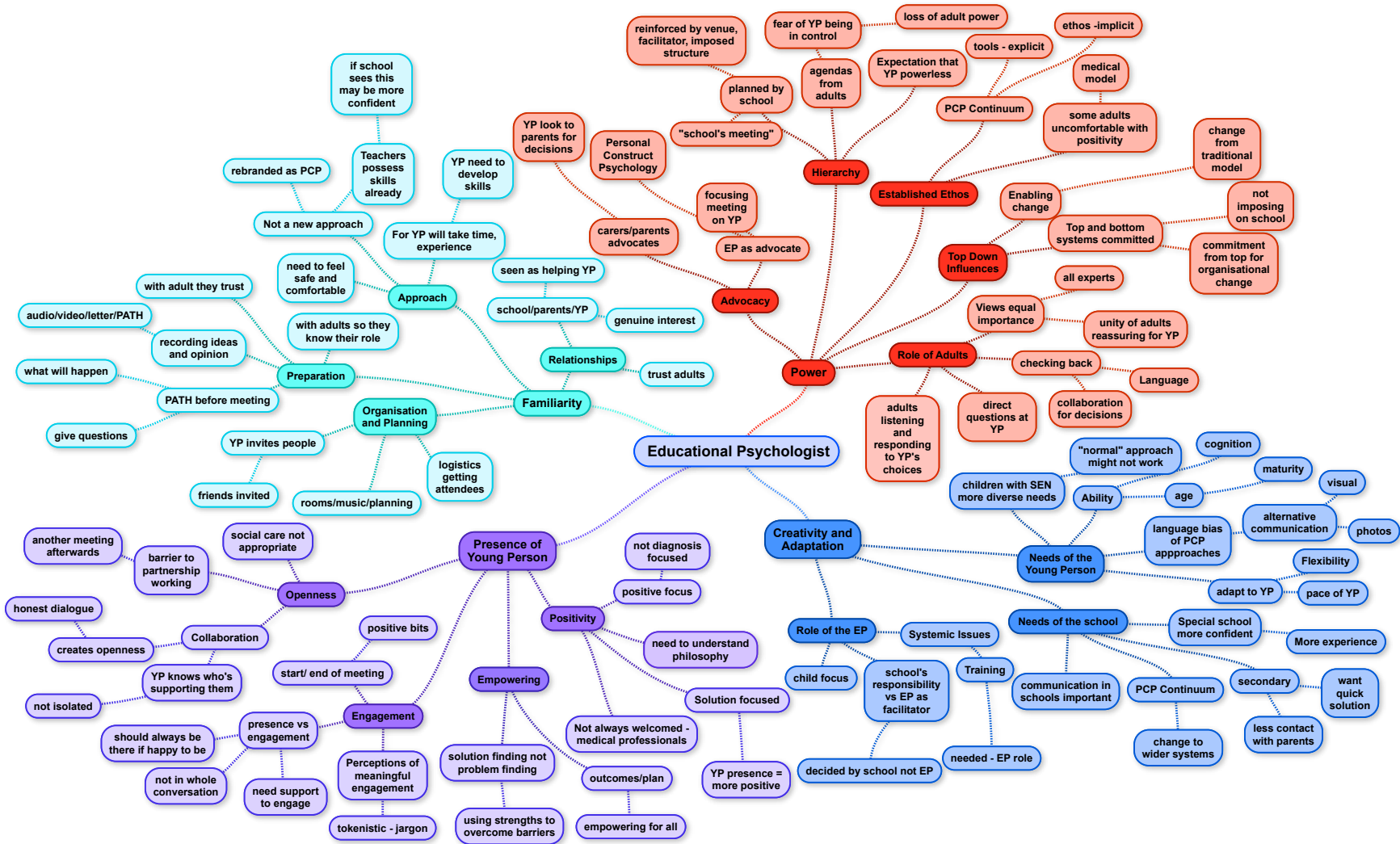


Appendix P – Initial codes from data from parents



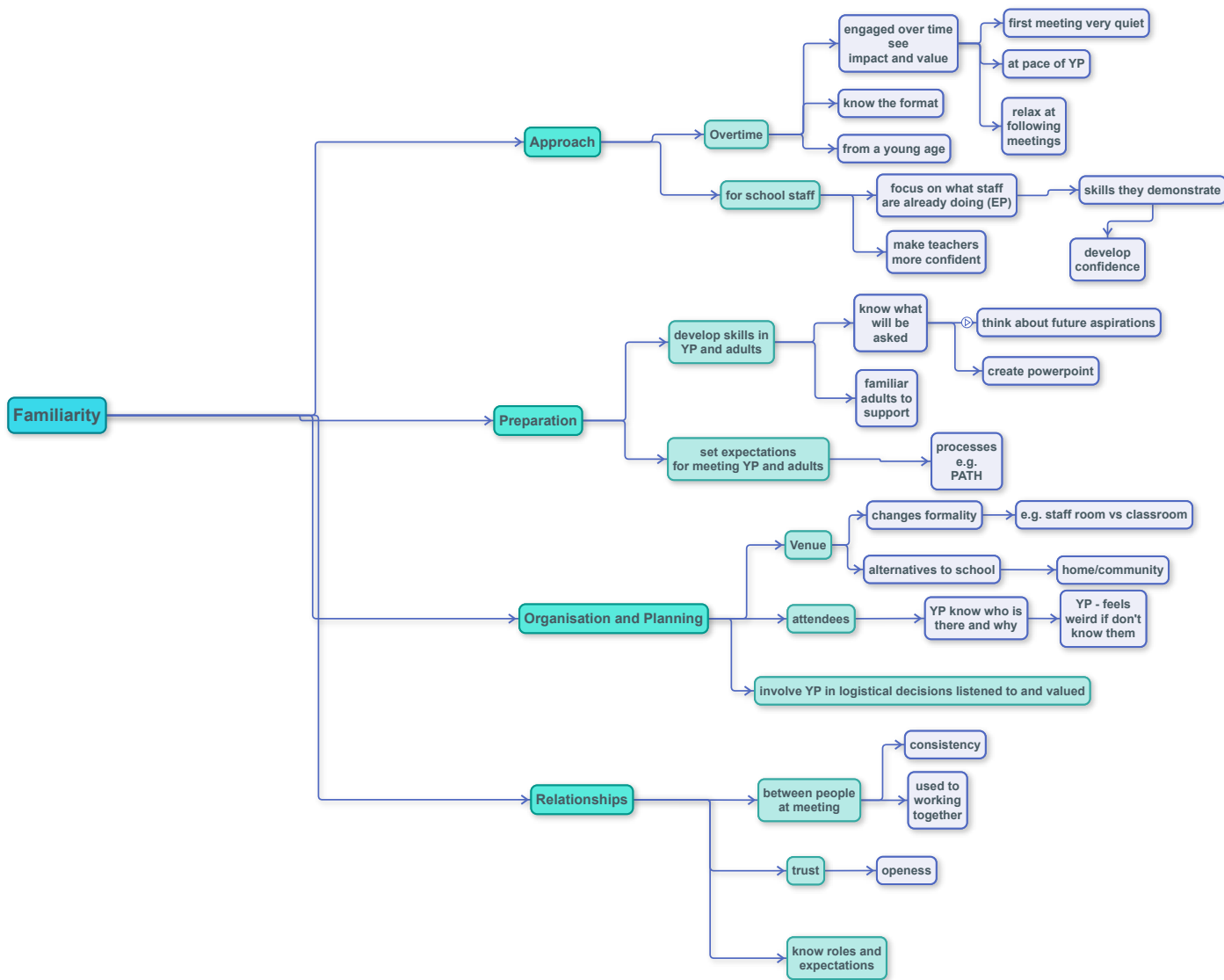


