



**Examining Looked After Children's (LAC) Lived Experiences of
Secondary School**

Rebecca Dougall

Doctorate in Educational Psychology (DEdPsy)

2018

Abstract

Despite legislative changes and an increase in policy provision (see The Children Act 1989; The Children Act, 2004; The Children and Young Persons Act, 2008; The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act, 2014; Welsh Assembly Government, 2007; Welsh Government, 2015a; 2016a), there continues to be a significant achievement gap between Looked After Children (LAC) and their non-looked after peers, which increases across the key stages and continues in to higher education (Department for Education (DfE), 2018; Welsh Government (WG), 2018). LAC are also disadvantaged as they move in to adulthood, with poorer life outcomes compared to the general population (Dixon, 2008; Hook & Courtney, 2011; Centre for Social Justice, 2015).

While there is a proliferation of research examining why LAC underachieve (Harker et al. 2002, 2004; Zetlin, Weinberg & Shea, 2006a, 2006b; Forrester et al. 2009; Brodie, 2010; Berridge, 2012; Berger, 2015), it is argued that there remains limited empirical consideration of the lived experiences of LAC in education. Therefore, this research sought to provide an in-depth examination of the lived experiences of LAC in secondary school. Data was gathered in an urban local authority in Wales. Semi-structured interviews were held with 6 LAC at Key Stage 3 across two secondary schools. Recordings of the interviews were transcribed verbatim, and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was conducted. 4 super superordinate themes were identified; *sense of belonging, relationships, exposure to judgement and foster care experiences*. The research findings are discussed in relation to existing theoretical and research literature. The implications of the present study for the practice of educational psychology are discussed, together with future directions for research and the strengths and limitations of the present study.

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to thank the incredible young people who made this research possible. You were a pleasure to talk to and extremely insightful. The experiences you kindly shared with me were really thought provoking and will undoubtedly shape my practice as an Educational Psychologist.

I would also like to thank Dr Ian Smillie for his invaluable supervision throughout this research journey.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for their unwavering support. I am looking forward to spending more time with you all.

A special thank you must go to my mum, who has always believed in me, even when I did not believe in myself. Without her support, love and understanding I would not be where I am today. Thank you Mum.

Summary

This thesis is divided into three parts: a literature review, an empirical study, and a critical appraisal. Part 1 provides a detailed and critical review of the existing theoretical and research literature relating to looked after children (LAC) in education. Research studies relating directly to the research question are critically evaluated and a rationale for the empirical study is presented.

Part 2 is an account of the empirical study, which aimed to explore the lived experiences of LAC in secondary school. This section includes a brief review of the identified gaps in the existing research literature to support the academic rationale and research question. A detailed methodology is provided, including information on the research design, ethical considerations and data analysis. The research findings are discussed in relation to existing theoretical and research literature. The implications of the present study for the practice of educational psychology are discussed, together with future directions for research and the strengths and limitations of the present study.

Finally, part 3 is a critical appraisal of the research process and the researcher's own professional development. The critical appraisal is presented in two sections. The first section provides an overview of the research process, which contributed to the body of knowledge. The second section is a critical account of the development of the research and of the research practitioner.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Declaration	iii
Acknowledgments	v
Summary	vi
Table of Contents	vii
List of abbreviations	xii
List of Tables and Figures	xiv
Part 1: Major literature review	1
1. Introduction	2
1.1 Overview of the literature review	2
1.2. Search terms and sources	3
1.3. Inclusion/exclusion of research	3
2. ‘Looked After’ Children	4
2.1 Looked After Children and Educational Outcomes	5
2.2 Looked After Children and Special Educational Needs (SEN)	6
2.3 Looked After Children and long-term outcomes	7
2.4 Looked After Children and Educational Success	8
2.5 Summary	8
3. The Legislative Context	9
3.1 Policy and Provision – Wales	9
3.1.1 Looked After Children Education Co-ordinators	9
3.1.2 Personal Education Plan (PEP)	10
3.1.3 Designated Teachers	10
3.1.4 Pupil Development Grant	10
3.2 Impact of policy and provision	11
3.3 Summary	12
4. Looked After Children and Educational Interventions	13
4.1 Summary	14
5. Attachment Theory	15
5.1 An Internal Working Model	16

5.2 Attachment and Learning	16
5.3 The Learning Triangle.....	17
5.4 Attachment and LAC	18
5.5 Attachment in the classroom	18
5.6 Criticisms of Attachment Theory	19
5.6.1 The Dynamic Maturation Model of Attachment	20
5.7 Summary	20
6. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).....	21
6.1 The prevalence of ACEs	21
6.2 ACEs and Looked After Children.....	22
6.3 ACEs and life outcomes.....	22
6.4 ACEs and learning	22
6.4.1 Brain development.....	23
6.4.2 Emotional regulation	23
6.4.3 Post-traumatic stress disorder.....	24
6.5 Summary	24
7. Why the ‘achievement gap’?	25
7.1 Pre-care and care experiences	25
7.2 Risk and protective factors.....	26
7.2.1 Individual characteristics.....	28
7.2.2 Placement stability.....	29
7.2.3 School factors	30
7.2.4 Key adults	30
7.2.5 The consequences of being labelled ‘looked-after’	30
7.3 The International context	32
7.4 Casting a critical eye	32
7.5 Summary	33
8. Child Voice	34
8.1 Summary	35
9. The current study	36
9.1 Rationale.....	36
9.2 Relevance to Educational Psychology Practice	37
9.3 Research aims.....	38

References.....	39
Part 2: Major Empirical Paper	51
Abstract.....	52
1. Introduction	53
2. The current study	57
3. Method.....	57
3.1 Research Design and Paradigm.....	57
3.2 Interpretative Phenomenological Approach (IPA).....	58
3.3 Measures.....	58
3.4 Participants	59
3.4.1 Inclusion and exclusion criteria	60
3.5 Procedure.....	61
3.6 Ethical Considerations.....	62
3.7 Analysis	63
3.8 The Researchers Position	64
4 Results	65
4.1 Sense of belonging	67
4.2 Relationships	69
4.3 Exposure to judgement.....	72
4.4 Foster care experiences	76
5 Discussion.....	80
5.1 Sense of belonging	80
5.2 Relationships	81
5.3 Exposure to judgement.....	83
5.4 Foster care experience.....	84
5.5 Implications for Educational Psychology Practice.....	85
5.6 Strengths.....	87
5.7 Limitations	87
5.8 Future Research Directions	88
6 Final Conclusions	89
References.....	90
Part 3: Major Reflective Account.....	97
Introduction.....	98

1. Contribution to knowledge	98
1.1 Inception of the research topic	98
1.2 Identifying and exploring gaps in the research literature	100
1.3 Development of the research question	101
1.4 Contribution of research findings to existing knowledge	101
1.4.1 Sense of belonging.....	101
1.4.2 Relationships	102
1.4.3 Exposure to judgement	103
1.4.4 Foster care experience	104
1.5 Contribution to future research	104
1.6 Relevance to EP practice.....	105
2. Critical account of the development of the research and research practitioner	107
2.1 The epistemological and ontological position as a research practitioner.....	107
2.1.1 Social constructionism versus social constructivism.....	109
2.2 Methodological decisions.....	109
2.2.1 Qualitative rationale	109
2.2.2 Measures	110
2.2.3 Participant recruitment	112
2.3 Data analysis	114
2.4 Ethical considerations	117
2.5 Reflections on the research process	118
References.....	120
Appendix 1: Gatekeeper Letter – Head of Children’s Services.....	126
Appendix 2: Informed Consent Form - Head of Children’s Services	128
Appendix 3: Information for prospective participants.....	129
Appendix 4: Informed Assent.....	132
Appendix 5: Debrief	135
Appendix 6: Information Sheet- Social Workers.....	136
Appendix 7- Information Sheet- Foster parents.....	138
Appendix 8: Semi-structured interview questions – first interview	140
Appendix 9: Semi-structured interview questions – second interview.....	143
Appendix 10: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis Procedure	144
Appendix 11: Table of database search terms and returns	145

Appendix 12: Superordinate and subordinate themes for all participants	147
Appendix 13: Participant ‘A’: Exploratory comments and emergent themes	152
Appendix 14: Participant ‘A’: Superordinate and subordinate themes with supporting quotes	174
Appendix 15: Participant ‘K’: Exploratory comments and emergent themes	183
Appendix 16: Participant ‘K’ Superordinate and Subordinate themes with supporting quotes	197
Appendix 17: Research Journal Extract.....	203

Further appendices are attached on a USB due to their length. These appendices contain the following information:

Appendix 1a: Interview 1 transcript for participant ‘A’

Appendix 1b: Interview 2 transcript for Participant ‘A’

Appendix 2: Participant ‘A’: Superordinate and subordinate themes with supporting quotes

Appendix 3a: Interview 1 transcript for participant ‘K’

Appendix 3b: Interview 2 transcript for participant ‘K’

Appendix 4: Participant ‘K’: Superordinate and subordinate themes with supporting quotes

Appendix 5: Interview transcript for participant ‘N’

Appendix 6: Participant ‘N’: Superordinate and subordinate themes with supporting quotes

Appendix 7: Interview transcript for participant ‘R’

Appendix 8: Participant ‘R’: Superordinate and subordinate themes with supporting quotes

Appendix 9: Interview transcript for participant ‘C’

Appendix 10: Participant ‘C’: Superordinate and subordinate themes with supporting quotes

Appendix 11a: Interview 1 transcript for participant ‘T’

Appendix 11b: Interview 2 transcript for participant ‘T’

Appendix 12: Participant ‘T’: Superordinate and subordinate themes with supporting quotes

List of abbreviations

ACEs	Adverse Childhood Experiences
CIN	Children in Need
CYP	Children and young people
DfE	Department for Education
EHCP	Education and Health Care Plan
EP	Educational Psychologist
EPS	Educational Psychology Service
LA	Local Authority
LAC	Looked After Children
PEP	Personal Education Plan
PDG	Pupil Development Grant
SEN	Special Educational Needs
TEP	Trainee Educational Psychologist
UK	United Kingdom

WAG	Welsh Assembly Government
WG	Welsh Government
VSH	Virtual School Head

List of Tables and Figures

Table 1	The statistics for LAC in Wales on 31 st March 2017	Pg.6
Figure 1	The Learning Triangle	Pg.17
Table 2	Information on interview participants	Pg.60
Table 3	Inclusion and exclusion criteria	Pg.60
Figure 2	Research procedure	Pg.61
Table 4	Ethical considerations	Pg.62
Figure 3	Thematic map to represent the themes for the group of participants	Pg.66
Table 5	Examples of work that could be completed by EPs to support LAC	Pg.85



Examining Looked After Children's (LAC) Lived Experiences of Secondary School

Part 1: Major literature review

Word Count: 9, 964

1. Introduction

The numbers of looked after children (LAC) continue to grow and the achievement gap between LAC and their non-looked after peers remains (Department for Education (DfE), 2018; Welsh Government (WG), 2018), despite a proliferation of legislation and policy aimed at improving the educational attainment of LAC (see The Children Act 1989; The Children Act, 2004; The Children and Young Persons Act, 2008; The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act, 2014; Welsh Assembly Government, 2007; Welsh Government, 2015a; 2016a).

A review of the literature highlights that much of the research examining the educational underachievement of LAC fails to consider the lived experiences of these young people (Mannay et al., 2015; 2017). The legal term ‘looked after’ is used to describe a heterogeneous group in which children are subject to a care order, but otherwise may be living in very different environments. Furthermore, children’s services and educational systems can differ considerably across the UK. Thus, it is argued that examining the lived experiences of LAC in education could provide valuable insight in to what could be done to support this population more effectively.

1.1 Overview of the literature review

This section provides a detailed and critical review of the existing theoretical and research literature relating to LAC in education.

The literature review will begin by discussing the educational progress and life outcomes of LAC. The legislative context will be outlined, and local policy and provision will be reviewed and discussed.

The second part of the literature review will discuss and critically review the theoretical research literature, namely attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969) and Adverse Childhood

Experiences (ACEs) (Bellis et al., 2014; 2015) on a child's ability to access education. Research literature relating directly to the research question will then be discussed and critically reviewed.

Finally, a rationale for the present research will be presented and its relevance to educational psychology discussed.

1.2. Search terms and sources

The electronic databases utilised to inform this literature review were PsycINFO (1806-2018), ERIC, Google Scholar and ORCA. The search terms were: 'looked after children', 'children looked after', 'academic attainment', 'education', 'educational experiences', 'foster care', and 'care leavers'. Search terms were further expanded through combining terms, for example 'looked after children' and 'academic attainment'. For more detailed information please see Appendix 11.

Further literature was identified through the reference lists of primary sources and general media searches were conducted. Government documents, relevant policies and news articles were accessed through internet search engines. Other key sources included books on attachment theory.

Literature searches were conducted between December 2016 and January 2018 however, the researcher remained mindful of research papers and policy documents that became available after this time.

1.3. Inclusion/exclusion of research

The decision was taken to primarily focus on research from within the UK, due to difficulties in comparing research findings from different care and educational systems. The research included focused on the risk and protective factors associated with the educational achievement of LAC and their experiences of education. Research examining LAC's

experiences of foster care was excluded. Abstracts were read for quality and relevance. Where possible research from the last 10 years was selected, due to legislative changes and developments in policy provision and the possible effect these changes could have on young people's experiences of education. However, the search for theoretical literature utilised a broader range of dates to incorporate seminal work that has informed research and practice.

Research relating to children in residential care was excluded, as previous research has suggested that children in residential care can have more behavioural difficulties and distinctive educational needs (O'Higgins, Sebba & Luke, 2015).

Following the application of the inclusion and exclusion criteria, three studies were identified that examined the experiences of LAC in education; Sugden, 2013; Mannay et al., 2015 and Sebba et al., 2015.

2. 'Looked After' Children

Within the Children Act (1989) a Looked After Child (LAC) is defined under section 22 as, "a child who is - (a) in their [Local Authority] care; or (b) provided with accommodation by the authority in the exercise of any functions" (p.17). The term 'looked after' can also include children and young people who are living at home under a 'care order'. Under section 31 of the Children Act (1989), a care order is defined as an order made by the court on the application of any local authority (LA) or authorised person to: (a) place a child with respect to whom the application is made in the care of a designated local authority; or (b) put him under the supervision of a designated local authority. In most cases, children cease to be 'looked after' on their 18th birthday, however, under Section 20 of the Children Act (1989); those children who are being looked after in a residential provision may be looked after until their 21st birthday.

This group can also be referred to as children looked after, children in care, foster care or out of home care. However, the term most commonly used in the literature is 'looked after

children' (LAC) and therefore this term will be used throughout to provide consistency for the reader.

According to Welsh Government (WG) statistics, there were 5,954 LAC in Wales in the year ending March 2017, which was an increase of 5 percent on the previous year (WG, 2018). The majority of who were aged 10-15 years.¹ Over the last 20 years the number of LAC has increased by 20% (WG, 2018).

Children can become 'looked after' for a variety of reasons, including: abuse and neglect, acute family stress or dysfunction and parental illness, disability or absence (WG, 2016a).

2.1 Looked After Children and Educational Outcomes

There is a significant achievement gap between LAC and their peer group, which widens across the key stages and continues into higher education. LAC are less likely than the general population to complete primary or secondary education (Department for Education (DfE), 2018; WG, 2018) and a disproportionate number experience exclusion from school or time out of school (Brodie, 2010).

This observed educational disadvantage continues in to higher education with LAC less likely to access and complete university (Welsh Audit Office, 2012). Figures released by the Welsh Audit Office (WAO) (2012) showed that only 2% of LAC in Wales entered higher education, compared to 50% of the general population. Furthermore, 48% of care leavers were not in employment, education or training (NEET) compared with 11.5% of the general population of school leavers (WAO, 2012). It is argued that these figures are likely to be higher, as not all young people will maintain contact with the LA.

¹ In England there were 70,450 LAC in the year ending March 2017, the majority of whom were aged 10-15 (Department for Education, 2018).

Statistics representing the educational outcomes, across the key stages, for LAC in Wales on 31st March 2017, are summarised in Table 1. These figures highlight the achievement gap between LAC and their non-looked peers across the key stages.

Table 1: The statistics for LAC in Wales on 31st March 2017

	Looked After Children	Non-Looked After Children
% of young people who met the expected level at Foundation Phase	61%	87%
% of young people who met the expected level at KS2	69%	90%
% of young people who met the expected level at KS3	60%	87%
% of young people who met the expected level at Foundation Phase KS4	12%	55%

2.2 Looked After Children and Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Arguably these figures need to be considered in relation to Special Educational Needs (SEN). Government figures show that LAC are four times more likely to have SEN and ten times more likely to have a statement of SEN or an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) (DfE, 2016a), which will arguably affect their ability to achieve academically.

However, previous figures released by the WAO (2012) showed that the educational outcomes for LAC with statements of SEN were poorer compared to their non-looked after peers with statements of SEN. The figures showed that 35 percent of LAC with a statement of SEN gained 5 GCSEs (Grades A*-G) compared to 45 percent of their non-looked after peers with statements of SEN (WAO, 2012). Therefore, these figures suggest that SEN is not the only barrier to the academic progress of LAC.

It is important to note that outcomes for LAC have been measured or defined in relation to national indicators and arguably this may need to be addressed to take in to account the rates of SEN amongst LAC and alternative curricula. As suggested by Brodie (2010), “the

measurement of educational outcomes for LAC is complex and improvements on the ground may not be reflected in LA returns” (p. 1). Furthermore, it is arguable that the comparison group by which LAC’s academic attainment can be reasonably measured needs to be considered.

It could be argued that positive educational outcomes for LAC should encompass more than just academic attainment, to include whole school experiences, for example, the participation in extracurricular activities and the development of life skills.

Finally, as posited by Jackson (2013), it is suggested that the trajectory of attainment for LAC is a better indicator of the effectiveness of the educational system, rather than an assessment of their actual level of attainment.

2.3 Looked After Children and long-term outcomes

It is not only the educational underachievement of LAC that is cause for concern. Longitudinal research has shown that LAC are also disadvantaged as they move in to adulthood, with poorer life outcomes compared to the general population (Dixon, 2008; Hook & Courtney, 2011; Centre for Social Justice, 2015).

According to the Centre for Social Justice (2015), adults who have been in care are more likely than the general population to be unemployed, have mental health problems, spend time in prison or psychiatric institutions, become dependent on welfare benefits, or experience homelessness at some point in their lives.

However, greater educational success has been linked to better long-term outcomes. Research conducted by Okpych & Courtney (2014) found that better educational outcomes predicted higher earnings and greater likelihood of employment in young people transitioning from care.

2.4 Looked After Children and Educational Success

When considering the statistics presented above, it is important to note that LAC can and do achieve academically. The YIPPEE study (Jackson & Cameron, 2014) involved the participation of 32 young people who had shown educational promise aged 16. When interviewed aged 18-24, 25 were in education and 12 were on degree programmes. Their success was attributed to stability in school and care placements, availability of financial and practical support, the support of a key adult and individual motivation.

2.5 Summary

Government figures show that the academic attainment of LAC is consistently lower than the general population (DfE, 2018; WG, 2018). While a higher proportion of LAC have SEN, their educational progress remains poorer when compared to their peers with SEN (WAO, 2012). However, it is acknowledged that the measurement of educational outcomes of LAC is complex and improvements on the ground may not be reflected against national performance indicators (Brodie, 2010).

Understanding the achievement gap and raising academic attainment is an important strategy to interrupt the negative life trajectories associated with LAC (Gorard, Beng & Davies, 2012; O'Higgins, Sebba & Luke, 2015). Furthermore, all LAs have a duty of care under the Children Act (1989) to promote the educational achievement of all LAC. It is argued that to improve the educational outcomes of LAC, attention should be given to all stages of a child's educational career, from the early years through to support for higher education. Moreover, policy and provision need to appreciate the individuality of LAC and focus on supporting them to achieve their individual potential (Brodie, 2010).

3. The Legislative Context

The low educational attainment of LAC has been a longstanding concern for policy makers in the UK and there has been a marked increase in the publication of legislation and policy aimed at improving the educational outcomes of LAC, both within Wales and the UK (see The Children Act 1989; The Children Act, 2004; The Children and Young Persons Act, 2008; The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act, 2014; WAG, 2007; WG, 2015a; 2016a).

3.1 Policy and Provision – Wales

Since Devolution in 1999, the Welsh Assembly has developed its own policies and guidance for LAs, which have aimed to improve the educational outcomes of LAC in compulsory education. These policy provisions have resulted in several educational interventions for LAC, which include the establishment of: a Looked After Children Education Co-ordinator (WAG, 2007); a Designated Teacher (WAG, 2007); the Personal Education Plan (Children Act 2004), and the Pupil Development Grant, previously known as the Pupil Deprivation Grant (WG, 2015a). These provisions have placed a positive duty on LAs to improve the educational outcomes for LAC and will be discussed in turn.

3.1.1 Looked After Children Education Co-ordinators

All LAs in Wales are required to designate a Looked After Children Education Co-ordinator who is responsible for promoting and co-ordinating the education of LAC placed in the care of the authority. As outlined in *Toward a Stable and Brighter Future* (WAG, 2007) the LAC education co-ordinators are also responsible for developing and promoting the engagement of LAC and obtaining their views on educational provision.

3.1.2 Personal Education Plan (PEP)

Under the Children Act (2004), all LAs are required to ensure that all LAC have a Personal Education Plan (PEP), soon to be reconfigured as an Individual Development Plan (IDP), within 20 school days of entering the care system or joining a new school. A PEP is an individualised, person centred plan, which aims to incorporate the educational needs of the young person and the support they may require reaching their goals and aspirations. The legislation states that all LAC should be involved in the development and regular review of their PEP.

3.1.3 Designated Teachers

Every school is required to have a designated teacher who promotes the educational achievement of every LAC in their school. A designated teacher should be a qualified teacher and a member of the school's senior leadership team, as they provide the important link between the school and other key professionals. The designated teacher has a key role in supporting other school staff to understand the needs of LAC (WAG, 2007).

3.1.4 Pupil Development Grant

Since 2012, LAs in Wales have provided schools with additional funding to support LAC and pupils entitled to free school meals (FSM) in education- the pupil development grant, previously known as the pupil deprivation grant. Schools are directed to spend the money on evidence-based interventions aimed at reducing the attainment gap between LAC and their non-looked after peers. In 2014, to ensure the money was being used appropriately, the role of 'Raising Attainment Advocate' for Wales was established (WG, 2015a).

In May 2017, the Education Secretary for Wales announced that the Pupil Development Grant would be extended to provide support to LAC as young as three years old. This was

part of more than £90m pledged by the Welsh Government to help disadvantaged pupils (WG, 2017).

3.2 Impact of policy and provision

Research evaluating the effectiveness of the provision outlined above is limited and arguably, there are no clearly defined outcomes by which effectiveness can be evaluated (Pye, Mollidor, Tayler & Huxley, 2015). Moreover, much of the research that does exist is arguably out of date, having been carried out over 10 years ago.

Fletcher-Campbell, Archer & Tomlinson (2003) evaluated the role of designated teachers, through interviews with over 100 school staff. They concluded that the role was helpful in monitoring the overall progress of LAC and coordinating support and the implementation of PEPs. However, in the second phase of the same study, involving a further 30 interviews with designated teachers, Dobel-Ober et al. (2006) highlighted concerns in relation to the variability in practices observed. For example, some aspects of the role being delegated to junior staff, a lack of time made available to carry out the role and ambivalence about the extent to which a designated teacher should engage directly with individual children. Due to the variability in practices observed, it is argued that these findings cannot be generalised. Furthermore, the views of LAC are also absent. Indeed, Harker et al. (2004) conducted interviews with 55 LAC and found that while 24 had heard of the designated teacher role, 31 had no knowledge of it.

Research examining the effectiveness of PEPs is also mixed. Earlier research conducted by Dobel-Ober et al. (2006) showed that LAC, carers and social workers were unclear of the purpose of PEPs and often unaware they existed. However more recently, Berridge et al. (2008; 2009) found that most LAC had PEPs and were involved in the development of these.

More recently, Pye, Mollidor, Tayler & Huxley (2015) published an interim evaluation report, which examined the impact of the Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) on the educational outcomes of children eligible for free school meals (FSM). The report concluded that the impact of the PDG on educational attainment of FSM pupils was not clear. Questionably, any observed differences could have been due to other interventions or general improvements in the education system. Interestingly, an earlier evaluation by Pye et al. (2014) reported that the attainment gap between FSM pupils and non-FSM pupils was already narrowing prior to the introduction of the PDG.

3.3 Summary

Despite a marked increase in the publication of legislation and policy aimed at improving the educational outcomes of LAC in the UK (The Children Act, 1989; The Children Act, 2004; The Children and Young Persons Act, 2008; The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act, 2014; WAG, 2007; WG, 2015a; 2016a) there remains a significant achievement gap between LAC and their non-looked after peers and Mannay et al. (2017) posits “at times the attainment gap appears somewhat intractable” (p.684).

Arguably this highlights the challenges and complexity in addressing LAC’s educational achievements and raises the question as to whether current policies and practices are meeting the complex needs of LAC (Brodie, 2010; Berridge, 2012; Mannay et al., 2017). Research conducted by Sebba et al. (2015) found that LAs had little influence on the educational attainment of LAC. It is suggested that further research is required to evaluate the effectiveness of the provision outlined above against clearly defined outcome measures, and to include a wider range of methodologies. Moreover, research should aim to involve LAC and schools.

4. Looked After Children and Educational Interventions

Alongside the proliferation of legislation and policy aimed at improving the academic attainment of LAC, there has also been a marked increase in the number of targeted interventions designed to address the educational underachievement of this population (Evans et al., 2016; 2017).

Evans et al. (2017) conducted a systematic review of randomised control trials which examined the effectiveness of interventions aimed at improving educational outcomes for LAC. Following the application of the inclusion and exclusion criteria, fifteen studies, evaluating twelve interventions were sourced. Interventions included Fostering Individualised Assistance Programme (see Clark et al., 1998), Teach Your Children Well (see Flynn et al., 2011; 2013), Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care (see Leve & Chamberlain, 2007; Green et al., 2014), Head Start (see Lipscomb et al., 2013), Letterbox Club (see Mooney et al. (2016), Kids in Transition (see Pears et al., 2013) and On the Way Home (see Trout et al., 2013).

Of the fifteen studies, nine suggested that the intervention being evaluated had influenced a range of educational outcomes. Head Start (Lipscomb et al., 2013), Kids in Transition (Pears et al., 2013), and Teach Your Children Well (Flynn et al., 2011; 2012) were found to have a positive effect on literacy and numeracy skills; Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care (Leve & Chamberlain, 2007) and the Fostering Individualised Assistance Programme (Clark et al., 1998) were found to have a positive effect on school attendance and exclusions; Head Start (Lipscomb et al., 2013), was found to have a positive effect on teacher-student relationships and Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care (Leve & Chamberlain, 2007; Green et al., 2014) was found to have a positive effect on homework completion for girls leaving the justice system.

Interestingly, Evans et al.'s (2017) review found that no interventions were found to have demonstrated an improvement on LAC's academic attainment and attitudes towards learning. However, as noted by Evans et al. (2017) these findings should be approached with caution, due to several methodological issues with the original research studies, including small sample sizes, incomplete data sets and data contamination. Therefore Evans et al. (2017) concluded that no definitive statements could be made regarding the effectiveness of the interventions. Furthermore, only two of the studies included in the systematic review were conducted in the UK, which arguably questions the impact of the cultural context on the research findings.

4.1 Summary

Within the U.K, research examining the effectiveness of targeted interventions aimed at improving the educational achievement of LAC is limited and arguably more established in the USA and Canada. Moreover, the evidence that does exist is not robust, with a range of methodological issues, such as small sample sizes and incomplete data sets, as highlighted by Evans et al. (2016; 2017). Consequently, it is suggested that there remains a need for quality research into the effectiveness of interventions, to support the learning of LAC.

It is also noted that the involvement of LAC in developing these interventions is limited, with many being theoretically driven. Further, the research included in the literature review, did not consider the individual nuances of the lives of LAC and whether the effectiveness of the interventions was moderated once individual characteristics', such as length of time in care and the reasons for entering care, were considered.

It is argued that the incorporation of LAC's perspectives may enhance intervention effectiveness and lead to an improvement in educational outcomes. Indeed, Evans et al. (2016) gathered the views of young people, aged 16-27, with experiences of the care system,

on the acceptability of educational interventions. The young people were clear that the incorporation of their perspectives may enhance intervention effectiveness and lead to the improvement of their educational outcomes.

The theoretical and research literature relating to attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969) and the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) (Bellis et al., 2015) on a child's ability to access education will now be presented and critically reviewed. It is suggested that professional practice in relation to LAC is informed, at least in part, by these theoretical concepts.

5. Attachment Theory

Attachment theory originates from the seminal work of John Bowlby (1969) and was first introduced in his series *Attachment and Loss* (1969, 1973 & 1980). Attachment theory highlights the importance of the relationship between a child and his or her primary caregiver and the influence this relationship can have on the child's future development.

Bowlby (1969) theorised that all infants are predisposed to form attachments with others and these early interactions form the basis of an attachment relationship, the quality of which has implications for the child's future social and emotional development.

Three attachment styles were identified through Mary Ainsworth's Strange Situation procedure (see Ainsworth et al., 1978). Within a laboratory setting, children were observed while their caregivers and a stranger entered and left the room. The behaviours elicited from the children through the simulation of different situations (being left alone, being left with a stranger, being reunited with their caregiver) were categorised into three attachment styles; secure, insecure avoidant and insecure ambivalent. A fourth attachment style, disorganised, was later identified by Main and Solomon (1982).

According to Bowlby (1969), for emotional and psychological good health, a child needs to develop a secure attachment with his or her primary caregiver. A secure attachment is categorised by feeling safe, trusting that your needs will be met appropriately and consistently, and confidence to explore the world around you, while your primary caregiver acts as a secure base.

5.1 An Internal Working Model

Bretherton and Munholland (1999) theorise that through our relationships with our primary caregivers we develop an understanding of relationships. We use this knowledge to inform how we engage in future interactions and interpret relationship language (facial expressions, body language, tone of voice) - our 'inner working model'. Research suggests that our internal working model is established by age 3 (Schoore, 2000). Therefore, suggesting a critical period of 0-3 years as the determinant for future attachment styles.

5.2 Attachment and Learning

Authors such as Bergin & Bergin (2009) and Geddes (2006) posit that attachment plays an important role within the classroom setting. Bergin & Bergin (2009) theorise that it is not solely the attachment relationships between pupils and parents that is the key to educational progress, but also the pupil's attachment to their teachers and school.

A secure attachment style provides pupils with feelings of safety and security, which enables them to explore the classroom freely, more readily accept challenges and more effectively regulate their emotions (Bergin & Bergin, 2009). Moreover, attachment styles inform how pupils develop relationships with peers, teachers and support staff (Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Geddes, 2006). Consequently, insecure attachment styles may lead to long lasting difficulties in maintaining meaningful and long-lasting relationships (Perry, 2001; 2002).

5.3 The Learning Triangle

Geddes (2006) sought to use attachment theory to develop a model which related attachment to learning. Geddes (2006) introduced the *Learning Triangle*, which reflects the importance of the relationships between the pupil, the teacher and the learning task.

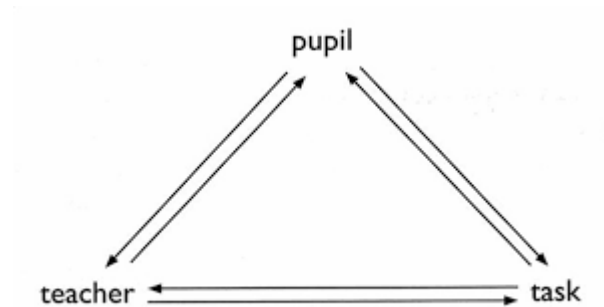


Figure 1: The Learning Triangle, Geddes (2006)

Geddes (2006) theorises that for educational progress, a balanced and fluid relationship must be present between the pupil, teacher and learning task. Learning involves being able to relate to the teacher and the learning task, while balancing both the challenges and uncertainty of ‘not knowing something’ (p.57). Pupils with a secure attachment style will trust the teacher to keep them safe and support them through this period of uncertainty, enabling the pupil to be able to focus on the learning task. Conversely, Geddes (2006) argues that an insecure attachment style will result in a “distorted view of the Learning Triangle” (p.59), which will affect a pupil’s ability to access their learning, as they are preoccupied with feelings of distress and discomfort.

The learning triangle has provided education staff with a tool by which to understand the behaviours and responses of pupils with attachment needs in the classroom.

5.4 Attachment and LAC

The factors affecting the development of attachment relationships for LAC are complex and involve the interaction of many different variables (Milward et al., 2006). The primary reason for children entering the care system is due to abuse and neglect², which arguably will have had a profound impact on these children's relationships with their primary caregivers. Through these traumatic and tumultuous experiences, LAC will develop an understanding of relationships and use this knowledge to inform how they engage in future interactions and interpret relationship language (Bretherton & Munholland, 1999). Children who have experienced loss and trauma will interpret words, gestures, tone of voice and facial expressions very differently (Bombèr, 2007). Sadly, the care system can perpetuate feelings of loss and rejection, due to placement moves.³

Indeed, research suggests that children in foster and residential care have a higher risk of developing disorganised attachments, with lifelong physical, emotional and social consequences, than children in the general population (Milward et al., 2006).

5.5 Attachment in the classroom

Understanding how attachment presents in the classroom arguably helps educators to be more effective. Bombèr and Hughes (2013) promote the model of PACE (playfulness, acceptance, curiosity and empathy) to support LAC in school. Bombèr and Hughes (2013) argue that the traditional behaviourist approach (reward and punishment) to behaviour management is likely to perpetuate feelings of rejection and loss and consequently impede the development of positive relationships with school staff and peers.

Bath Spa University, in collaboration with the local In Care Council, have developed a programme, which focuses on training teachers to support and establish positive relationships

² According to WG (2018) statistics 62% of LAC entered the care system because of abuse and neglect

³ In Wales, 624 LAC at 31st March 2017, had experienced 3 or more foster placement moves

with LAC. Teachers are presented with carefully scripted film clips, which depict various real-life scenarios often faced by LAC. These film clips are used to inform a discussion about how teachers can effectively support LAC (Parker & Gorman, 2013).

5.6 Criticisms of Attachment Theory

Bowlby's attachment theory (1969) has received increasing criticism in recent years, for its focus on the critical period of 0-3 years as the determinant for future attachment styles and its categorisation of attachment behaviours into four distinct categories (Crittenden & Landini, 2011; Meins, 2017).

Meins (2017) argues that despite claims that secure attachment styles predict successful development; there is no strong research evidence to suggest that parent-child attachment in infancy predicts anything about a child's later development. Meins (2017) posits, "the belief that making all toddlers securely attached will have knock-on positive effects for future generations is patently incorrect" (p.21).

Meins (2017) also suggests that people often confuse insecure attachment with lack of attachment and children only fail to form *any* attachment in extreme conditions of social isolation and deprivation. Indeed, Lemma (2003) highlighted that Bowlby's (1969) observations were conducted on children in the Second World War and therefore may not be applicable to less stressful situations.

Conversely, Sochos (2015) argued that attachment theory is useful for understanding both wider sociocultural phenomena and interpersonal relationships. While, Rana, Moyhuddin & Rana (2016) reasoned that there is evidence of attachment theory predicting relationship and coping behaviours. Indeed, authors such as Geddes (2006), Bombèr (2007; 2011) and Bombèr and Hughes (2013) argue that attachment theory provides a useful framework for understanding the needs of LAC in the classroom.

5.6.1 The Dynamic Maturational Model of Attachment

More recently, research has shown that attachment theory applies throughout life and is not limited to the early years (Crittenden & Landini, 2011). The Dynamic Maturational Model (DMM) is a variant of attachment theory developed by Crittenden (2006). Within the DMM, Crittenden (2006) posits that attachment has two primary functions; to protect the self from danger and find a reproductive partner (Crittenden, 1995, cited in, Crittenden, 2006, p 105). Crittenden (2006) theorises that patterns of attachment are self-protective strategies, and these are learned through a child's interactions with significant adults. These strategies will change in response to different experiences and maladaptive strategies can be mediated through experiencing positive relationships with other significant adults, "each developmental step forward contains both the opportunity to correct past error and generate more adaptive behaviour" (Crittenden, 2006, pg. 110).

Arguably, Crittenden (2006) offers a more optimistic view of attachment and suggests that supporting the development of positive relationships in the later years can help to mitigate against the maladaptive behaviours associated with insecure attachment styles.

5.7 Summary

By the very nature of their 'looked after' status, LAC are likely to have experienced absent, or unpredictable and turbulent relationships with their primary caregivers. Children can enter the care system for a variety of reasons; however, government figures show the primary reasons are due to abuse and neglect or family dysfunction (WG, 2018). Consequently, LAC are likely to have developed insecure attachment styles with their primary caregivers, categorised by feelings of distress, uncertainty and distrust (Bergin & Bergin, 2009). While the insecure attachment style may fall under one of the three categories (avoidant, resistant or disorganised), research shows that all are associated with difficulties

learning in school (Bergin & Bergin, 2009). Therefore, LAC's educational needs may not be related to academic ability, but underlying attachment needs.

Understanding the basic principles of attachment theory and the impact that insecure attachment styles can have on the educational experiences of LAC is important in ensuring that the appropriate educational support is in place, to enable these young people to achieve in school and reach their full potential.

6. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

As defined by Bellis et al. (2015), "Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are stressful experiences occurring during childhood that directly harm a child or affect the environment in which they live" (p.4). Childhood experiences of abuse, neglect, exposure to domestic violence and substance misuse, are examples of ACEs. However, ACEs are not limited to these traditional categories and can also include parental separation and living with someone who was incarcerated or mentally ill (Bellis et al., 2015).

6.1 The prevalence of ACEs

Bellis et al. (2015) conducted the first Welsh ACEs survey, with an overall sample size of 2,028 Welsh adults. Analysis showed that 46.5% of the participant population had experienced at least one ACE before the age of 18 and 13.6% had experienced 4 or more ACEs.

A similar survey conducted in England by Bellis et al. (2014) found that 48% of the adults surveyed had experienced at least one ACE and 9% had experienced 4 or more.

6.2 ACEs and Looked After Children

By the very nature of their ‘looked after’ status, children in the care of the LA are likely to have experienced ACEs. Figures released by the Welsh Government (2016a) showed that the categories of need for LAC were as follows; 64% abuse or neglect, 24% acute family stress or dysfunction, 6% parental illness, disability or absence and 4% socially unacceptable behaviour. Therefore, when considering the educational progress of LAC, it is important to consider the impact of ACEs on their ability to access education.

6.3 ACEs and life outcomes

Research indicates that a relationship exists between ACEs and poor life outcomes and the risk increases with the number of ACEs experienced (Bellis et al., 2014). Bellis et al. (2014) found that the number of ACEs correlated with poorer health, criminal justice, employment and educational outcomes. Moreover, as posited by Bellis et al. (2014), “those who have ACEs are more likely to propagate a cycle that exposes their own children to ACEs” (p.89).

However not all young people will be affected by ACEs to the same extent and this is likely to be linked to the resilience of the individual. Arguably, this raises the question of which factors increase resilience and how these can be promoted in schools to reduce the impact of ACEs (Bellis et al., 2015).