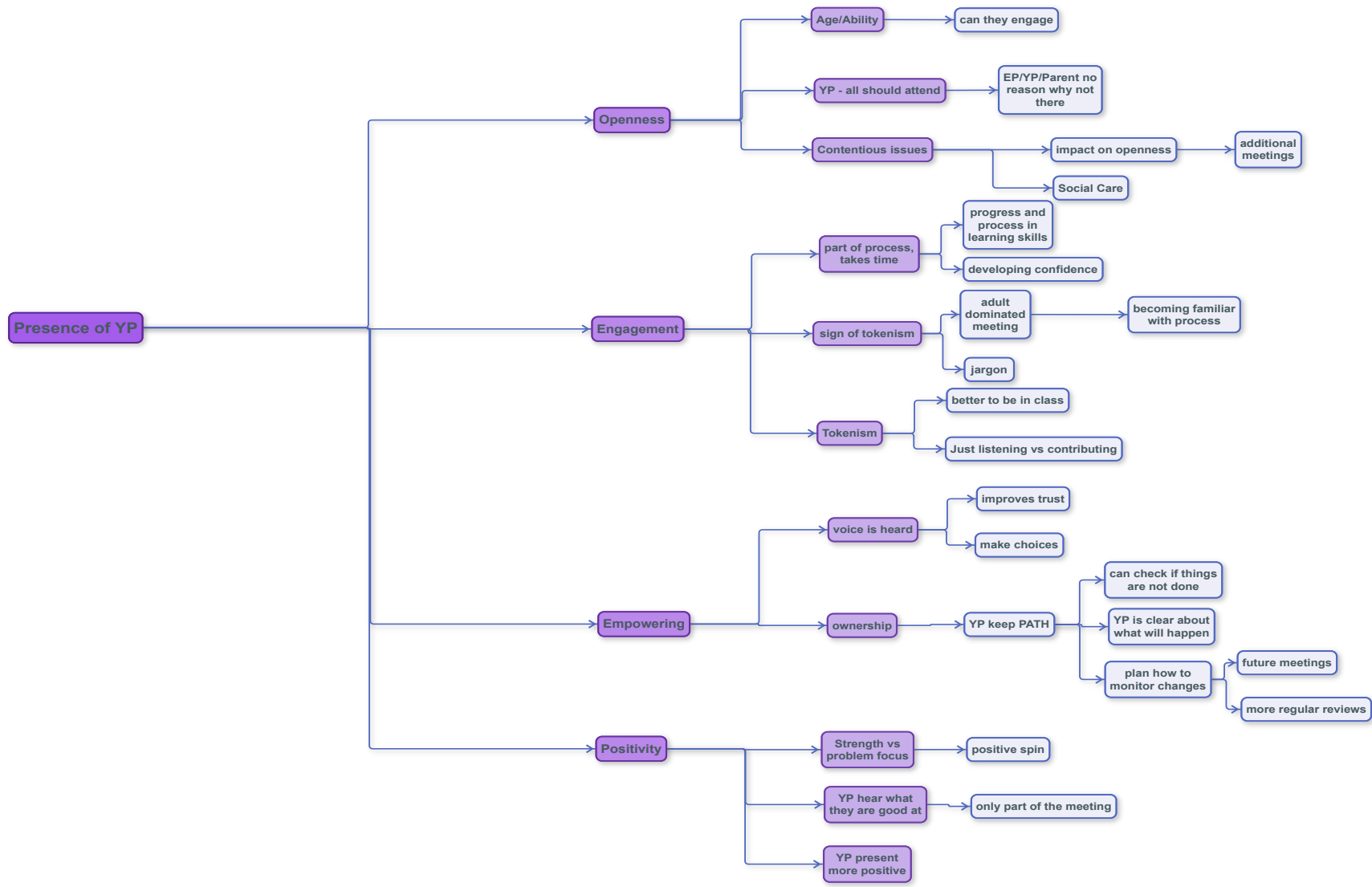
Appendix R – Initial codes from data from Educational Psychologists