6.4 ACEs and learning

ACEs can result in children experiencing chronic stress, resulting in a state of high alertness, which prepares the body for further trauma (Bellis et al., 2015). Research shows that prolonged periods of chronic stress can affect brain development and emotional regulation (Newman, 2004), which will arguably present challenges for children in school.

6.4.1 Brain development

The human brain grows at a remarkable rate and typically reaches 95 per cent of its adult size by the age of 6 (Rees et al., 2016). However, experiencing chronic stress during infancy can affect a child's brain development. High levels of stress hormones, such as cortisol, have been linked with impaired brain functioning, due to slow brain-cell growth and brain cells and neural pathways dying (Bombèr, 2007).

Perry and Hambrick (2008) posit that the brain develops in a neuro-sequential way, starting at the brain stem (which governs basic physiological responses) right up to the pre-frontal cortex (which co-ordinates executive functioning). They suggest that a child's brain develops differently depending on the stimulation provided by the child's physical, sensory, social and emotional environment. For a child exposed to chaotic stimulation the outcome is a brain characterised by "chaotic dysfunction". Conversely, for a child who experiences a lack of stimulation the outcome is a lack of neurological connectedness. These structural differences can result in difficulties with working memory, planning and organising and exercising emotional control (Bombèr, 2011), which arguably could hinder a child's ability to access their learning.

6.4.2 Emotional regulation

Research shows that experiences of human interaction during the early years stimulate neural connections to grow and develop the brain's network (Schore, 2005). Therefore, interactions with key adults are crucial in helping children to develop the ability to effectively regulate their emotions. If children are not given, adequate stimulation there may be fewer connections being made in the brain (Dann, 2011).

Moreover, if a child does not receive appropriate emotional responses from their caregiver, the child is likely to learn maladaptive strategies, for example, dissociation or hyperarousal (Dann, 2011).

6.4.3 Post-traumatic stress disorder

Research suggests that separation from a primary caregiver may be enough to constitute trauma and if a child does not have access to conditions to mitigate against the trauma or the trauma is repeated, this may result in post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Cairns, 2013). Children may become locked in a state of terror and develop externalising behaviours which are difficult to manage and accommodate in the classroom, with these children often perceived as naughty and disruptive (Cairns, 2013). It is arguable that these challenging behaviours are likely to impact on these children's ability to access their learning in the first instance. Indeed, how key adults respond to these challenging behaviours can leave children feeling rejected and the cycle is perpetuated.

6.5 Summary

Evidence from research, which has examined the impact of ACEs on life trajectories, suggests that LAC are at higher risk of difficulties, which may affect their ability to access education and achieve academically. While the reasons for children and young people entering care are varied, all are likely to have experienced ACEs.

The more traumatic events experienced and the more varied the types of trauma, the more probable it is that a child will display post-traumatic symptoms, which may include dissociation, behavioural disturbance, hyperactivity and inattention in school (Jackson, 2013). Moreover, experiencing chronic stress during infancy may hinder a child's brain development, resulting in structural changes, which may affect their cognitive functioning. Consequently, LAC may have very different brains from children who have had more

nurturing experiences as the fundamental brain connections apparent in normal development are often disrupted (Dann, 2011). Therefore, to support these young people more effectively, it is argued that professionals need to understand both the physical and psychological effects of experiencing early trauma.

Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969) and research examining the impact ACEs (Bellis et al., 2015), suggest LAC are at higher risk of difficulties that may affect their ability to access education.

Research literature, which has examined the risk and protective factors associated with the educational outcomes of LAC will now be presented and critically discussed.

7. Why the ‘achievement gap’?

There is a proliferation of research which has examined the underachievement of this population (Harker et al. 2002 & 2004; Zetlin, Weinberg & Shea, 2006a & 2006b; Forrester et al. 2009; Brodie, 2010; Berridge, 2012; Berger et al., 2015). Explanations include adverse pre-care experiences, experiences within the care system, poor communication between education and social services, placement instability and limited and variable access to the education system (Zetlin, Weinberg & Shea, 2006a & 2006b).

7.1 Pre-care and care experiences

The extent to which the achievement gap is due to LAC’s pre-care experiences or experiences of the care system remains unclear (Forrester et al., 2009). Authors such as Berridge (2012) highlight that socio-economic risk factors, that are strongly associated with admission into care, such as social class and poverty, also predict low educational

achievement. Berridge (2012) posits that it would be incorrect to assume that experiences of the care system alone have a negative effect on the educational outcomes of LAC.

Many children in care come from families in which they have been children in need, as defined in section 17 of the Children Act (1989). The Welsh Assembly Government's Child in Need Audit for 2011 showed that the attainment of children in need (CIN) living at home was lower than that of children in care (Welsh Assembly Government, 2011).

Additionally, the largest numbers of children and young people (CYP) enter the care system between 13-15 years of age (WG, 2016a). Arguably, their experiences of the care system cannot be the only contributing factor to the educational underachievement of this population. Furthermore, a high proportion of LAC see their entry into care as beneficial in relation to their education, due to increased stability and improved school attendance (Morgan, 2009; Brodie, 2010; Mannay et al., 2015; Rees, 2013; Sebba et al., 2015). Therefore, more recently, research has begun to consider the interplay between the care and educational systems when examining the potential risk and protective factors associated with the educational outcomes of LAC.

7.2 Risk and protective factors

A review of the literature has highlighted that generally there is a paucity of published research on LAC in education (Mannay et al. 2015; 2017). More specifically, there remains limited empirical consideration of the lived experiences of LAC in education. Key research studies relating directly to the research question, conducted by Sugden (2013), Mannay et al. (2015; 2017) and Sebba et al. (2015), will now be critically explored.

Sugden (2013) conducted a piece of research in Leeds, which examined what supported LAC to learn successfully. Sugden (2013) conducted semi structured interviews with six young people aged 9-10 (5 male and 1 female). Sugden (2013) adopted Interpretative

Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as the research methodology and three super-ordinate themes were identified which focused on the importance participants placed on school as the major support for their learning; ‘a place where I am accepted’, ‘a place where I can make choices’ and ‘a place which personalises learning’.

Sugden (2013) acknowledged that further research was required to examine LAC’s experiences of school. Sugden (2013) notes, “by understanding how these perceptions may alter across looked after populations which differ by age, gender and ethnicity, a clearer understanding of how to increase the attainment of LAC will be gained” (p. 380).

Two large-scale studies were conducted by Sebba et al. (2015) in England and Mannay et al. (2015) in Wales. Prior to this little was known about the factors that facilitated or limited the educational progress of LAC in the UK.

Sebba et al. (2015) conducted a piece of research, which aimed to identify the key risk and protective factors contributing to the low educational outcomes of LAC in secondary schools in England. The research adopted a mixed methods design. Sebba et al. (2015) examined data from the National Pupil Database (NPD) and the Children Looked After Database (CLAD), for the cohort who were eligible to sit their GCSEs in 2013. Semi structured interviews were also conducted with 26 young people from the same cohort.

Mannay et al. (2015) explored the educational experiences and aspirations of LAC and young people in Wales. Prior to this, no research had been undertaken in the UK which solely focused upon the views and experiences of LAC, from across the Key Stages in the National Curriculum, focusing specifically upon their experiences of school, school transitions, and what LAC think can, or should, be improved. This was an in-depth qualitative piece of research which took place over a 6-month period and was conducted

through the collaboration of Cardiff University, The Fostering Network, Voices From Care Cymru and Spice Innovate.

The research was undertaken in two distinct phases. Phase one consisted of an in-depth systematic literature review and phase two used a range of qualitative methods to explore LAC's experiences of education, their future aspirations and their views on changes that could be made to improve their educational experiences (Mannay et. al, 2015). Three events were held in South Wales and one in North Wales. In total 39 LAC aged 7-16 took part in a series of activity days and a further 26 young people, in care and care leavers, took part in six focus groups. In addition, two care leavers who were in higher education took part in telephone interviews.

The risk and protective factors as identified by Mannay et al. (2015) and Sebba et al. (2015) as contributing to the low educational outcomes of LAC in England and Wales are discussed below.

7.2.1 Individual characteristics

Sebba et al. (2015) found that individual characteristics, such as being male, having a high Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) score and having special educational needs (SEN), were associated with poorer educational outcomes and progress. However, it could be argued that many children could have all three of these variables and not be 'looked after', so arguably this does not support professional's understanding of the achievement gap between LAC and their non-looked after peers.

The most common type of SEN amongst LAC was social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, followed by moderate and specific learning difficulties, which is likely to explain the higher SDQ scores. While the attainment gap was considerably reduced after SEN were controlled for, the attainment gap remained.

7.2.2 Placement stability

Sebba et al. (2015) found that the earlier young people entered the care system, the better their academic progress. This suggests that the care system can act as protective factor and have a positive effect on the educational outcomes of LAC. Indeed, Sebba et al. (2015) reported that the young people interviewed felt becoming 'looked after' had, had a positive effect on their education, as it had led to increased stability and support.

The length of time spent in care was also found to have an impact on the educational outcomes of LAC (Mannay et al., 2015; Sebba et al, 2015). Those pupils who had been in care for the medium to long term (5-11 years) performed better at KS4 compared to those who had been in care in the short term (2 years). Leaving and re-entering the care system was also associated with poorer educational outcomes (Sebba et al., 2015).

School changes and placement changes were found to have a negative impact on the educational attainment of LAC (Mannay et al., 2015; Sebba et al., 2015). As the number of placements increased, the percentage of LAC achieving 5 grades A*-C at GCSE decreased (Mannay et al., 2015). More school changes in the later years, most notably Year 10 or 11 were found to have a greater effect on academic attainment at KS4, compared to school changes in the earlier years (Sebba et al., 2015). Concerningly, according to WG statistics, 624 LAC had 3 or more placements in 2016-2017 (WG, 2017).

Placement type was also found to influence educational progress (Sebba et al., 2015). LAC who were in kinship care or unrelated foster care placements achieved better results at KS4 compared to children in need (CIN) living at home. The results of LAC in residential care settings were significantly lower (Sebba et al., 2015), suggesting that additional contributing factors are involved for these young people, which warrants further investigation.

7.2.3 School factors

One of the strongest predictors of educational progress was the type of school attended by LAC. Sebba et al. (2015) and Mannay et al. (2015) found that the educational attainments of LAC who attended a non-mainstream school, for example an SEN provision or pupil referral unit (PRU), were lower than those LAC who attended a mainstream school.

Arguably, these findings may be a result of the pupil profiles, rather than the provision. For example, the population within a PRU or SEN provision will have additional needs, for example, social, emotional and behavioural needs, which will arguably affect educational progress and their ability to access education in the first instance. Further, PRU's and SEN provisions often do not follow the mainstream curriculum and pupils are on a reduced timetable. Therefore, drawing direct comparisons between the educational progress of LAC in a mainstream setting and LAC in a specialist provision is questionable.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, absences and exclusions were associated with poorer educational outcomes for LAC (Sebba et al., 2015).

7.2.4 Key adults

Young people identified the importance of having the support of a significant and trusted adult. Interestingly, the educational support provided by foster carers was important, but not identified as one of the key contributing factors of educational progress (Sebba et al., 2015). Young people identified teachers and school staff as having a significant impact on their educational progress daily and reported that they enjoyed and valued one-to-one tuition.

7.2.5 The consequences of being labelled 'looked-after'

Mannay et al. (2017) presented data which was generated as part of their earlier study in 2015, to explore LAC's educational experiences and how being labelled as 'in care'

impacted on their positionality within the dominant discourse of academic success. Mannay et al. (2017) suggests that,

“educational policies and practices alienate LAC from dominant discourses of educational achievement through assignment of the ‘supported’ subject position, where children and young people are permitted and even encouraged not to succeed academically due to their complex and disrupted home circumstances” (p.683).

Mannay et al. (2017) found that the participant’s narratives of their educational experiences were filled with feelings of being either the same or different to their non-looked after peers.

Mannay et al. (2017) found that many of the primary aged children provided descriptive and evaluative accounts of their educational experiences that might be typically expected from any group of children. Often the children described their education in terms of friends, favourite subjects and teachers, with no reference to being in care.

In contrast, the older children were observed to display an “increased awareness of their status as ‘Looked After Children’ and the negative connotations or stigma that came with this status. Many felt singled out, different or exposed because of their treatment by professionals, such as social workers and teachers” (Cascade, Research Briefing, 2016, p.2). The young people’s narratives described being pulled out of classes to attend meetings with social workers, in rooms where they were visible to their peers, and support workers sitting with them during lessons. To resist the educational stigma of being ‘looked-after’, participants described the importance of their own agency and the belief and support from a key adult, such as their foster carer.

Mannay et al. (2017) also found that participants felt that professionals had lower expectations of their academic potential, because of their ‘looked-after’ status. Participant’s

described being given special concessions, such as additional practical and emotional support, which exposed them as being different to their peers. While participants acknowledged that children in care may need additional support, it was felt that this support should be made universally available, such as a designated person or a safe place, to try and avoid LAC being stigmatised as vulnerable or at risk.

7.3 The International context

More recently, O'Higgins, Sebba and Gardner (2017) conducted a systematic review to identify factors associated with educational outcomes for LAC. The review included research conducted in the USA, Canada, Australia, Sweden and the U.K.

Results showed that belonging to an ethnic minority group, being male, and having SEN were associated with poorer educational outcomes for LAC. Evidence for an association between placement factors and educational progress was mixed. Interestingly, no robust evidence was found to suggest behavioural difficulties were associated with poor educational outcomes for LAC when compared to a parent population with behavioural difficulties.

While the findings from O'Higgins, Sebba and Gardner's (2017) review should be approached with caution, due to difficulties with generalisability, the review provides further insight in to the potential risk factors associated with the poorer educational outcomes of LAC.

7.4 Casting a critical eye

The LAC included in Mannay et al.'s (2015; 2017) research were recruited via the Foster Carer Network, which is an organisation which supports, and trains foster carers. As acknowledged by Mannay et al. (2015; 2017), this method of recruitment would have arguably targeted engaged foster carers, which suggests a potential bias within the sample. It

is arguable that ascertaining the views and experiences of LAC whose foster carers were not supported by the Foster Carer Network, may have generated a more differentiated data set.

As the research was generated as part of a Welsh Government commissioned study, the researcher also acknowledges the perceived ‘power imbalance’ created during the research process, as acknowledged by Karnieli-Miller, Strier and Pessach (2009), and notes that this could have influenced the information the participants chose to share with the researchers. Moreover, it is not clear what measures were employed to try and mediate against this.

Finally, Mannay et al. (2017) aimed to examine how being labelled as ‘in care’ impacted on young people’s positionality within the dominant discourse of academic success. Arguably this suggests that Mannay et al. (2017) hold the position that being labelled as ‘in care’ does impact on a young person’s positionality within the discourse of academic success, which could have influenced the interpretation of the research findings.

7.5 Summary

The research conducted by Mannay et al. (2015; 2017) and Sebba et al. (2015) and the systematic literature review conducted by O’Higgins, Sebba and Gardner (2017) provides valuable insight in to the risk and protective factors associated with the educational progress of LAC. It is argued that this information is key to informing effective policy and provision aimed at improving the educational attainment of LAC.

To build upon the findings of Mannay et al. (2015; 2017) and Sebba et al. (2015), it is argued that a more in-depth examination of the lived experiences of LAC is required. Mannay et al.’s (2015; 2017) research findings suggest that secondary aged pupils could provide valuable insight in to what it is like to be a LAC in secondary education, due to their increased awareness of their ‘looked after’ or ‘in care’ status. Arguably, secondary schools could provide the ‘last chance’ to support these young people effectively, with a view to

interrupting the negative life trajectories associated with this population. Moreover, the achievement gap between LAC and their non-looked after peers increases significantly between KS3 and KS4 (WG, 2018).

8. Child Voice

Legislation and policy has long highlighted the importance of the participation of children and young people in the planning and decision-making processes relating to them (Department for Education and Skills, 2001a; 2003; Department for Education, 2014; HM Government, 2003; 2004; Welsh Government; 2014). Article 12, of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) clearly outlines the rights of children to be heard in relation to decisions that affect them and Section 22 of the Children Act (1989) stipulates that every LA must consider the wishes and feelings of LAC when making decisions or reviewing care plans.

In recent years there has been an accelerating movement towards the idea of LAC's participation in the decisions made about their lives and 'child voice' has become an important concept in statutory guidance promoting the education of LAC, as they are described as experts in their own lives (Clark & Statham, 2005).

Statutory guidance published by the Department of Education in 2014, entitled *Promoting the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children*, references the importance of listening to and taking account of the child's wishes and feelings about their education.

In January 2016, the Welsh Government published a strategic document called '*Raising the attainment, achievement and aspirations of children who are looked after in Wales*' (Welsh Government, 2016b). A key theme to emerge from this publication was the

importance of the participation of LAC to inform strategic approaches and operational decision-making.

Alongside this publication, the Welsh Government (2016c) published an action plan, outlining specific periods for action by the Welsh Government and key stakeholders. One of the actions states, ‘to ensure the views of these children are considered when planning and delivering targeted support’ (p.20).

However, despite the current legislative context, it remains unclear how far ascertaining the learner voice is achieved. It is argued that while professionals may be more likely to ask children about their views, the extent to which the views are listened to, and subsequently acted upon, remains unclear (Thomas & Percy-Smith, 2011; Morgan, 2012).

Indeed, Pert, Diaz & Thomas (2017) interviewed 25 young people and 16 foster carers to explore their participation in LAC reviews. The results showed that the levels of participation experienced by both the young people and their foster carers were very low. Further, the young people reported that they experienced significant barriers to engaging with the review process. Pert et al. (2017) concluded that LAC reviews were not providing the opportunity for LAC views and wishes to be heard.

8.1 Summary

A review of the literature has shown that the views of LAC in education remain disproportionately underrepresented in the research literature to date. Arguably Mannay et al. (2015; 2017) and Sebba et al. (2015) conducted the largest pieces of research to include the views of LAC on their educational experiences. Prior to this, research incorporating the views of LAC, often focused on their experiences of the care system (Holland, 2009).

Honey, Rees, and Griffey (2011) highlight the benefits of eliciting the voices of LAC when noting that “recent consultations with children in care and those who have left care

have provided valuable insights into the complex needs, experiences and difficulties facing LAC” (p.37). Sugden (2013) also highlights that one way to understand and promote the educational outcomes of LAC is to directly ask them about their experience.

Moreover, Sebba et al. (2015) and Mannay et al. (2015) conclude that the correlation between being in care and low educational outcomes is mediated by various individual, family and environmental risk factors. Arguably, this highlights the need for qualitative approaches that provide an in-depth view of the lived experiences of LAC in education and acknowledge individual nuances.

Therefore, the present research argues that central to improving educational achievement is listening to LAC’s experiences of school and as learners, so their views can inform future policy and provision. It is important to acknowledge that LAC are not a homogenous group and will have individual and unique experiences.

9. The current study

9.1 Rationale

The numbers of LAC continue to grow and the achievement gap between LAC and their non-looked after peers remains, despite a proliferation of legislation and policy aimed at improving the educational attainment of LAC.

Poor educational attainment is associated with poor long-term outcomes, with adults who have been in care more likely than the general population to be unemployed, have mental health problems, and spend time in prison or psychiatric institutions, or experience homelessness at some point in their lives (Centre for Social Justice, 2015). Improving the educational experiences of this population is crucial in interrupting the associated negative life trajectories (Gorard, Beng & Davies, 2012). It is argued that all key stakeholders involved in education can make a difference to the lives of LAC.

A review of the literature highlights that much of the research examining the educational underachievement of LAC fails to consider the lived experiences of these young people. The legal term ‘looked after’ is used to describe a heterogeneous group in which children are subject to a care order, but otherwise may be living in very different environments. Furthermore, children’s services and educational systems may differ considerably across the UK. Thus, it is argued that examining the lived experiences of LAC in education could provide valuable insight in to what could be done to support this population more effectively.