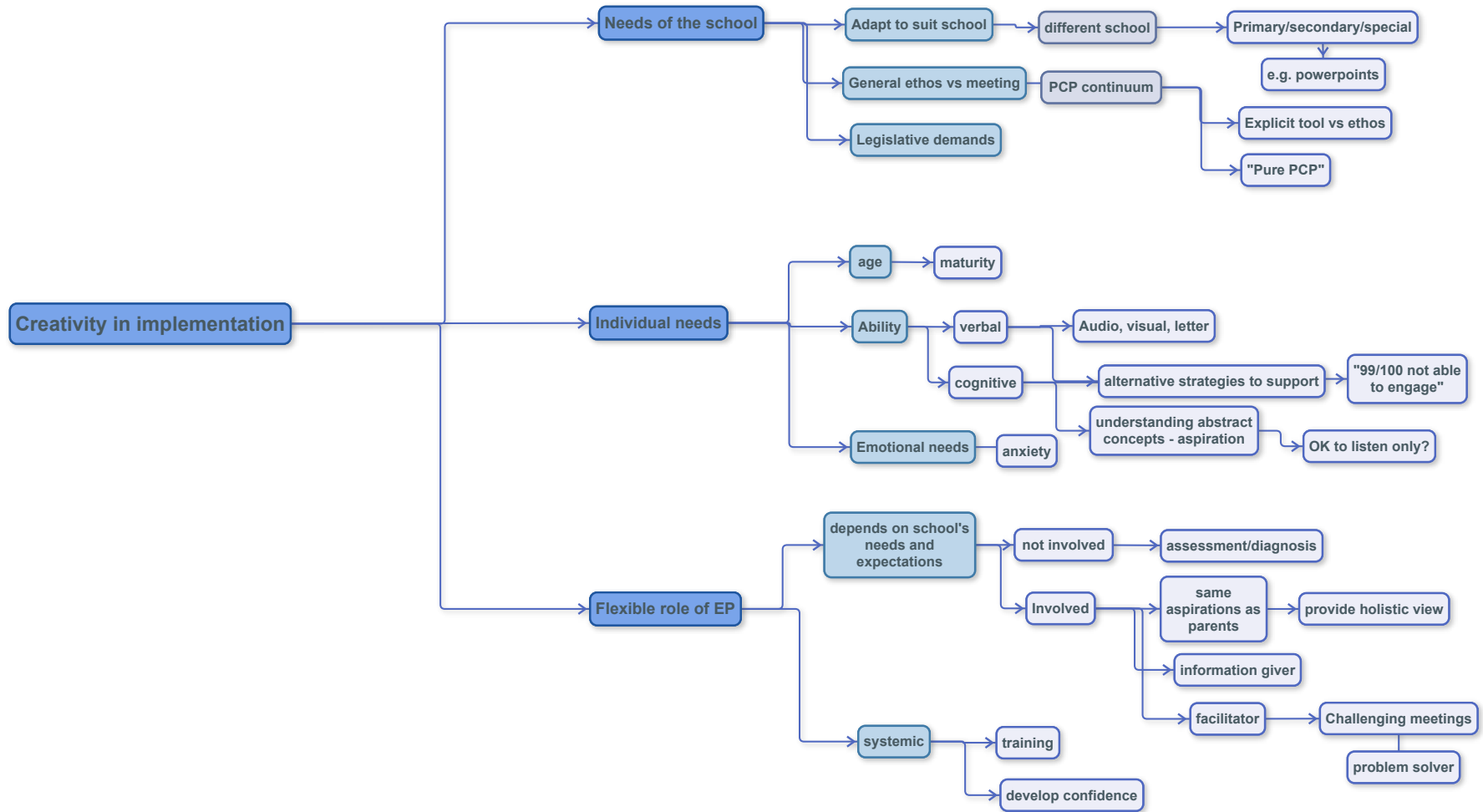
## Appendix S – Initial codes for all participant groups organised into themes