Therefore, this research asked LAC to share their experiences of secondary school. As argued by Clark and Statham (2005) and Winter (2006), we need to understand what makes a difference from the narratives of LAC themselves, as they are experts in their own lives. Winter (2006) suggests that research which seeks the views of children is often constrained by adult-orientated measures. As posited by Brodie (2010), “listening to the views of looked after children and young people and being alert to their current experiences is central to improving educational achievement” (p.3). It is hoped that the research findings will be used to inform practices within the local authority in which the data was collected.

9.2 Relevance to Educational Psychology Practice

A review of the role of the EP by Farrell, Woods, Rooney, Squires and O’Connor (2006) suggested that EPs could provide a distinctive contribution to LAC’s lives. As the numbers of LAC continue to rise, EPs play an increasingly important role in supporting LAC in education and arguably can promote change at the individual, group and systemic levels. EPs also have the skills and knowledge to provide evidence-based support and thus, it is important that EPs conduct research to enhance understanding of the needs of this vulnerable group.

9.3 Research aims

The present research aims to provide an in-depth examination of the lived experiences of LAC in secondary school in Wales.

References

- Ainsworth, M. D. S., & Wittig, D. A. (1969). Attachment and exploratory behaviour of one-year-olds in strange situation. In B. M. Foss (Ed.), *Determinants of Infant Behaviour*, Vol 4. London: Meuthen.
- Bellis, M. A., Hughes, K., Leckenby, N., Perkins, C., & Lowey, H. (2014). National survey of adverse childhood experiences and their relationship with resilience to health-harming behaviours in England. *BMC Medicine*, 12(72), 1-10.
- Bellis, M. A., Ashton, K., Hughes, K., Ford, K., Bishop, J., & Paranjothy, S. (2015). *Adverse childhood experiences and their impact on health-harming behaviours in the Welsh adult population*. Retrieved on 30th October, 2017 from [http://www2.nphs.wales.nhs.uk:8080/PRIDDocs.nsf/7c21215d6d0c613e80256f490030c05a/d488a3852491bc1d80257f370038919e/\\$FILE/ACE%20Report%20FINAL%20%28E%29.pdf](http://www2.nphs.wales.nhs.uk:8080/PRIDDocs.nsf/7c21215d6d0c613e80256f490030c05a/d488a3852491bc1d80257f370038919e/$FILE/ACE%20Report%20FINAL%20%28E%29.pdf)
- Berger, L. M., Cancian, M., Han, E., Noyes, J., & Rios-Salas, V. (2015). Children's academic achievement and foster care. *Paediatrics*, 135(1), 2014-2448.
- Bergin, C. & Bergin, D. (2009). Attachment in the classroom. *Educational Psychology Review*, 21, 141-170.
- Berridge, D., Dance, C., Beecham, J. & Field, S. (2008). *Educating difficult adolescents: effective education for children in public care or with emotional problems*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Berridge, D., Henry, L., Jackson, S., & Turney, D. (2009). *Looked-after and learning: evaluation of the virtual school head pilot*. London: DCSF. Retrieved on 12th January 2018 from <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/10825/1/DCSF-RR144.pdf>

Berridge, D. (2012). Educating young people in care: What have we learned? *Children and Youth Services Review*, 34(6), 11171-1175.

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

Bombèr, L. M. (2011). *What about me? Inclusive strategies to support pupils with attachment difficulties make it through the school day*. London: Worth Publishing Ltd.

Bombèr, L. M., & Hughes, D. A. (2013). *Settling to learn. Settling troubled pupils to learn: why relationships matter in school*. London: Worth Publishing Ltd.

Bowlby, J. (1969). *Attachment and loss Volume 1: Attachment*. London: Penguin.

Bowlby, J. (1973). *Attachment and loss Volume 2: Separation, anxiety and anger*. London: The Hogarth Press.

Bowlby, J. (1980). *Attachment and loss Volume 3: Sadness and depression*. London: The Hogarth Press.

Bretherton, I. & Munholland, K. A. (1999). Internal working models in attachment relationships in, *Handbook of Attachment Theory, Research & Clinical Applications* edited by Cassidy, J., & Shaver, P. R. New York: The Guildford Press.

Brodie, I. (2010). *Improving educational outcomes for looked after children and young people*. Retrieved on 10th January 2017 from http://archive.c4eo.org.uk/themes/vulnerablechildren/educationaloutcomes/files/improimpr_educational_outcomes_research_review_1.pdf

Cairns, K. (2013). The effects of trauma on Children's Learning, in S. Jackson (ed) *Pathways Through Education for Young People in Care: Ideas from Research and Practice*. London: BAAF.

Centre for Social Justice. (2015). *FINDING THEIR FEET Equipping care leavers to reach their potential*. London. Retrieved on 20th December 2016, from <http://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/core/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Finding.pdf>

Children Act (1989). London: HMSO. Retrieved on 19th December 2016, from <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents>

Children Act (2004). London: HMSO. Retrieved on 19th December 2016, from <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/31/contents>

Children and Young Persons Act (2008). London: HMSO. Retrieved on 19th December 2016, from <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/23/contents>

Clark, H. B., Prange, M. E., Lee, B., Steinhardt Stewart, E., Barrett McDonald, B., & Adlai Boyd, L. (1998). An individualised wraparound process for children in foster care with emotional/behavioural disturbances: Follow-up findings and implications from a controlled study in: Epstein, M. H., Kutash, K., & Duchnowski, A. (Eds.). (1998). *Outcomes for children and youth with emotional and behavioral disorders and their families: Programs and evaluation best practices*. Austin, TX: PRO-ED.

Clark, A., & Statham, J. (2005). Listening to young children: Experts in their own lives. *Adoption & Fostering*, 29(1), 45-56.

Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). Retrieved on 19th December 2016, from <https://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1007&context=child>

Crittenden, P. M. (2006). A dynamic-maturational model of attachment. *Australia and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy*, 27(2), 105-115.

Crittenden, P. M., & Landini, A. (2011). *Assessing adult attachment: A dynamic-maturational approach to discourse analysis*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton.

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

Department for Education (2014). *Promoting the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children*. Retrieved on 22nd April 2018, from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-the-education-of-looked-after-children>

Department for Education (2018). *A guide to looked after children statistics in England*. Retrieved on 22nd April 2018, from https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/694628/SFR20_2018_CLA_Statistics_Guide.pdf

Department for Education and Skills. (2001a). *Special educational needs: code of practice*. Nottinghamshire: DfES

Department for Education and Skills (DfES) (2003). *Every Child Matters*. London: HMSO

Dixon, J. (2008). Young people leaving care: Health, well-being and outcomes. *Child & Family Social work*, 13(2), 207-217.

Dobel-Ober, D., Brodie, I., Kent, T., Berridge, D. and Sinclair, R. (2006). *Taking care of education: final evaluation report: Derby*. Derby City Council.

Evans, R., Hallett, S., Rees, A., & Roberts, L. (2016). The acceptability of educational interventions: Qualitative evidence from children and young people in care. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 71, 68-76.

Evans, R., Brown, R., Rees, G. & Smith, P. (2017). Systematic review of educational interventions for looked-after children and young people: Recommendations for intervention development and evaluation. *British Educational Research Journal*, 43(1), 68-94.

Farrell, P., Woods, K., Lewis, S., Rooney, S., Squires, G., & O'Conner, M. (2006). *A review of the functions and contributions of educational psychologists in England and Wales in light of 'Every Child Matters: Change for children'*. Nottingham: HMSO.

Fletcher-Campbell, F., Archer, T. and Tomlinson (2003). *The role of the school in supporting the education of children in public care* (DfES research report 498), London: DfES. Retrieved on 13th January 2018 from <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/6057/1/RR498.pdf>

Flynn, R. J., Marquis, R. A., Paquet, M. P., & Peeke, L. M. (2011). *Effects of Tutoring by Foster Parents on Foster Children's Academic Skills in Reading and Math: A Randomized Effectiveness Trial: Final Report of the RESPs for Kids in Care Project*. Ottawa, Centre for Research on Educational and Community Services.

Flynn, R. J., Tessier, N. G., Coulombe, D. (2013). Placement, protective and risk factors in the educational success of young people in care: cross-sectional and longitudinal analysis. *European Journal of Social Work*, 16(1), 70-87.

Forrester, D., Goodman, K., Cocker, C. & Binnie, C. (2009). What is the impact of public care on children's welfare? A review of research findings from England and Wales and their policy implications. *Journal of Social Policy*, 38(3), 439-456.

Geddes, H. (2006). *Attachment in the classroom: the links between children's early experience, emotional well-being and performance in school*. London: Worth Publishing Ltd.

Gorard, S., Beng, H. S., & Davies, P. (2012). *The impact of attitudes and aspirations on educational attainment and participation*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Retrieved on 19th December 2016, from <http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/education-young-people-parents-full.pdf>

Green, J. M., Biehal, N., Roberts, C., Dixon, J., Kay, C., Parry, E., Rothwell, J., Roby, A., Kapadia, D., Scott, S. & Chamberlain, P. (2014). Multidimensional treatment foster care for adolescents in English care: Randomised trial and observational cohort evaluation. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 204, 214-221.

Harker, R. M., Dobel-Ober, D., Lawrence, J., Berridge, D., & Sinclair, R. (2002). Who takes care of education? Looked after children's perceptions of support for educational progress. *Child and Family Social Work*, 8, 89-100.

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

HM Government (2003). *Every Child Matters*. Norwich: The Stationery Office.

HM Government (2004). *The Children Act*. Norwich: The Stationery Office.

Holland, S. (2009). Listening to children in care: A review of methodological and theoretical approaches to understanding looked after children's perspectives. *Children & Society*, 23, 226-235.

Honey, K. L., Rees, P., & Griffey, S. (2011). Investigating self-perceptions and resilience in looked after children. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 27(1), 37-52.

Hook, J., & Courtney, M. E. (2011). Employment outcomes of former foster youth as young adults: The importance of human, personal, and social capital. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 33(10), 1855-1865.

Jackson, S., & Cameron, C. (2014). *Improving access to further and higher education for young people in public care: European policy and practice*. London: Jessica Kingsley.

Jackson, S. (2013). *Pathways through education for young people in care: Ideas from research and practice*. London: British Association for Adopting and Fostering BAAF.

Karnieli-Miller, O., Strier, R., & Pessach, L. (2009). Power relations in qualitative research. *Qualitative health research*, 19(2), 279-289.

Lemma, A. (2003). *Introduction to the practice of psychoanalytic psychotherapy*. Oxford: Wiley.

Leve, L. D., & Chamberlain, P. (2007). A randomized evaluation of Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care: Effects on school attendance and homework completion in juvenile justice girls. *Research on Social Work Practice, 17*(6), 657-663.

Lipscomb, S. T., Pratt, M. E., Schmitt, S. A., Pears, K. C., & Kim, H. K. (2013). School readiness in children living in non-parental care: Impacts of Head Start. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 34*(1), 28-37.

Main, M., & Solomon, J. (1982). Discovery of an insecure-disorganised/disorientated attachment pattern in Parkes, C. M., & Stevenson-Hinde, J. (Eds). *The Place of Attachment in Human Behaviour*. London: Routledge.

Mannay, D., Staples, E., Hallett, S., Roberts, L., Rees, A., Evans, R., & Andrews, D. (2015). Understanding the educational experiences and opinions, attainment, achievement and aspirations of looked after children in Wales. Retrieved on 10th January 2017, from <http://gov.wales/docs/caecd/research/2015/151111-understandingeducational-experiences-opinions-looked-after-children-en.pdf>

Mannay, D., Evans, R., Staples, E., Hallet, S., Roberts, L., Rees, A., & Andrews, D. (2017). The consequences of being labelled 'looked-after': Exploring the educational experiences of looked-after children and young people in wales. *British Educational Research Journal, 43*(4), 683-698.

Meins, E. (2017). Overrated: the predictive power of attachment. *The Psychologist, 30*, 20-24.

Millward, R., Kennedy, E., Towlson, K., & Minnis, H. (2006). Reactive attachment disorder in looked-after children. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, 11*(4), 273-279.

Morgan, R. (2009). *Life in children's homes: a report of children's experience by the Children's Rights Director for England*. London: Ofsted.

Morgan, R. (2012) *Children's Care Monitor 2011. Children on the State of Social Care in England. Reported by the Children's Rights Director for England*. Ofsted, Manchester.

Newman, T. (2004). *What Works in Building Resilience?* Ilford: Barnardo's.

O'Higgins, A., Sebba, J., & Luke, N. (2015). *What is the Relationship Between Being in Care and the Educational Outcomes of Children? An International Systematic Review*. Rees Centre for Research in Fostering and Education, University of Oxford.

O'Higgins, A., Sebba, J., & Gardner, F. (2017). What are the factors associated with educational achievement for children in kinship or foster care: A systematic review. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 79, 198-220.

Okpych, N. J., & Courtney, M. E. (2014). Does education pay for youth formerly in foster care? Comparison of employment outcomes with a national sample. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 43, 18-28.

Parker, G., & Gorman, M. (2013). In Care, In School: Giving Voice to Children and Young People in Care, in Jackson, S. (ed) *Pathways Through Education for Young People in Care: Ideas from research and practice*. London: British Association for Adoption & Fostering BAAF.

Pears, K. C., Fisher, P. A., Kim, H. K., Bruce, J., Healey, C. V., & Yoerger, K. (2013). Immediate effects of a school readiness intervention for children in foster care. *Early Education & Development*, 24(6), 771-791.

Pert, H., Diaz, C., & Thomas, N. (2017). Children's participation in LAC reviews: A study in one English local authority. *Child & Family Social Work*, 22(2), 1-10.

- Perry, B. (2001). 'The neurodevelopmental impact of violence in childhood', in Schetky, D. & Benedek, E. (Eds). *Textbook of Child and Adolescent Forensic Psychiatry*. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press.
- Perry, B. (2002). 'Childhood experience and the expression of genetic potential: What childhood neglects tells us about nature and nurture.' *Brain and Mind*, 3, 79-100.
- Perry, B. D., & Hambrick, E. P. (2008). The neurosequential model of therapeutics. *Reclaiming Children and Youth*, 17(3), 38-43.
- Pye, J., Hardy, C. and Taylor, C. (2014) Evaluation of the Pupil Deprivation Grant: First year evaluation report. Cardiff: Welsh Government.
- Pye, J., Mollitor, C., Taylor, C., & Huxley, K. (2015). *Evaluation of the Pupil Deprivation Grant: Interim report*. Retrieved on 1st December 2017, from <http://gov.wales/docs/caecd/research/2015/151203-evaluation-pupil-deprivation-grant-year-2-en.pdf>
- Rana, A. W., Moyhuddin, F., & Rana, T. A. (2016). Over-optimistic about attachment. *The Psychologist*, 29, 82-91.
- Rees, P. (2013). The mental health, emotional literacy, cognitive ability, literacy attainment and 'resilience' of 'looked after children': A multidimensional, multiple -rater population-based study. *British journal of clinical psychology*, 52, 183-198.
- Rees, P., Booth, R., & Jones, A. (2016). The emergence of neuroscientific evidence on brain plasticity: implications for educational psychology practice. *Educational and Child Psychology*, 33(1), 8-19.
- Schore, A. N. (2000). The effects of early relational trauma on right brain development, affect regulation and infant mental health. *Infant Mental Health Journal*, 22, 201-269.
- Schore, A. (2005). Attachment, affect regulation, and the developing right brain: Linking developmental neuroscience to paediatrics. *Paediatrics in Review*, 26(6), 204-217.

- Sebba, J., Berridge, D., Luke, N., Fletcher, J., Bell, K., Strand, S., Thomas, S., Sinclair, I., & O'Higgins, A. (2015). *The educational progress of looked after children in England: Linking care and educational data*. Retrieved on 23rd October 2017, from http://reescentre.education.ox.ac.uk/wordpress/wpcontent/uploads/2015/11/EducationalProgressLookedAfterChildrenOverviewReport_Nov2015.pdf
- Sochos, A. (2015). Attachment – beyond interpersonal relationships. *The Psychologist*, 28, 986-991
- Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act (2014). London: HMSO. Retrieved on 20th December 2016 from <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2014/4/contents/enacted>
- Sugden, E. J. (2013). Looked after Children: what supports them to learn? *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 29(4), 367-382.
- Thomas, N., & Percy-Smith, B. (2011) It's about changing services and building relationships: evaluating the development of Children in Care Councils. *Child & Family Social Work*, 17(4), 487-496.
- Trout, A. L., Lambert, M. C., Epstein, M. H., Tyler, P., Thompson, R. W., Stewart, M., & Daly, D. L. (2013). Comparison of On The Way Home aftercare supports to traditional care following discharge from a residential setting: A pilot randomized controlled trial. *Child welfare*, 92(3), 27-45.
- Wales Audit Office. (2012). *The educational attainment of looked after children and young people*. Retrieved on 19th December 2016, from, http://www.audit.wales/system/files/publications/The_educational_attainment_of_looked_after_children_and_young_people_English_2012.pdf
- Welsh Assembly Government (2007). *Towards a stable life and a brighter future*.

Retrieved on 3rd November 2017, from
<http://gov.wales/docs/caecd/publications/110317stableen.pdf>

Welsh Government (2014). *White Paper*. Cardiff: Welsh Government.

Welsh Government (2011). *Wales children in need census 2011*. Retrieved on 19th December 2017, from <https://gov.wales/docs/statistics/2012/120229sdr322012en.pdf>

Welsh Government (2015a). *Pupil Deprivation Grant proposals affecting looked after children*. Retrieved on 19th December 2017, from
<http://learning.gov.wales/news/sitenews/pupil-deprivation-grant-proposals-affecting-looked-after-children/?lang=en> on 20.01.17.

Welsh Government (2016a). *Adoptions, outcomes and placements for children looked after by local authorities in Wales, 2015-16 - revised*. Retrieved on 19th December 2017, from Welsh Government website:
<http://gov.wales/docs/statistics/2016/161018adoptions-outcomes-placements-children-looked-after-local-authorities2015-16-revised-en.pdf>

Welsh Government (2016b). *Raising the ambitions and educational attainment of children who are looked after in Wales – the Strategy*. Retrieved on 19th December 2016, from,
<http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/160127-lac-strategy-en.pdf>

Welsh Government (2016c). *Raising the ambitions and educational attainment of children who are looked after in Wales – Action plan 2015-2016*. Retrieved on 19th December 2016, from, <http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/160127-lac-action-plan-en.pdf>

Welsh Government (2017). *Wales Children in Need Census, 2016*. Retrieved on 19th December 2017, <http://gov.wales/docs/statistics/2017/170308-wales-children-need-census-2016-en.pdf>

Welsh Government (2018). *Wales Children Receiving Care and Support Census, 2017 (Experimental Statistics)*. Retrieved on 10th April 2018 from,

<http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/wales-children-receiving-care-support-census/?lang=en>

Winter, K. (2006). Widening our knowledge concerning young looked after children: the case for research using sociological models of childhood. *Child & Family Social Work*, 11(1), 55-64.

Zetlin, A. G., Weinberg, L. A., & Shea, N. M. (2006a). 'Improving education prospects for youth in foster care: the Education Liaison Model'. *Intervention in school and clinic*, 41(5), 267-272.

Zetlin, A. G., Weinberg, L. A., & Shea, N. M. (2006b). 'Seeing the whole picture: views from diverse participants on barriers to educating foster youths.' *Children and schools*, 28(3), 165-173.



Examining Looked After Children's (LAC) Lived Experiences of Secondary School

Part 2: Major Empirical Paper

Word Count: 5,920

Abstract

Despite legislative changes and a marked increase in policy provision (see The Children Act 1989; The Children Act, 2004; The Children and Young Persons Act, 2008; The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act, 2014; Welsh Assembly Government, 2007; Welsh Government, 2015a; 2016a), there continues to be a significant achievement gap between Looked After Children (LAC) and their non-looked after peers, which increases across the key stages and continues into higher education (Department for Education (DfE), 2018; Welsh Government (WG), 2018). Despite a proliferation of research examining why LAC underachieve (Harker et al. 2002 & 2004; Zetlin, Weinberg & Shea, 2006a & 2006b; Forrester et al. 2009; Brodie, 2010; Berridge, 2012; Berger, 2015), it is argued that there remains limited empirical consideration of the lived experiences of LAC in education. Therefore, this research sought to provide an in-depth examination of the lived experiences of LAC in secondary schools. Data was gathered in an urban local authority in Wales. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 6 LAC at Key Stage 3 across two secondary schools. Recordings of the interviews were transcribed verbatim, and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was conducted. 4 super superordinate themes were identified; *sense of belonging, relationships, exposure to judgement and foster care experiences*. The implications of the present study for the practice of educational psychology are discussed, together with future directions for research and the strengths and limitations of the present study.

1. Introduction

Under the Children Act (1989) a Looked After Child (LAC) is defined as a child who is in the care of the local authority (LA) or provided with accommodation by the authority. Within the UK, the numbers of Looked After Children (LAC) continue to rise. According to Welsh Government (WG) (2018) statistics, there were 5,954 LAC in Wales in the year ending March 2017, which was an increase of 5 percent on the previous year.

National and international figures show that there is a significant achievement gap between LAC and their non-looked after peers. This achievement gap widens across the key stages and continues in to higher education (DfE, 2018; WG, 2018). In 2015 18% of LAC in Wales achieved 5 GCSEs grade A*-C or equivalent, compared to 58% of all children (WG, 2016a). In 2012, figures released by the Welsh Audit Office showed that 48% of care leavers were not in employment, education or training (NEET) compared with 11.5% of the general population of school leavers (Welsh Audit Office (WAO), 2012).

While the so called ‘achievement gap’ is reduced once Special Educational Needs (SEN) are considered, the gap remains, suggesting SEN is not the only barrier to the educational progress of LAC.

However, it is important to note that outcomes from LAC have been measured or defined in relation to national indicators and arguably this may need to be addressed to take in to account the rates of SEN amongst LAC and alternative curricula. As suggested by Brodie (2010), “the measurement of educational outcomes for LAC is complex and improvements on the ground may not be reflected in LA returns” (p. 1).

Being ‘looked-after’ is also associated with negative life trajectories with care leavers overrepresented in prison and psychiatric institution populations (Centre for Social Justice, 2015). Care leavers are also more likely than the general population to experience homelessness; unemployment and mental health disorders (Centre for Social Justice, 2015). However, research shows that educational success is linked to better long-term outcomes for those leaving the care system (Okpych & Courtney, 2014). Therefore, improving the educational outcomes for LAC is an important strategy to interrupt the negative life trajectories associated with this population. Furthermore, all LAs have a duty of care under the Children Act (1989) to promote the educational achievement of all LAC.

The academic attainment of LAC has been a longstanding concern for key stakeholders within the UK and there has been a marked increase in legislation, policy and interventions aimed at improving the educational outcomes of LAC (see The Children Act 1989; The Children Act, 2004; The Children and Young Persons Act, 2008; The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act, 2014; Welsh Assembly Government, 2007; Welsh Government, 2015b; 2016a). While this has undoubtedly raised the profile of the education of LAC, the achievement gap between LAC and their non-looked after peers remains (WG, 2018). Arguably this raises the question as to whether current policy and provision is meeting the needs of LAC. Indeed, research evaluating the effectiveness of the policy and provision is limited and arguably, there are no clearly defined outcomes by which effectiveness can be evaluated (Pye, Mollitor, Tayler and Huxley, 2015).

Moreover, while the national data on the educational outcomes for LAC is well established, the research base into the protective and risk factors associated with educational progress is limited and often omits the lived experiences of young people themselves (Mannay et al., 2017).

A review of the literature has shown that the views of LAC in education remain disproportionately underrepresented (Brodie, 2010), with previous research often focusing on their experiences of the care system (Holland, 2009). Although the extent to which the achievement gap is due to LAC's pre-care experiences or experiences of the care system remains unclear (Forrester et al. 2009). Indeed, as identified by Berridge (2012), socio-economic risk factors, that are strongly associated with admission in to care, for example social class and poverty, also predict low educational achievement. Therefore, it would be incorrect to assume that experiences of the care system alone have a negative effect on the educational outcomes of LAC.

Brodie (2010) carried out a knowledge review, which aimed to identify what improved the educational outcomes of LAC. Brodie (2010) noted that there was an absence of research examining LAC's lived experiences of school. In recent years there has been a move to address this imbalance and two large scale studies have been conducted in England and in Wales, which have aimed to ascertain the views of LAC in education (Mannay et al. 2015 and Sebba et al. 2015).

Mannay et al. (2015 ; 2017) and Sebba et al. (2015) identified several risk and protective factors contributing to the low educational outcomes of LAC in England and Wales, including, individual characteristics, such as being male and having a high strengths and difficulties questionnaire (SDQ) score; placement stability; school factors; relationships with key adults and how being labelled as 'in care' impacts on a young person's positionality within the discourse of academic success.

The LAC included in Mannay et al.'s (2015; 2017) research were recruited via the Foster Carer Network, which is an organisation which supports, and trains foster carers. This method of recruitment would have arguably targeted engaged foster carers, which suggests a

potential bias within the sample. It is argued that ascertaining the views and experiences of LAC whose foster carers were not supported by the Foster Carer Network, may have generated a more differentiated data set.

As the research was generated as part of a Welsh Government commissioned study, the researcher also acknowledges that the perceived ‘power imbalance’ created during the research process, as acknowledged by Karnieli-Miller, Strier and Pessach (2009), and notes that this could have influenced the information the participants chose to share with the researchers.

Finally, Mannay et al. (2017) aimed to examine how being labelled as ‘in care’ impacted on young people’s positionality within the dominant discourse of academic success. Mannay et al. (2017) suggests that,

“educational policies and practices alienate LAC from dominant discourses of educational achievement through assignment of the ‘supported’ subject position, where children and young people are permitted and even encouraged not to succeed academically due to their complex and disrupted home circumstances” (p.683).

Arguably, this suggests that Mannay et al. (2017) hold the position that being labelled as ‘in care’ does impact on a young person’s positionality, which could have influenced the interpretation of the research findings.

To address the methodological issues identified above, it is argued that an independent, and more in-depth, examination of the lived experiences of LAC in education is required. Arguably, ascertaining the voices of LAC will promote our understanding of their experiences of education. Moreover, through understanding their perspectives, it is suggested that professionals will be able to support these young people more effectively in school. Mannay et al. (2015) found that secondary aged pupils displayed an increased awareness of

their ‘looked after’ or ‘in care’ status. Therefore, it is suggested that secondary aged LAC could provide a valuable insight in to their educational experiences.

2. The current study

2.1 Aim

The present research aimed to provide an in-depth examination of Looked After Children’s’ (LAC) lived experiences of secondary school in one urban local authority in Wales.

3. Method

3.1 Research Design and Paradigm

A qualitative design was used, due to the nature of the research question, as ascertaining detailed information about LAC’s lived experiences of secondary school was identified as important. Goddard (2000) suggests that the complex nature of LAC’s experiences of education cannot be accessed through larger scale, quantitative research alone, as it misses the nuances of the experiences.

The present research embraced an exploratory approach, which allowed for an in-depth examination of LAC’s experiences of secondary school. Therefore, this research was underpinned by a constructionist paradigm. Social constructionists believe that knowledge is co-created through social processes and interactions (Burr, 2015).

The epistemological approach of the researcher was subjectivist. The researcher maintained that the findings would be created through the interaction between the researcher and participant (Guba & Lincoln, 1994)

The ontological approach of the researcher was relativist. This position emphasises the relative, subjective value of the data, rather than an absolute truth or validity. Relativism

suggests that truth is related to an individual's social, cultural and moral context and his or her previous experiences (Bryman, 2016).

The researcher acknowledges qualitative methodology is subject to criticism, due to its level of subjectivity (Thomas, 2013), however the researcher posits that this approach most suitably fitted the aims of the present study.

3.2 Interpretative Phenomenological Approach (IPA)

In line with the ontological and epistemological position assumed by the researcher an IPA approach was adopted. The three key concepts of philosophical knowledge that underpin IPA are; phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography. The connections between IPA and the ontological and epistemological position of the researcher will be explored within the critical appraisal.

3.3 Measures

Individual, semi-structured interviews were used. Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) advocate that IPA is best suited to a data collection method which encourages participants to offer a "rich, detailed, first-person account of their experiences" (p.56). Moreover, Reid, Flowers, and Larkin (2005) state that one to one, semi-structured interviews have been a popular and preferred method for collecting such data.

Furthermore, previous research commissioned by the Welsh Government found that despite employing several different qualitative approaches to ascertain LAC's educational experiences, a core number of LAC chose to be interviewed (Mannay et al., 2015).

Semi-structured interviews were employed, rather than structured interviews, as the researcher did not want to lead the participant's responses (Fielding, 2004). Furthermore, semi structured interviews, informed by an IPA approach, allowed the researcher to explore the nuances in the participants lived experiences.

The interviews were conducted in two phases. The first interview was used as a prompt to engage in a broader discussion about the participants' experiences of secondary school and to support rapport building. The interview questions (Appendix 8) were developed after completing a literature review to ensure that the questions would provide novel findings (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). The second round of interview questions were informed by initial themes that started to emerge from the first round of interviews. The language adopted was also informed by the language used by participants. Adopting this approach allowed for a deeper exploration of initial themes identified during phase one. As posited by Smith et al. (2009), adopting this approach allowed for a "more detailed and multifaceted account" of the participants experiences of secondary school (p.52).

A foreword preceded the interview questions to provide more information about the interview process (Appendices 8 and 9). To prompt discussion about the participant's experiences of secondary school, open-ended questions were asked, with a selection of organised prompts (Appendices 8 and 9). The questions were deliberately broad and open-ended to allow for a range of detailed responses. Due to the nature of a semi-structured interview, the specific questions asked varied depending on the participant's responses, to allow participants to discuss their views and experiences without being limited to pre-determined questions.

3.4 Participants

A purposive sampling method was used and 6 Looked After Children, aged 11-15, both male and female, from two secondary schools, were recruited to take part in this research. This age range was selected as the majority of LAC in Wales are within this age group (WG, 2017). All participants were from one urban local authority (LA) in Wales. The LA was selected as it had the largest population of LAC in Wales (WG, 2018).

Table 2: Information on Interview Participants

Participant	Pseudonym*	Gender	Participation
‘A’	Amy	Female	1 st and 2 nd interview
‘K’	Kai	Male	1 st and 2 nd interview
‘N’	Nathan	Male	2 nd interview
‘R’	Rose	Female	2 nd interview
‘C’	Callum	Male	2 nd interview
‘T’	Tabitha	Female	1 st and 2 nd interview

*To ensure participant confidentiality pseudonyms have been used

3.4.1 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The participants needed to meet the following criteria to be eligible to participate in this research:

Table 3: Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Currently be classified as ‘Looked After’ by the local authority (LA) and have held this status for at least 6 months. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> × Participants were not eligible to participate if they were residing in a residential care placement, as previous research has suggested that children in residential care can have ‘more behavioural difficulties and distinctive educational needs’ (p.7) (O’Higgins, Sebba & Luke, 2015). Moreover, it was felt that there would be a lack of potential participants meeting the 6-month stable placement criteria. Therefore, it is suggested that a separate piece of research should aim to examine the educational experiences of LAC residing in residential placements.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Be residing in a stable foster care placement for at least 6 months. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Be on role at a mainstream secondary school within the LA and have been for at least 6 months. 	

3.5 Procedure

The research procedure is outlined in *Figure 2*.

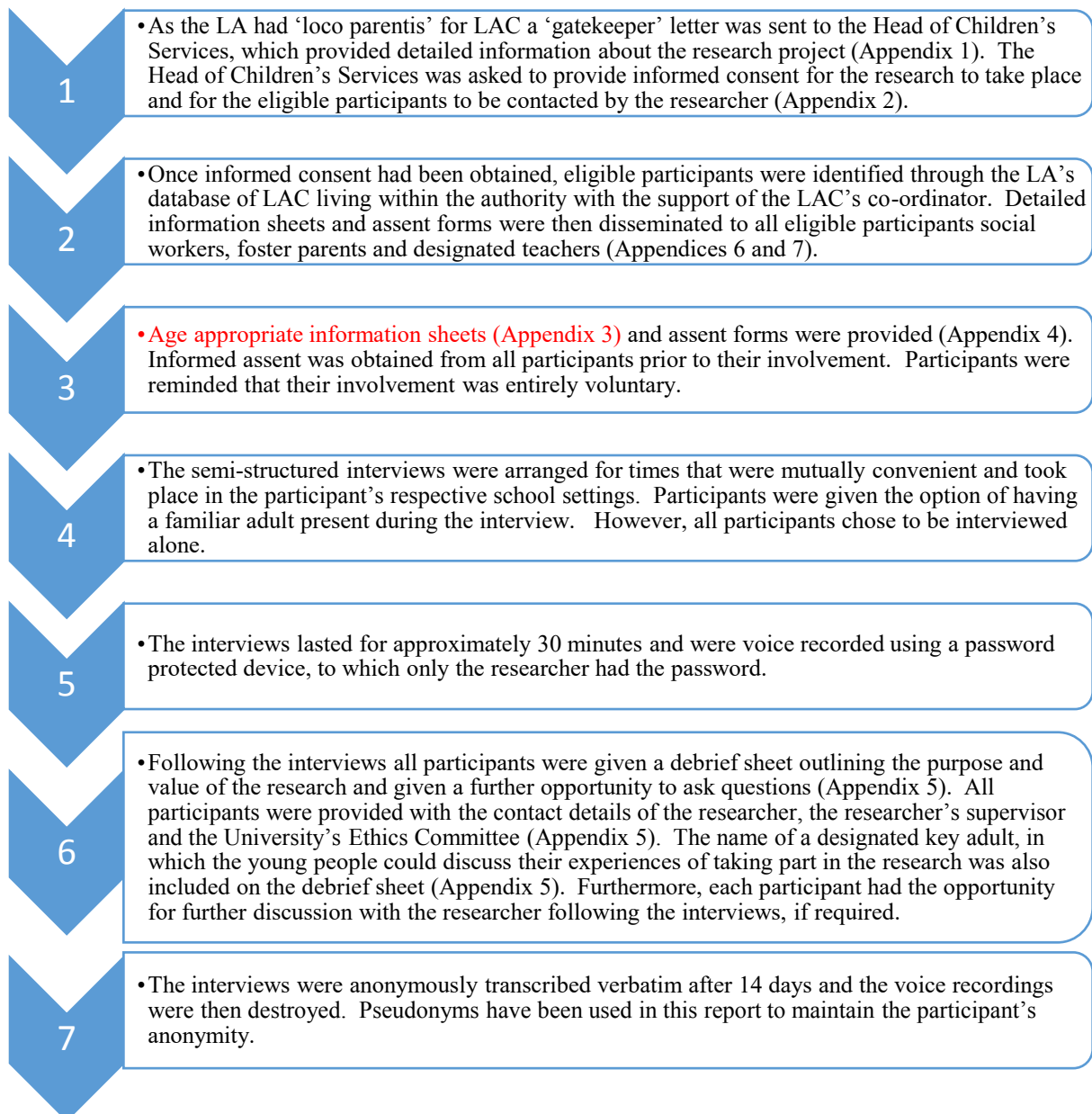


Figure 2: Research procedure

3.6 Ethical Considerations

The proposed research adhered to the ethical guidelines as outlined by the British Psychological Society (BPS) (2009a; 2018) and the Health Care Professionals Council (HCPC) (2016). Ethical approval from the University's Ethics Committee was obtained prior to any data being collected. The researcher also adhered to the policies and procedures as outlined by the LA in which the data was collected. Key ethical considerations are outlined in Table 4.

Table 4: Ethical considerations

Ethical consideration	How addressed
Informed consent	<p>As the LA had 'loco parentis' for LAC a 'gatekeeper' letter was sent to the Head of Children's Services, which provided detailed information about the research project (Appendix 1). The Head of Children's Services was asked to provide informed consent for the research to take place and for the eligible participants to be contacted by the researcher (Appendix 2).</p> <p>Once informed consent had been obtained, eligible participants were identified through the LA's database of LAC living within the authority with the support of the LAC's co-ordinator. Detailed information sheets and assent forms were then disseminated to all eligible participant's social workers, foster parents and designated teachers (Appendices 6 and 7).</p> <p>Age appropriate assent forms were provided (Appendix 4). Informed assent was obtained from all participants prior to their involvement.</p>
Right to withdraw	All participants were given the opportunity to withdraw their participation at any point, prior to transcription.

<p>Anonymity and confidentiality</p>	<p>The interviews lasted for approximately 30 minutes and were voice recorded using a password protected device, to which only the researcher had the password.</p> <p>The semi-structured interviews were arranged for times that were mutually convenient and took place in the participant's respective school settings. Participants were given the option of having a familiar adult present during the interview.</p> <p>The interviews were anonymously transcribed verbatim after 14 days and the voice recordings were then destroyed. Pseudonyms have been used in this report to maintain the participant's anonymity.</p>
<p>Debrief</p>	<p>Following the interviews all participants were given a debrief sheet outlining the purpose and value of the research and given a further opportunity to ask questions (Appendix 5).</p> <p>All participants were provided with the contact details of the researcher, the researcher's supervisor and the University's Ethics Committee (Appendix 5).</p> <p>The name of a designated key adult, in which the young people could discuss their experiences of taking part in the research was also included on the debrief sheet (Appendix 5). Furthermore, each participant had the opportunity for further discussion with the researcher following the interviews, if required.</p>

3.7 Analysis

The interviews were transcribed verbatim and IPA was conducted following the guidelines of Smith et al. (2009) (Appendix 10).

Analysis was conducted for each participant individually, before full group analysis took place. IPA was deemed the most appropriate form of data analysis as there was one research aim, broad in nature, which aimed to explore the LAC's lived experiences of secondary school. Smith et al. (2009) offer that IPA is useful in offering "nuanced analyses of *particular* instances of lived experience" (p. 37).

However, IPA has been criticised for its subjectivity and vulnerability to researchers with preferred outcomes (Bryman, 2016). To try and address this criticism, an independent researcher was recruited to cross-examine the researcher's interpretation of the data and a meeting was held before the main themes were finalised.

3.8 The Researchers Position

As posited by Smith et al. (2009), within IPA, the researcher is trying to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of what is happening to them. Due to the important role the researcher has within IPA, the position of the researcher is presented.

The researcher was living and undertaking her fieldwork placement within the LA in which the data was collected. The researcher was not working directly with the schools or pupils involved in the present study. However, the researchers' previous experiences of working with LAC influenced her interest in this area.

As advised by Smith et al. (2009), the researcher kept a research journal to record any reflective and reflexive comments from the research process (Appendix 17). The journal was repeatedly referred to during the process of data analysis to ensure the interpretation was kept as close as possible to the participant's narratives.