## Appendix T: Table of database search terms and returns

Literature searches were conducted between December 2015 and December 2017\*. The initial search terms ‘person-centred planning’ and ‘gaining the voices of children and young people’ returned a large number of results that provided a starting point for analysis, however not all of the literature was relevant to the research area and some results were not published in peer-reviewed journals. Boolean searches, using the operators ‘AND’ and ‘OR’, were conducted in an attempt to return specific and relevant literature. Using the terms ‘Young People’; ‘Decision Making’; ‘Education’; ‘Person Centred’; ‘Educational Psychology’; ‘Voices of Young People’; ‘Person Centred Planning’; and ‘Special Educational Needs’. The search term ‘Voices of Young People’ was changed to ‘Young People” AND/OR ‘Decision Making’. This helped to widen the search to look at a range of methods that had been found to be successful in engaging young people in decision-making.

The electronic databases PsycINFO, Educational Resources Information Centre and the British Education Index were used to conduct these searches. In addition to this, Google Scholar and the Cardiff University Library Databases were also searched. Searches of the literature were conducted between November 2015 and December 2017.

Source	Search Terms	Results
PsycINFO (Using Multi-Field Search, and searching All fields)	Person centred planning AND gaining the voices of young people	0
	Young people AND decision making AND education	4701
	Young people AND decision making AND person centred	83
	Young people AND decision making AND person centred planning	21
	Young people AND decision making AND special educational needs	115
	Young people AND education AND special educational needs	1202
	Young people AND special educational needs AND person centred	29
	Young people AND special educational needs AND person centred planning	16
	Person centred planning AND decision making	71
	Person centred planning	328
	Young people AND person centred planning AND educational psychology	19
Educational Resources Information Centre	Person centred planning AND gaining the voices of young people	1
	Young people AND decision making AND education	498
	Young people AND decision making AND person centred	6
	Young people AND decision making AND person centred planning	3
	Young people AND decision making AND special educational needs	19
	Young people AND education AND special educational needs	108

	Young people AND special educational needs AND person centred	4
	Young people AND special educational needs AND person centred planning	3
	Person centred planning AND decision making	7
	Person centred planning	106
	Young people AND person centred planning AND educational psychology	0
British Education Index	Person centred planning AND gaining the voices of young people	1
	Young people AND decision making AND education	149
	Young people AND decision making AND person centred	2
	Young people AND decision making AND person centred planning	1
	Young people AND decision making AND special educational needs	3
	Young people AND education AND special educational needs	88
	Young people AND special educational needs AND person centred	4
	Young people AND special educational needs AND person centred planning	3
	Person centred planning AND decision making	4
	Person centred planning	2
	Person centred	133
	Young people AND person centred planning AND educational psychology	2

\*Search returns have been recorded from searches completed in January 2018.