4 Results

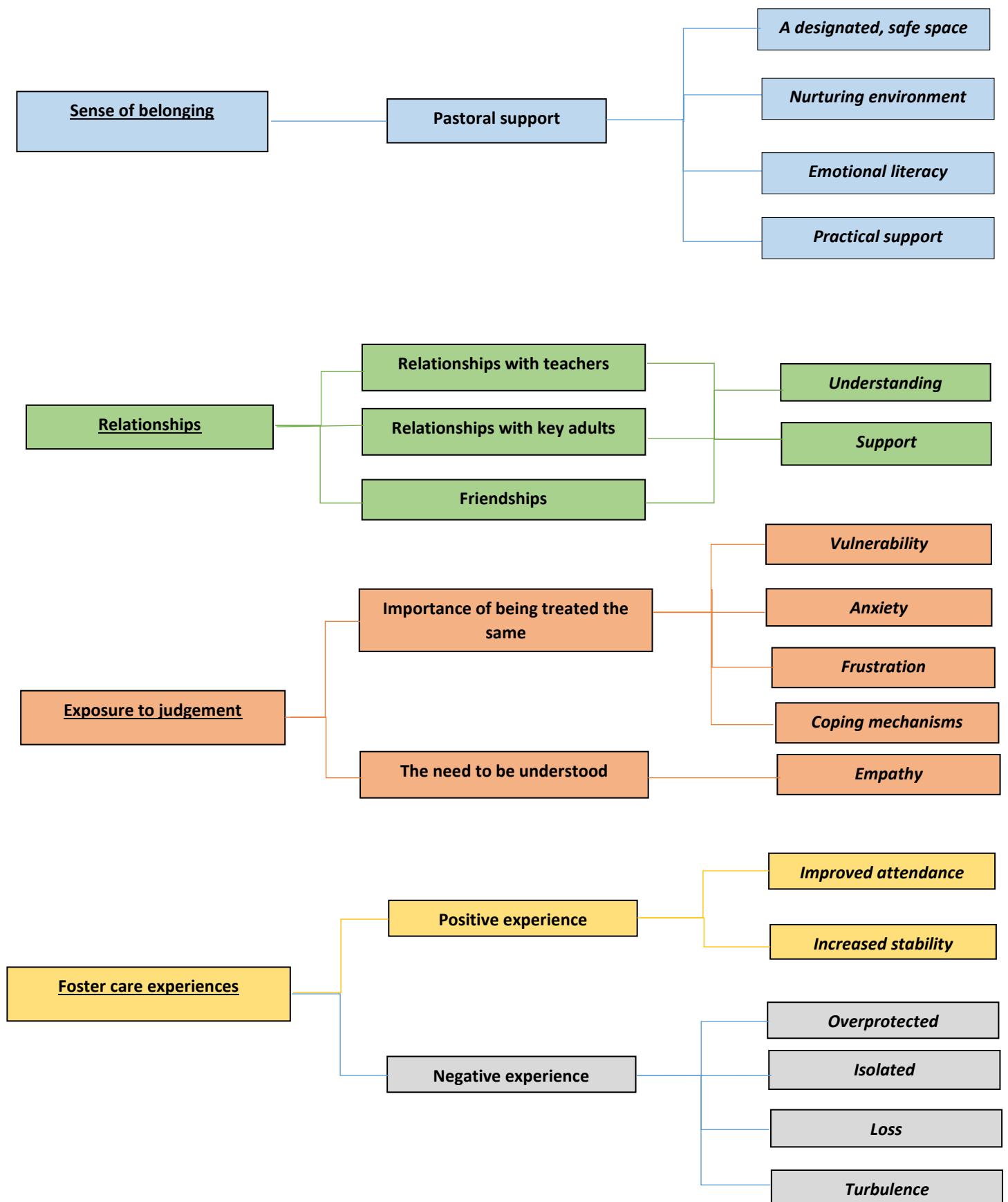
This research aimed to examine the lived experiences of LAC in secondary school. The results from the IPA: the super-super ordinate themes⁴, super-ordinate themes⁵, and sub-ordinate themes⁶ are presented in the thematic map overleaf (figure 2). These themes represent higher order concepts and thematic patterns developed from individual analysis. Appendix 12 provides an overview of the identification of superordinate themes and subordinate themes for each participant. Appendices 13-16 provide examples of the analysis process. The findings will then be discussed in relation to relevant theoretical and research literature within the discussion.

⁴ Presented in bold and underlined in the results section. For the present research, the super-super-ordinate themes are overarching themes of the super-ordinate and sub-ordinate themes.

⁵ Presented in bold in the results section, the super-ordinate themes are the broader, group defining themes.

⁶ Presented in bold and italics in the results section, the sub-ordinate themes are the themes that are secondary to the super-ordinate themes.

Figure 3: Thematic Map to Represent the Themes for the Group of Participants



4.1 Sense of belonging

All the young people acknowledged that they required additional support from their respective **pastoral** department on occasions. Their discourses reflected on having a *designated, safe* and *nurturing space*, which has been interpreted as helping to support their sense of belonging.

Nathan reflected:

“Like the Bridge, is basically a place you can go, that you can talk to people. There is like some tables, you can make a cup of tea, there’s couches and stuff. You can just sit down, chill, talk about your problems, let them all out”

(lines 116-118)

Rose shared:

“I think it’s really important, cause, to be honest it’s like a second home for some people. Because there is a girl, she’s like, that’s where she always goes, that’s like her comfort place”

(lines 255-256)

These extracts suggest that the **pastoral** departments provide a sense of community and it would be reasonable to infer that this helps to support the young people’s sense of belonging. It has been interpreted that the pastoral departments are fulfilling the functions of what would typically be satisfied by a stable home environment for many young people. In the absence of such, for LAC it is felt that the pastoral departments are acting as a second home.

Callum acknowledged:

“what’s talked about in the Bridge, stays in the Bridge, it don’t leave.”

(line 170)

This extract further conveys a sense of safety and security. It could be suggested that the pastoral departments act as a secure base for the young people. Certainly, having a ***designated, safe*** and ***nurturing*** space to go to may provide physical containment for LAC given the turbulence that they may have experienced in their lives. Moreover, associating a space with available adult support may provide further emotional containment.

Indeed, the young people’s narratives also reflected on the ***emotional literacy*** support provided by their respective pastoral departments. This was common across all the participant’s discourses, and therefore it would be reasonable to infer that the young people highly valued ***emotional literacy*** support.

Kai reflected:

“they helped me with sort of my emotions and dealing with emotions and helping me express them to others, whether it be teachers, friends.”

(lines 20-21)

Tabitha shared:

“I did ‘I Can Do It.’ That was one of the groups I did. And I do another one that I still do, which is ELSA (Emotional literacy).”

(line 110-111)

Tabitha’s memory of her involvement in particular groups may be indicative of the lasting impact that this structured emotional support has had on her.

The ***practical support*** available was discussed within two of the young people's narratives.

Kai reflected:

"I got loads of help with homework, after school clubs and what not."

(line 61)

And Nathan voiced:

"And they also do courses where they can help you with like you know, getting friends or anything."

(lines 118-119)

These extracts suggest that the availability of ***practical support*** has been important for Kai and Nathan.

The participant's narratives suggest that the pastoral departments are fulfilling many functions of what a stable family life would offer.

4.2 Relationships

The young people's **relationships** with teachers, key adults and friends featured strongly across all of their narratives and therefore **'relationships'** has been identified as a superordinate theme.

The importance of the **relationships with teachers** featured strongly within the young people's discourses. Notably, the ***support*** received from teachers has been interpreted as highly valued by the young people.

Amy reflected:

“and in Year 7, they (the teachers) showed like loads of support. Because they knew that I was in care. They had to say I was. They showed loads of support because like in a way I’m still not mentally strong if you know what I mean, like in ways.”

(lines 16-19)

Kai voiced:

“Urm amazing, they’ve helped me ridiculous amounts. Err, they, the staff in the Bridge helped me a lot”

(lines 19-20)

The young people’s discourses also reflected on the **understanding** shown by teachers. This would suggest that a supportive and empathetic approach from teachers is highly valued.

Kai noted:

“especially when it comes to care, they’re always asking how I’m doing, how urm, like even if some teachers have been away, urm, when they come back they’ll be like, how is it, back where you are living? Like they know my story and they know, you know.”

(lines 96-99)

From this extract it would be reasonable to infer that it is important to Kai that teachers hold him in mind when they have been away.

Rose reflected:

“Because I am the type of person, like, I don’t really like, like, speaking out loud and telling people, like about my feelings. And like with the teachers, they can, they, they, even though they have known you for like a year, they like understand everything” (lines 21-24)

This extract draws attention to the importance Rose has placed on teachers *understanding* her without her needing to explicitly express her feelings.

The young people's discourses also reflected on the **relationships** they had established with **key adults** in school, particularly the designated teachers.

Rose reflected:

*"Mrs * (designated teacher) was there straight away to sort it all out. Like, she, she, like sorted it out."*

(line 161)

Nathan also noted:

*"And yeah.... the relationships between the students and the teachers and sort of.... especially Mrs * (designated teacher)"*

The importance of establishing **friendships** and the **support** friends provided also featured strongly across the young people's discourses and therefore has been interpreted as highly valued within the participant's lived experiences of secondary school.

Amy noted:

"They've been there.... they've been there. It's like, I've argued with them, but then like 5 seconds later, I'll be like, I'm so soooooorrrrrry. And they'll be the same with me, and then we're all friends. There has not been a day where we've all separated."

(lines 281-283)

Callum reflected:

“My friend, like when I’m feeling down, like he helps me, like he walks home with me and stuff. He just does nice things for me like that when I’m not happy. So, he like focuses 100% on me.”

It is reasonable to infer that the unconditional and consistent **support** provided by their friends has contributed to Amy’s and Callum’s positive experience of secondary school.

Interestingly, the support provided by foster carers was not a dominant theme within the participant’s narratives. Therefore, it has been interpreted that the support provided by foster carers was not an important part of the lived experience of secondary school for these LAC.

4.3 Exposure to judgement

A sense of **vulnerability** in lessons and **anxiety** associated with peers finding out about their past was identified across all the young people’s narratives. The participant’s discourses were imbued with feelings of wanting to be **treated the same** as their non-looked after peers, suggesting that this is very important to them. **Exposure to judgement** was therefore interpreted as the super superordinate theme.

Tabitha voiced:

“Urm, make sure you treat ‘em the same as you treat other people and like, for example. It may be a trip for fostering people. Urm, they did, in year 7, urm like, do not do that.”

(lines 106-107)

Callum reflected:

“I wanted to be treated the same. Some people still think like, ‘oh he is a foster kid, we have got to look after him’ and I’m like no, I’m still a normal kid.”

(lines 31-32)

This suggests that Callum does not identify with the ‘LAC’ label. It would be reasonable to infer that Callum’s construct of being ‘looked after’ has connotations of weakness, which he rejects. Arguably this suggests a level of resilience.

Conversely, for Amy, being in care was associated with an expectation that staff would provide extra support.

Amy reflected:

“and in Year 7, they (the teachers) showed like loads of support. Because they knew that I was in care.”

(lines 17-18)

The young people’s narratives suggest that being ‘looked after’ is an important part of their lived experience of school; however, it does not define them. Consequently, it is extremely important to them that they are **treated the same** as their non-looked after peers.

Conversely, the participant’s narratives also conveyed the importance of others showing an understanding of their needs as LAC, which arguably conflicts with their desire to be treated the same. The superordinate theme was interpreted as **importance of being understood**.

Kai explained:

“Just be understanding that, like what they’re going through is, is very traumatic.”

(line 55)

The importance of others taking an empathetic approach was identified as important within Nathan’s discourse.

Nathan expressed:

“Well they have really liked helped me, because like, they have really understood the problems and not tried to butt in, gave me empathy.”

(lines 367-368)

The internal conflict of wanting to be **treated the same** as his peers and the **importance of being understood** as a LAC was evident within Callum’s narrative.

He reflected:

“Treat them normal, but like if they feel upset, take them out, check they’re ok. Give them more chances to like do their work. If they work slow, give the foster parents more help if they need it.”

(lines 121-123)

A sense of **vulnerability** in lessons, notably R.E, was inferred from some of the young people’s responses.

Nathan reflected:

“Because like, in R.E they talk about communities and families a lot and like they start talking. I think a lot of foster care people are very sensitive about their families, their mums and dads and why they can’t take care of them. And like, you know, just to be aware of that, so it’s not like, like, hurtful, even though they weren’t trying to be hurtful”

(lines 149-152)

Amy noted:

“Watch what you say in lessons. I know that in R.E a couple of times, they’ve talked about something I don’t like, and it’s made me upset and I’ve been taken out of the lesson and I’ve missed out on key information” (lines 230-232)

It would be reasonable to infer that parts of the R.E curriculum are particularly **anxiety** provoking for LAC. Class discussions can highlight the disparity between LAC's and their peer's experience, notably of family and community, and it is important for **consideration** to be given to LAC in these instances.

The young people's discourses also reflected a sense of **anxiety** associated with their peers finding out about their past.

Amy shared:

"Yeah, just because if you tell everyone and then it goes wrong in school. And they bully you and there are people that take the mick, but yeah you know, yeah"

(lines 37-38)

Rose reflected:

"Yeah because to be honest, no one wants their business being shared around and everything."

(line 159)

These quotes suggest that remaining in control of the information shared about their past is important. A sense of **vulnerability** could be reasonably inferred when this information is shared with others, suggesting difficulties with who to trust.

Amy and Nathan's discourses reflected upon strategies that they had employed to manage these feelings. These strategies have been interpreted as **coping mechanisms**.

Amy explained:

“It’s like the schoolwork’s definitely helped. Like if I’m upset I’ll focus on something and I’ll be like, “Oh, this is interesting” and just like it’ll take my mind off stuff and I won’t think about it.”

(lines 64-66)

Nathan noted:

*“Well like Mrs * creating chess club, that really helped me, because like, when I really didn’t have anything, like I didn’t have friends, I had chess club. So like, it really helps you get through your day.”*

(lines 340-342)

4.4 Foster care experiences

The care experience is inevitably an individual one and this is highlighted in the present research and has therefore been interpreted as a super-superordinate theme. Four of the participants reflected upon their **positive experiences** of foster care.

Amy reflected:

“(Foster care) It means having a new experience of a new life, so where I had a bad past, I’d be like, right ok, I can forget about that, I can make the choices that I want to make and now I can live my life as if I had a normal life anyways”

(lines 9-11)

However, conversely Kai’s discourse reflected a **negative experience** of foster care.

He noted:

“it’s a tough time, especially if you’re arguing, and you don’t get along with the carers, you don’t like them, urm, it can be very, very, urm, sort of, annoying and you know, you don’t want to be there, you want to get away, you want to go and see, you might want to move away or run away and all of this. Urm, and, it can have a big effect on your life.”

(lines 144-147)

The language used by Kai, suggests that he has experienced a lot of **turbulence** because of placement moves. Kai’s discourse suggests that the **turbulence** he has experienced has had a significant impact on the stability he experiences in secondary school.

Kai reflected:

“Urm It’s got its ups and downs. Like sometimes it’s good depending on if you move, if you stay with the first carer you’ve been put with or ...urm yeah, just depends on who you’ve been really put with.”

(lines 18-20)

Tabitha’s narrative was also imbued with feelings of **frustration** with the care system.

She noted:

“it makes me feel bad, because at the same time, rules are different when your being fostered.”

(lines 7-8)

Tabitha also reflected:

“Urm, they check, like literally every single place. Like, not really the living room, but the bathroom, the kitchen, the bedrooms. I don’t know why, but, like, that’s one of their rules now.”

(lines 13-15)

Tabitha’s response suggests that she feels **over protected**. A feeling shared by Nathan who in fact articulated that he felt **over protected**:

“I feel like we’re over protected, like, as if we’re babies. Because like, for example, we aren’t allowed to be on YouTube or be seen publicly, when like loads of people, like loads of children are. I can understand like Facebook and stuff, and like, yeah, but some stuff is just silly and too protective.”

(lines 132-134)

Nathan’s discourse was also imbued with a sense of **loss** for the life he may have had if he had stayed with his birth family.

He shared:

*“And would I have had a better life if I didn’t go in to foster care and went to * and like went down that route. And what could have happened if I had gone that way and not this way?”*

(lines 217-218)

Nathan’s position is very reflective and suggests that while LAC may be experiencing positive foster care placements, they can still feel a sense of **loss** for the life they thought they were going to have with their birth family.

However, encouragingly all the young people viewed moving in to care as having a positive effect on their school experience, through providing **increased stability**, resulting in **improved school attendance**.

Kai shared:

“Urm it’s more, having stability, I mean going from being in, living with my parents, there was a lot of, urm {sigh}, not a lot, not a lot of stability there.”

(line 6-7)

Callum reflected:

“when I wasn’t in foster care, I didn’t go to school as much, like my attendance was poor. But now my attendance is like 100%, because my foster mum doesn’t let me have a day off.”

(lines 59-61)

Despite Nathan’s narrative being imbued with feelings of **frustration** with the foster care system, he reflected:

*“I think it’s impacted on me positively. Cause like, like if I had never gone in to foster care I would never have gone to *, because * is like the second-best school in Wales or something, or third or something.”*

(lines 200-202)

5 Discussion

The young people's narratives reflected largely positive experiences of secondary school, despite some references to the difficulties associated with moving away from friends and family when moving in to care. Importantly, the young people's accounts of their lived experiences offer valuable insight in to the risk and protective factors associated with positive educational experiences. Encouragingly these factors can be influenced at the school level. The discussion has been restricted to those themes presented within the analysis.

5.1 Sense of belonging

The additional support received from their respective pastoral departments was highly valued by all the young people and this was interpreted as supporting their sense of belonging.

Drawing upon attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969), it could be suggested that the pastoral departments provide a secure base for these young people, through providing physical and emotional containment. It has been interpreted that the pastoral departments are fulfilling the functions of what would be typically fulfilled by a stable home environment for many young people. In the absence of a stable home environment, for LAC the pastoral departments are acting as second homes.

Bergin & Bergin (2009) posit that a secure attachment to the school (referred to as school bonding), encompasses a 'sense of belonging' to the school and the community within it. Smith (2006) discusses how 'attachment to school' affects the degree of commitment to and engagement with schooling felt by students. Strong or secure attachments reflect a sense of value and purpose in school whilst weak or insecure attachments to school reflect scepticism, indifference and/or hostility towards school.

The emotional literacy support available through their respective pastoral departments was interpreted as highly valued by all the young people. Interactions with key adults are crucial in helping children to learn how to effectively regulate their emotions. If a child does not receive appropriate emotional responses from their primary caregiver, the child is likely to learn maladaptive strategies, for example, dissociation or hyperarousal (Dann, 2011). Perhaps unsurprisingly, research indicates that LAC experience relatively high levels of difficulty with emotional literacy (Rees, 2013). Therefore, the availability of emotional literacy support becomes critically important to teach these young people appropriate strategies to support their emotional regulation.

The practical support available, for example help with homework, was interpreted as highly valued within two of the young people's discourses. Due to their looked-after status, it is likely that such practical support has been absent.

Ultimately it is felt that the pastoral departments are fulfilling the role of a stable family environment for these young people, by providing a nurturing, safe space, with emotional and practical support.

5.2 Relationships

The importance of establishing relationships with teachers and key adults in school featured strongly within all the young people's narratives. The young people identified feeling listened to and having staff available who understood their needs, to be factors that positively influenced their educational experience as LAC.

While establishing positive relationships with adults has been identified as important within the participant's lived experiences, the theoretical literature also highlights that these young people are also some of the hardest to maintain relationships with, at least in part, because of their attachment history (Bombèr, 2007; 2011 & Geddes, 2006).

The young people's narratives highlight some potentially interesting links with intersubjectivity, the work of Colwyn Trevarthen. According to Trevarthen (2010; 2011), a mother's responsiveness to her baby supports and develops intersubjectivity (a shared understanding), which Trevarthen (2010; 2011) regarded to be the basis of all effective communication, interaction and learning.

Research suggests that as babies, humans are biologically wired to "coordinate their actions with others" (Stone, Underwood & Hotchkiss, 2012). This ability to coordinate and synchronise with others facilitates cognitive and emotional learning through social interaction. Moreover, the most socially productive relationships between children and adults are bidirectional (Stone, Underwood & Hotchkiss, 2012). Arguably LAC may not have had much experience of intersubjectivity with their primary caregivers. Therefore, it could be suggested that their relationships with key adults in school is offering this experience. Consequently, it is important that educational professionals are knowledgeable about how best to support and establish positive relationships with LAC.

Indeed, Bergin & Bergin (2009) theorise that it is not solely the attachment relationships between pupils and parents that is the key to educational progress, but also the pupil's attachment to their teachers and school. Moreover, Geddes (2006) theorises that for educational progress, a balanced and fluid relationship must be present between the pupil, teacher and learning task.

Within secondary school, independence is encouraged; however the participants' narratives suggest that they valued the relative dependency. Bombèr, (2007) highlights that relationships and the relative dependency inherent in them should not be frowned upon in schools, as we are merely re-creating something that is humanly necessary for children who have experienced trauma and loss.

The primary reason for children entering the care system is due to abuse and neglect⁷, which arguably will have had a profound impact on these children's relationships with their primary caregivers. In the absence of a positive and secure relationship with their primary caregivers, it is suggested that LAC are seeking this from other key adults. Through establishing positive relationships, LAC will use this knowledge to inform how they engage in future interactions and interpret relationship language (Bretherton & Munholland, 1999). Therefore, establishing positive relationships with key adults, becomes critically important, as close and supportive relationships with teachers have demonstrated the potential to mitigate the risk of negative outcomes for children who may otherwise have difficulty succeeding in school (Driscoll & Pianta, 2010).

The young people reflected on their relationships with the designated teachers in school. It has been interpreted that the young people valued both the designated teacher's understanding of their needs as LAC and that they were readily available in times of need. The research base into the effectiveness of designated teachers is limited. However, the present findings are encouraging and suggest that for these young people, their relationships with the designated teachers were an important part of their lived experience of secondary school.

5.3 Exposure to judgement

Feeling exposed to the judgement of others featured particularly strongly within the participant's discourses. The participants' narratives were imbued with feelings of wanting to be treated the same as their peers, and feelings of anxiety and vulnerability were associated with their peers finding out about their past. Participants articulated that R.E was a particularly difficult subject, due to the focus on family and community. A sense of

⁷ According to WG (2018) statistics 62% of LAC entered the care system because of abuse and neglect

vulnerability and anxiety was interpreted through the participants' narratives during these lessons.

Two of the participant's reflected on strategies they had employed to manage these feelings, which was interpreted as coping mechanisms. Amy discussed using school work as a distraction and escapism through music and art. While Nathan reflected upon the importance of having things to look forward to and access to extracurricular activities.

Interestingly, while all the participants articulated how they wanted to be treated the same as their peers, their narratives also conveyed the importance of others showing an understanding of their needs as LAC, which arguably conflicts with their desire to be treated the same. It was evident that how key adults and their peers viewed them and consequently responded to them was very important.

It is felt that the young people associated a stigma with being labelled 'looked-after'. In line with previous research (Mannay et al., 2017) the young people did not view themselves as any different to their peers and being 'looked-after' did not form a central part of their identity. However, their desire to be understood as LAC, did inexplicitly contrast themselves to their non-looked after peers.

5.4 Foster care experience

Encouragingly, and in line with previous research (Harker et al, 2004; Morgan, 2009; Mannay et al. 2015; 2017; Sebba et al. 2015), participants reported that their entry in to care had, had a positive impact on their school experiences, through providing increased stability and improved attendance. However, the participants' narratives highlighted that the care experience is inevitably an individual one. Four participants described positive experiences of foster care, while two participants' narratives conveyed more negative experiences, imbued with feelings of frustration at being over protected.

between the analysis and their professional practice.

The numbers of LAC continue to rise and consequently EPs are working with an increasing number of LAC. A review of the EP role by Farrell, Woods, Rooney, Squires and O'Connor (2006) posited that EPs could provide a distinctive contribution to LAC's lives. The present findings have relevance to EP work at an individual, school and organisational level. Some examples have been presented in the table overleaf in relation to the 4 superordinate themes.

Table 5: Examples of work that could be completed by EPs to support LAC

Sense of belonging	Relationships	Exposure to judgement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop the pastoral provision within secondary schools to include a designated, safe place, where both emotional and practical support is readily available. • Support schools in becoming ‘attachment-friendly’ by addressing policies and procedures. • Advise schools regarding spending of pupil premium or PDG on evidence-based interventions e.g. Emotional literacy support (ELSA). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide supervision for key adults working with LAC to support the development of positive adult-pupil relationships. • Encourage a holistic view of LAC • Assessment work to identify the child’s <i>individual</i> needs • Assist in the development of personal education plans (PEPs) to address the child’s <i>individual</i> needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools could be mindful of the topics covered in lessons, particularly R.E. • Support LAC to identify effective coping mechanisms. • Provide training to key adults to increase their awareness of attachment theory and the impact of ACEs on LAC and their distinctive educational needs. • Promote the PACE (playfulness, acceptance, curiosity and empathy) model of behaviour management, so as not to perpetuate feelings of rejection and loss.

5.6 Strengths

It is argued that the present research provides a unique and valuable insight in to the lived experiences of LAC in secondary school. It is suggested that using LAC's lived experiences can help professionals to identify practices that are more likely to improve educational outcomes and where to invest resources to maximise improved outcomes.

Employing semi-structured interviews allowed for an in-depth examination of the young people's experiences, allowing the researcher to explore the nuances in individual cases. Arguably pre-defined measures, such as a qualitative questionnaire would have masked the complexity of the young people's lives. Furthermore, there is a tendency in the research literature to focus on the difficulties faced by LAC in education, without consideration of the aspects of their lives which may be successful. The semi-structured interviews, informed by an IPA approach, focused upon individual experience and sense making, rather than being driven by the pre-existing literature. Therefore, this approach allowed the participants to talk about things which they had constructed as important. Indeed, the young people reflected on largely positive experiences of school, which is encouraging.

5.7 Limitations

Despite the ecological validity of the present study, the researcher acknowledges that the interpretations that have been made are limited to the small, homogeneous sample of LAC who were interviewed (Smith et al. 2009). Therefore, this limits the generalisability of the research findings. Central to IPA is hermeneutics, the theory of interpretation. As stated by Smith et al (2009) "the IPA researcher is engaged in a double hermeneutic, because the researcher is trying to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of what is happening to them" (p.3). The possible limitations associated with this form of interpretive

data analysis are acknowledged. For example, the active role the researcher had in constructing the themes that emerged from the data, could have been subject to biases based on her role and experiences as a trainee EP.

Furthermore, the difficulties with participant recruitment could have resulted in a bias within the sample. The engagement from social workers and foster carers was limited. Therefore, following supervision, the decision was made to contact the designated teachers in schools directly. Therefore, it is acknowledged that the designated teachers could have identified young people who they felt would provide a positive account of their educational experiences, as this would reflect favourably on the school.

Finally, this was a time limited piece of research and therefore the researcher was unable to revisit participants to discuss and clarify the research findings and ensure their voices were captured.

5.8 Future Research Directions

It is acknowledged that future research should aim to revisit participants to discuss the research findings and to clarify their voices were captured.

A larger sample, to include LAC from across different LAs would help to determine whether the current research findings are representative of the wider population of LAC in Wales. As discussed by Berridge et al. (2008) some LAC are lost from research samples, for example, those who frequently move within the care and educational systems, or those who have been excluded or been out of school for long periods for other reasons. There is also an absence of research examining the experiences of LAC in alternative educational settings and in further education.

It would also be helpful for future research to triangulate the information, by ascertaining the views of foster carers and designated teachers, to contribute further to the examination of the lived experience of LAC in education and to better inform future practice and provision.

It is also noted that since 2015 there has been 54% rise in the number LAC who are asylum seeking children. Therefore, it is suggested that future research should aim to include the views of these children, as it is suggested that this population will have distinct educational needs (WG, 2018).

6 Final Conclusions

It is argued that the present findings have provided a valuable insight in to the lived experiences of LAC in secondary school. 4 super- super ordinate themes were identified; *sense of belonging, relationships, exposure to judgement and foster care experiences*. These findings have practical implications for EP practice, which have been highlighted within the discussion.

The researcher hopes that her passion to champion the voice of the LAC is echoed throughout this piece of research. While the results cannot be widely generalised, it is hoped that the present study can be used as a foundation for a larger scale study into the lived experiences of LAC in education.

References

- Berger, L. M., Cancian, M., Han, E., Noyes, J., & Rios-Salas, V. (2015). Children's academic achievement and foster care. *Paediatrics*, 135(1), 2014-2448.
- Bergin, C. & Bergin, D. (2009). Attachment in the classroom. *Educational Psychology Review*, 21, 141-170.
- Berridge, D., Dance, C., Beecham, J. & Field, S. (2008). *Educating difficult adolescents: effective education for children in public care or with emotional problems*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Berridge, D. (2012). Educating young people in care: What have we learned? *Children and Youth Services Review*, 34(6), 11171-1175.
- Bombèr, L. M. (2007). *Inside I'm Hurting: practical strategies for supporting children with attachment difficulties in schools*. London: Worth Publishing Ltd.
- Bombèr, L. M. (2011). *What about me? Inclusive strategies to support pupils with attachment difficulties make it through the school day*. London: Worth Publishing Ltd.
- Bowlby, J. (1969). *Attachment and loss Volume 1: Attachment*. London: Penguin.
- Bretherton, I. & Munholland, K. A. (1999). Internal working models in attachment relationships in, *Handbook of Attachment Theory, Research & Clinical Applications* edited by Cassidy, J., & Shaver, P. R. New York: The Guildford Press.
- British Psychological Society (BPS) (2009a). *Code of Ethics and Conduct*. Leicester: BPS. Retrieved on 18th December 2016, from www.bps.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/data_protection_act.pdf.

British Psychological Society (BPS) (2018). *Code of Ethics and Conduct*. Leicester: BPS.

Retrieved on 12th March 2018, from

[https://www.bps.org.uk/sites/bps.org.uk/files/Policy%20-%20Files/Code%20of%20Ethics%20and%20Conduct%20\(2018\).pdf](https://www.bps.org.uk/sites/bps.org.uk/files/Policy%20-%20Files/Code%20of%20Ethics%20and%20Conduct%20(2018).pdf)

Brodie, I. (2010). *Improving educational outcomes for looked after children and young people. The Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services (C4EO)*. Retrieved on 14th January 2017, from archive.c4eo.org.uk/themes/vulnerablechildren/educationaloutcomes/files/improving_educational_outcomes_full_knowledge_review.pdf

Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods (5th Edition)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Burr, V. (2015). *Social constructionism*. London: Routledge

Centre for Social Justice. (2015). *FINDING THEIR FEET Equipping care leavers to reach their potential*. London. Retrieved on 20th December 2016, from <http://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/core/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Finding.pdf>

Children Act (1989). London: HMSO. Retrieved on 19th December 2016, from <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents>

Children Act (2004). London: HMSO. Retrieved on 19th December 2016, from <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/31/contents>

Children and Young Persons Act (2008). London: HMSO. Retrieved on 19th December 2016, from <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/23/contents>

Crittenden, P. M. (2006). A dynamic-maturational model of attachment. *Australia and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy*, 27(2), 105-115.

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

Department for Education (2018). *A guide to looked after children statistics in England*.

Retrieved on 22nd April 2018, from

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/694628/SFR20_2018_CLA_Statistics_Guide.pdf

Driscoll, K., & Pianta, R.C. (2010) 'Banking Time in Head Start: Early efficacy of an intervention designed to promote supportive teacher-child relationships'. *Early Education and Development*, 21(1), 38–27.

Farrell, P., Woods, K., Lewis, S., Rooney, S., Squires, G., & O'Conner, M. (2006). *A review of the functions and contributions of educational psychologists in England and Wales in light of 'Every Child Matters: Change for children'*. Nottingham: HMSO.

Fielding, M. (2004). Transformative approaches to student voice: Theoretical underpinnings, recalcitrant realities. *British Educational Research Journal*, 30(2), 295-311.

Geddes, H. (2006). *Attachment in the classroom: the links between children's early experience, emotional well-being and performance in school*. London: Worth Publishing Ltd.

Goddard, J. (2000). Research review: The education of looked after children. *Child and Family Social Work*, 5, 79-86.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. K., Denzin & Y. S., Lincoln (Eds). *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks CA: Sage.

Harker, R. M., Dobel-Ober, D., Lawrence, J., Berridge, D., & Sinclair, R. (2002). Who takes care of education? Looked after children's perceptions of support for educational progress. *Child and Family Social Work*, 8, 89-100.

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

Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) (2016). *Standards of conduct, performance and ethics*. London: HCPC. Retrieved on 10th December 2016, from www.hpc-uk.org/publications/standards/index.asp?id=38

Holland, S. (2009). Listening to children in care: A review of methodological and theoretical approaches to understanding looked after children's perspectives. *Children & Society*, 23, 226-235.

Jacob, S. A., & Furgerson, S. P. (2012). Writing interview protocols and conducting interviews: Tips for students new to the field of qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report*, 17(42), 1-10.

Karnieli-Miller, O., Strier, R., & Pessach, L. (2009). Power relations in qualitative research. *Qualitative health research*, 19(2), 279-289.

Mannay, D., Staples, E., Hallett, S., Roberts, L., Rees, A., Evans, R., & Andrews, D. (2015). *Understanding the educational experiences and opinions, attainment, achievement and aspirations of looked after children in Wales*. Retrieved on 10th January 2017, from <http://gov.wales/docs/caecd/research/2015/151111-understandingeducational-experiences-opinions-looked-after-children-en.pdf>

Mannay, D., Evans, R., Staples, E., Hallet, S., Roberts, L., Rees, A., & Andrews, D. (2017). The consequences of being labelled 'looked-after': Exploring the educational experiences of looked-after children and young people in wales. *British Educational Research Journal*, 43(4), 683-698.

Mooney, J., Winter, K., & Connolly, P. (2016). Effects of a book gifting programme on literacy outcomes for foster children: A randomised controlled trial evaluation of the Letterbox Club in Northern Ireland. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 65, 1-8.

Morgan, R. (2009). *Life in children's homes: a report of children's experience by the Children's Rights Director for England*. London: Ofsted.

O'Higgins, A., Sebba, J., & Luke, N. (2015). *What is the Relationship Between Being in Care and the Educational Outcomes of Children? An International Systematic Review*. Rees Centre for Research in Fostering and Education, University of Oxford.

Okpych, N. J., & Courtney, M. E. (2014). Does education pay for youth formerly in foster care? Comparison of employment outcomes with a national sample. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 43, 18-28.

Pye, J., Mollitor, C., Taylor, C., & Huxley, K. (2015). *Evaluation of the Pupil Deprivation Grant: Interim report*. Retrieved on 1st December 2017, from <http://gov.wales/docs/caecd/research/2015/151203-evaluation-pupil-deprivation-grant-year-2-en.pdf>

Rees, P. (2013). The mental health, emotional literacy, cognitive ability, literacy attainment and 'resilience' of 'looked after children': A multidimensional, multiple-rater population-based study. *British journal of clinical psychology*, 52, 183-198.

Reid, K., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2005). Exploring lived experience: An introduction to interpretive phenomenological analysis. *The Psychologist*, 18(1), 20-23.

Sebba, J., Berridge, D., Luke, N., Fletcher, J., Bell, K., Strand, S., Thomas, S., Sinclair, I., & O'Higgins, A. (2015). *The educational progress of looked after children in England: Linking care and educational data*. Retrieved on 23rd October 2017, from http://reescentre.education.ox.ac.uk/wordpress/wpcontent/uploads/2015/11/EducationalProgressLookedAfterChildrenOverviewReport_Nov2015.pdf

Smith, J. A., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, Method and Research*. Sage: London.

Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act (2014). London: HMSO. Retrieved on 20th December 2016 from <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2014/4/contents/enacted>

Stone, L. D., Underwood, C., & Hotchkiss, J. (2012). The relational habitus: Intersubjective processes in learning settings. *Human Development*, 55, 65-91.

Thomas, G. (2013). *How to do your research project: A guide for students in education and applied social sciences (2nd Edition)*. Sage Publications.

Trevarthen, C. (2010). *What is it like to be a person who knows nothing? Defining the active intersubjective mind of a new born human being*. Retrieved on 25th April 2018, from www.psych.uw.edu.pl/lasc/Trevarthen2.pdf

Trevarthen, C. (2011) 'What young children give to their learning, making education work to sustain a community and its culture.' *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 19(2), 173-193.

Wales Audit Office. (2012). *The educational attainment of looked after children and young people*. Retrieved on 19th December 2016, from, http://www.audit.wales/system/files/publications/The_educational_attainment_of_looked_after_children_and_young_people_English_2012.pdf

Welsh Assembly Government (2007). *Towards a stable life and a brighter future*. Retrieved on 3rd November 2017, from, <http://gov.wales/docs/caecd/publications/110317stableen.pdf> on 24.01.17.

Welsh Government (2015a) *Children looked after at 31 March by local authority, gender and age*. Retrieved on 19th December 2017 from stats.wales.gov.uk/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/Social-Services/Childrens-Services/Children-Looked-After

Welsh Government (2015b) *Pupil Deprivation Grant: Essential guidance*. Retrieved on 19th December 2017, from gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/150323-pdg-essential-guidanceen.pdf

Welsh Government (2016a) Wales Children in Need Census, 2015. Retrieved on 19th December 2017, from gov.wales/docs/statistics/2016/160309-wales-children-need-census-2015en.pdf

Welsh Government (2016b). *Raising the ambitions and educational attainment of children who are looked after in Wales – the Strategy*. Retrieved on 19th December 2016 from, [http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/deprivation/educational-attainment-of-looked after-children/?lang=en](http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/deprivation/educational-attainment-of-looked-after-children/?lang=en)

Welsh Government (2016c). *Raising the ambitions and educational attainment of children who are looked after in Wales – Action plan 2015-2016*. Retrieved on 19th December 2016, from, [http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/160127-lac-action-plan- en.pdf](http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/160127-lac-action-plan-en.pdf)

Welsh Government (2018). *Wales Children Receiving Care and Support Census, 2017 (Experimental Statistics)*. Retrieved on 10th April 2018 from, <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/wales-children-receiving-care-support-census/?lang=en>

Zetlin, A. G., Weinberg, L. A., & Shea, N. M. (2006a). 'Improving education prospects for youth in foster care: the Education Liaison Model'. *Intervention in school and clinic*, 41(5), 267-272.

Zetlin, A. G., Weinberg, L. A., & Shea, N. M. (2006b). 'Seeing the whole picture: views from diverse participants on barriers to educating foster youths.' *Children and schools*, 28(3), 165-173.



Examining Looked After Children's (LAC) Lived Experiences of Secondary School

Part 3: Major Reflective Account

Word Count: 5,978

Introduction

This critical appraisal is presented in two sections. The first section provides an overview of the present research's contribution to the body of knowledge on the educational experiences of LAC in secondary school. This section is comprised of a summary of the gaps identified in the literature review, the rationale for the research question, the contribution of findings to knowledge and the relevance to EP practice.

The second section is a critical account of the development of the research and of the research practitioner. This section includes the inception of the research, carrying out the research, the researcher's epistemological and ontological position, methodological decisions and data analysis.

This critical appraisal is written in the first person to reflect that this section provides a reflective and reflexive insight into the development of the research and of the research practitioner. It is hoped that by reading my research reflections, the reader will have a greater understanding of why I made certain research decisions and how these ultimately led to what I consider to be a unique contribution to knowledge.

1. Contribution to knowledge

1.1 Inception of the research topic

The present research grew out of a personal interest in the educational experiences of LAC and observations I made during my first fieldwork placement as a trainee educational psychologist (TEP).

I became involved with a complex case involving a looked after child (LAC). The young person was 12 years old and had attended 5 educational provisions in 7 years,

experienced multiple exclusions and was at risk of permanent exclusion. He was academically very able and had a willingness to learn and future aspirations of being a mechanic. During individual work he articulated that he had found primary school “much easier”, “friendlier and caring”. He noted that in secondary school he had to “move around lots of different classrooms and meet lots of different teachers”, something he acknowledged he found difficult to manage.

I was saddened how a young boy with so much potential could have seemingly been let down by the education system. He had experienced so much trauma in early life, characterised by abuse and neglect and he now found himself in an educational system that was perpetuating those feelings of loss and rejection. Sadly, an increasing number of school placements for secondary aged LAC were breaking down within the authority.

Professional practice in relation to LAC is informed, at least in part, by attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969; 1973;1980), which led me to consider how primary schools more readily lend themselves to an ‘attachment friendly’ environment. By comparison, in secondary schools, pupils are asked to make multiple transitions, are taught by many different teachers and independence is encouraged.

Indeed, there is a plethora of books aimed at supporting LAC in education, based on the theoretical underpinnings of attachment theory (Bombèr, 2007; Bombèr, 2011; Bombèr & Hughes, 2013; Geddes, 2006). While I saw evidence of ‘attachment friendly’ practices within the primary schools I was working with, I was struck that this provision seemed to be tokenistic or non-existent in the secondary schools.

This led me to consider the educational experiences of LAC in secondary school and what could be done to support these young people more effectively.

1.2 Identifying and exploring gaps in the research literature

A review of the literature highlighted that there remained limited empirical consideration of the lived experiences of LAC in education, with previous research often focusing on why LAC in education underachieve (Harker et al., 2002; 2004).

More recently, two large scale studies were conducted by Sebba et al. (2015) in England and Mannay et al. (2015) in Wales. However, prior to this little was known about the factors that facilitated or limited the educational progress of LAC in the UK, from the perspective of the young people themselves.

The legal term 'looked after' is used to describe a heterogeneous group in which children are subject to a care order, but otherwise may be living in very different environments. I was struck that little attention appeared to be given to the individual nuances of the educational experiences of LAC and people were viewing LAC as a homogenous group. I believed that examining the lived experiences of LAC in education could provide valuable insight in to what could be done to support this population more effectively.

Furthermore, despite there being an accelerating movement towards the idea of children's participation in research, a review of the existing literature also highlighted that the views of LAC remained disproportionately underrepresented. Therefore, I felt it was extremely important to gather LAC's views and experiences of school, as they are experts in their own lives (Clark & Statham, 2005). I wanted to provide LAC with an opportunity to communicate their thoughts, feelings and experiences of school. Moreover, I wanted the young people to feel empowered by their participation.

1.3 Development of the research question

The critical review of the research conducted by Mannay et al. (2015; 2017) and Sebba et al. (2015) was key to narrowing down the research question.

The present research aimed to explore the lived experiences of LAC in secondary school. In line with the philosophy of IPA, there was one overarching research question, deliberately broad in nature, focused upon individual experience and sense making, rather than being driven by the pre-existing literature. Winter (2006) suggests that research which seeks the views of children is often constrained by adult-orientated measures. Therefore, I did not want the participants' responses to be limited by predetermined questions, based on my underlying assumptions. However, to prompt discussion, I constructed several open-ended questions with a selection of organised prompts. These questions were developed through a process of research, supervision and self-reflection.

1.4 Contribution of research findings to existing knowledge

The present research identified 4 super superordinate themes; *sense of belonging, relationships, exposure to judgement* and *foster care experiences*. These themes offer an interpretation of the young people making sense of their own experience and me making sense of their sense making.

1.4.1 Sense of belonging

The participant's discourses reflected on having a designated, safe and nurturing space, which I interpreted as helping to support their sense of belonging. Drawing upon attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969; 1973; 1980), it is suggested that the pastoral departments act as a secure base for these young people, providing both emotional and physical containment. Bombèr & Hughes (2013) argue that without the safety of a secure base, children are unable to develop the desire to learn and the cognitive focus necessary for successful learning.

The present findings suggest that the pastoral departments are fulfilling the role of what would typically be fulfilled by a stable family environment, by providing a nurturing, safe space, with emotional and practical support.

It is suggested that this sense of belonging is indicative of the secure attachment these young people have established with their respective schools. Bergin & Bergin (2009) posit that a secure attachment to the school (referred to as school bonding), encompasses a 'sense of belonging' to the school and the community within it. Smith (2006) discusses how 'attachment to school' affects the degree of commitment to and engagement with schooling felt by students. Strong or secure attachments reflect a sense of value and purpose in school whilst weak or insecure attachments to school reflect scepticism, indifference and/or hostility towards school.

1.4.2 Relationships

In line with previous research (Mannay et al. (2015; 2017; Sebba et al., 2015) the importance of establishing relationships with teachers and key adults in school featured strongly within all the young people's narratives. The young people identified feeling listened to and having staff available that supported them and understood their needs, to be factors that positively influenced their educational experience.

While establishing positive relationships with adults has been identified as important within the participant's lived experience of secondary school, the theoretical literature also highlights that these young people are also some of the hardest to maintain relationships with, at least in part, because of their attachment history (Bombèr, 2007; 2011 & Geddes, 2006).

The young people's narratives also highlighted some unique and potentially interesting links with *intersubjectivity*. According to Trevarthen (2010), a mother's responsiveness to her baby supports and develops intersubjectivity (a shared understanding), the basis of all effective communication, interaction and learning.

Research suggests that as babies, humans are biologically wired to “coordinate their actions with others” (Stone, Underwood & Hotchkiss, 2012). This ability to coordinate and synchronise with others facilitates cognitive and emotional learning through social interaction. The most socially productive relationships between children and adults are bidirectional (Stone, Underwood & Hotchkiss, 2012). Arguably LAC may not have had much experience of intersubjectivity with their primary caregivers and therefore it is suggested that their relationships with key adults in school may be offering this experience.

1.4.3 Exposure to judgement

Feeling exposed to the judgement of others featured particularly strongly within the participant’s discourses. In line with previous research conducted by Mannay et al. (2017) the participant’s narratives were imbued with feelings of wanting to be treated the same as their peers. Participants articulated that R.E was a particularly difficult subject, due to the focus on family and community. A sense of vulnerability and anxiety was interpreted through the participant’s narratives during these lessons.

Interestingly, while all the participants articulated how they wanted to be treated the same, their narratives also conveyed the importance of others showing an understanding of their needs as LAC, which arguably conflicts with their desire to be treated the same. This offers a further unique insight into the lived experience of LAC in secondary school and has not been highlighted in previous research.

Indeed, this raises interesting questions for professionals working alongside LAC, as to where the balance would be met between ensuring LAC do not feel singled out or different, but also acknowledging that they are likely to require individualised support.

1.4.4 Foster care experience

Encouragingly, and in line with previous research (Harker et al, 2004; Morgan, 2009; Mannay et al. 2015;2017; Sebba et al. 2015), participants reported that their entry in to care had, had a positive impact on their school experiences, through increased stability and improved attendance.

However, the participant's narratives emphasised that the care experience is inevitably an individual one. While four participants described positive experiences of foster care, two of the participant's narratives conveyed more negative experiences, imbued with feelings of frustration at being over protected.

Nathan's narrative was particularly reflective and insightful. While overall his foster care experience had been positive, and he acknowledged that his move in to care had, had a positive impact on his education, he discussed how he often thought about the life he would have had if he had not gone in to care.

I think that it is very important for professionals to be mindful that irrespective of the trauma they may have experienced with their birth families, LAC can feel a sense of loss for the life they thought they were going to have and they may need additional support to help them to process these feelings.

1.5 Contribution to future research

As discussed in the empirical paper a reasonable next step would be to triangulate the information by ascertaining the views of foster carers and designated teachers. Arguably triangulating the views of different stakeholders would highlight any variances in experiences and enhance our understanding. As posited by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009), "the exploration of one phenomenon from multiple perspectives can help the IPA analyst to develop a more detailed and multifaceted account of that phenomenon" (p.52). However,

triangulation of the data would dilute the voices of LAC and the identified gap in the research literature was that there was limited research which examined the lived experiences of LAC in education.

A larger sample to include LAC from across different LAs would help to determine whether the current research findings are representative of the wider population of LAC in Wales.

Adopting a longitudinal approach to capture the lived experiences of LAC in education over time would also enhance understanding. However, it is recognised that the transient nature of the ‘looked-after’ population can make adopting a longitudinal approach difficult.

1.6 Relevance to EP practice

Government statistics show that the numbers of LAC continue to rise (WG, 2018), consequently EPs are working with an increasing number of LAC. A review of the role of the EP by Farrell, Woods, Rooney, Squires and O’Connor (2006) suggested that EPs could provide a distinctive contribution to LAC’s lives. EPs play a key role in supporting LAC and are perfectly placed within LAs and schools to promote change at both an individual and systemic level. More specifically, when children enter the care system they arguably become a part of a large complex system, containing a range of agencies. EPs can use their knowledge of systems theory to help to ensure that LAC’s views are communicated effectively.

EPs also have the necessary skills and knowledge to provide evidence-based support, which could be used to inform policy and provision. Therefore, it is important that EPs conduct research to enhance understanding of the needs of this vulnerable group. Indeed, EPs are evidenced based practitioners and as a profession we should be changing and adapting our practice considering new research (Kelly, 2008).

As recognised by Smith et al. (2009) results of IPA analysis are subjective and cannot be generalised. However, they can be cautiously applied to professional practice, offering further insight and important detail to existing literature. Considering the current findings, some examples of work that could be facilitated by EPs have been highlighted within the empirical paper.

Finally, the research process has highlighted the challenges faced by professionals in accessing LAC in the first instance. While those supporting LAC are understandably protective of this group, this is creating potential barriers around an already hard to access group. This could result in the views of LAC becoming increasingly marginalised. Interestingly all of the participants included, valued and appreciated the opportunity to share their experiences of school and the time I gave, by visiting on two occasions.

It is felt that the current methodology has implications for professional practice. The interviews were conducted in two phases which arguably helped to establish a good rapport with the participants. Therefore it is suggested that professionals could adopt a similar two phased approach in establishing a rapport with these young people.

1.7 Strengths and limitations

The present research aimed to address an identified gap in the research literature, where the views of LAC on their educational experiences remain disproportionately underrepresented. Employing semi-structured interviews allowed for an in-depth examination of the lived experiences of LAC in secondary school and allowed me to explore the nuances in individual cases. Arguably pre-defined measures, such as a qualitative questionnaire, would have masked the complexity of the young people's individual experiences.

I identified that there was an overlap between my role as a researcher and my role as an applied psychologist. I was undertaking my fieldwork placement within the LA in which the data was collected. While I did not work directly with any of the participants in my role as a trainee EP, it is acknowledged that participants may have been aware of my trainee EP status and that I was undertaking my fieldwork placement within the LA. Consequently, it is recognised that this may have influenced the information the young people offered during the interviews.

It is also acknowledged that while the Head of Children's Services granted consent for the research to take place, there were additional 'gatekeepers' that I had to engage with. Eligible participants were identified through the LAs centralised database, through the support of the LAC co-ordinator. I then contacted all eligible participants' social workers and designated teachers directly. I acknowledge that the additional 'gatekeepers' may have granted access to those participants who they felt had, had positive experiences of school, as this would reflect favourably on the schools and LA. To try and control for this, I endeavoured to contact all eligible participants, as identified through the centralised database.

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

2.1 The epistemological and ontological position as a research practitioner

Prior to designing and carrying out the research, I had to decide what my ontological and epistemological position would be, as this would inform the research methodology.

My research was underpinned by a social constructionist paradigm. Social constructionists believe that knowledge is co-created through social processes and interactions (Burr, 2003; 2015). As posited by Gameson and Rhydderch (2008) within social constructionism, individuals are likely to "construct many different, sometimes conflicting,

but equally convincing ‘truths’ or ‘realities’, all of which may be accepted as appropriate, relevant and valid” (pg. 101)

Therefore, my ontological approach was relativist. This position emphasises the relative, subjective value of the data, rather than an absolute truth or validity (Willig, 2008). Relativism suggests that truth is related to an individual’s social, cultural and moral context and his or her previous experiences (Bryman, 2016). I maintained there would be multiple realities derived from the young people’s experiences of secondary school, rather than an absolute truth (Creswell, 2012).

My epistemological approach was subjectivist. I maintained that knowledge would be created through the interactions between myself and the young person during the semi-structured interview (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

However, I acknowledge that this position is subject to criticism, due to its level of subjectivity (Thomas, 2013), however I believe that this approach most suitably fitted the aim of the present study, which was to provide an in-depth examination of the lived experiences of LAC in secondary school.

A positivist approach would seek to measure a single, external reality using objective measures (Robson, 1993), which did not fit with my underlying assumptions. I maintain that a positivist approach would have limited my understanding of the participants experiences, as their responses would have been limited to structured questionnaires or objective observations. Moreover, while a positivist approach is perceived to be objective and value free, Robson (2011) argues that ‘reality’ is not viewed in the same way by all researchers and therefore it is not possible for research to be truly objective and value free.

I adopted Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as the data analysis, as it enabled me to examine how the young people made meaning of their individual lived experiences (Peitiewicz & Smith, 2012). IPA is phenomenological and assumes a

“philosophical approach to the study of experience” (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009, p.11) by drawing upon fundamental principles of phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography, all of which are in line with relativist ontology and subjectivist epistemology (Robson & McCartan, 2016).

2.1.1 Social constructionism versus social constructivism

As posited by Robson and McCartan (2016) social constructionist and social constructivist paradigms share certain assumptions, such as there being multiple realities and that individuals are purposefully involved in making sense of their worlds. Consequently, both fitted with the aims of the present study.

However, the terms differ in that social constructivists focus on how individuals construct and make sense of the world, while social constructionists consider the active role the researcher has in constructing a reality with the participant, through the research process.

I recognised that I would play a central role within the research process and therefore maintain that a social constructionist position most suitably fitted the aim of the present study. However, by adopting a social constructionist research paradigm, I was very aware of my own subjectivity and the possibility that my conscious actions (e.g. prompts, tone of voice, etc.) and body language could influence the research findings. Whilst my awareness of this arguably helped me to take steps to guard against this (e.g. being aware of her tone), on reflection I became aware of the possibility that unconscious reflexivity could have influenced the research process (Forshaw, 2007).

2.2 Methodological decisions

2.2.1 Qualitative rationale

As posited by Thomas (2013), constructionism is concerned with understanding the experiences of a specific sample. Therefore, research that adopts a constructionist position

readily lends itself to qualitative methods of data collection, such as interviews and focus groups (Robson & McCartan, 2016).

Moreover, authors such as Goddard (2000) suggest that the complex nature of LAC's experiences of education cannot be accessed through larger scale, quantitative research alone as it misses the nuances of the experience. Indeed, I had identified that what was missing from the research literature to date was the examination of the lived experiences of LAC in education and arguably you cannot limit the experiences of LAC to numerical values. Therefore, a qualitative research methodology was adopted.

However, I acknowledge the limitations associated with adopting this approach and the importance of criticality. For example, Fredrickson (2002) argues that qualitative research is incompatible with the concept of evidence-based practice due to small sample sizes and researcher bias, which limits the generalisability of the research findings.

Conversely quantitative research can include larger sample sizes, where measures of statistical significance and reliability can be used. Nevertheless, I maintain that a qualitative approach most suitably fitted the aims of the present research.

2.2.2 Measures

In line with the constructionist research paradigm adopted, individual, semi-structured interviews were used. Hefferon and Gil-Rodriguez (2011) posit that gathering good quality data for IPA requires a more open-ended interview structure, within which the researcher maintains a balance between guiding and being guided by the participant.

Moreover, previous research commissioned by the Welsh Government (WG) found that despite employing several different qualitative approaches to ascertain LAC's educational experiences, a core number of LAC chose to be interviewed (Mannay et al., 2015).

Employing semi-structured interviews, informed by an IPA approach, allowed the participants to talk about areas they constructed as important without being restricted to a strict interview schedule and enable exploration of topics that had not been previously discussed in the literature (Cohen & Crabtree, 2008). It also allowed for a deeper examination of the participants lived experiences of school and enabled me to explore the nuances in individual cases. This depth of meaning was essential in answering the research question and arguably would not have been achieved through focus groups or qualitative questionnaires. Furthermore, employing focus groups was not deemed ethically appropriate (Krueger & Casey, 2014), due to the vulnerability of the participant population. The interviews were conducted in person to enable a trusting relationship to be established (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012).

The first set of semi-structured interview questions were formulated based on existing research literature. However, following the transcription of the first round of interviews I realised that the questions needed to be more focused and explicit to effectively ascertain the experiences of LAC. It was felt that the first set of questions were too abstract and relied on incidental issues for LAC to arise. Consequently, the young people offered answers that you would typically expect from any young person. Upon reflection, the perceived vulnerability of the participant population may have contributed to me being over cautious when formulating the first round of interview questions. I acknowledged that to elicit the young people's lived experiences of secondary school as LAC, I would have to directly acknowledge their 'looked after' status within the questions. This was a critical point in my own development.

The second round of interviews allowed for a deeper exploration of initial themes identified during phase one. As posited by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009), adopting this approach allowed for a "more detailed and multifaceted account" of the participants

experiences of secondary school. I feel that that this two-phased approach, further demonstrates my commitment to ascertaining the voice of LAC to provide an in-depth account of their lived experiences of secondary school.

Nevertheless, it is acknowledged that an alternative approach would have been to formulate the semi-structured interview questions with a group of LAC as part of a pilot study. A pilot study would have helped to refine and develop the interview questions and to assess the practicalities, such as completion time and allowed for a period of reflection prior to data collection (Bryman, 2016). Although pilot studies are more often associated with positivist research, Sampson (2004) highlighted their relevance to constructionist research. Alternatively, I could have asked the participants to read their written transcripts and be involved in the collation and validation of themes, an approach recommended by Karnieli-Miller, Strier and Pessach (2009).

2.2.3 Participant recruitment

IPA is recognised as an idiographic approach concerned with understanding particular phenomena in particular contexts (Smith et al., 2009). In determining a sample size, Smith et, al. (2009) posit that “much depends on the research question and the quality of the data obtained” and “it is important not to see high numbers as being indicative of better work” (p. 52). However, as a novice IPA researcher, I required some guidance towards a suitable sample size.

Turpin et al. (1997) recommend the recruitment of 6 participants for an IPA study, as this allows for opportunity to investigate the similarities and differences between participant experiences without compromising on the richness of the data (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2012).

A small, homogeneous sample was required, and 6 LAC were recruited from one urban local authority. The LA in which the participants were recruited had the largest population of

LAC in Wales. The age range of KS3 was selected, as the majority of LAC in Wales are aged 10-15 years and the achievement gap significantly increases at KS3 and KS4 (WG, 2018).

Research with LAC can be fraught with difficulties, as the accessibility to LAC can be restricted and the co-operation of key stakeholders limited. Moreover, engagement from LAC can be low.

It took time to establish relationships with key stakeholders within the LA and these relationships were crucial in gaining informed consent from the Head of Children's Services. Key stakeholders were understandably protective of this population. Wider systemic issues also posed barriers in being able to engage with key stakeholders. Once informed consent had been obtained from the Head of Children's services, I required the support of key stakeholders to identify eligible participants.

Eligible participants were identified through a centralised database and I contacted the young people's social workers and foster carers. Despite numerous emails and phone calls, the engagement from the social workers and foster carers was minimal and did not lead to the recruitment of any young people.

Following supervision, I decided to contact the designated teachers in schools. The designated teachers were very supportive and engaged with me.

Interestingly, once I gained access to eligible participants, the young people (YP) welcomed the opportunity to sit down with me and talk about their educational experiences. This conflicts with researchers who have undertaken participatory research with children and young people (CYP) and have found that CYP are less engaged with research that involves "just sitting and talking to an adult" (Bagnoli & Clark, 2010, p.11). My interpretation of this was that LAC are used to having adults, some of whom they do not know, make decisions for

them rather than with them. Indeed, a sense of frustration at being over-protected was interpreted through some of the young people's narratives. Therefore, the opportunity to sit down with an adult and share experiences that were important to them may have been empowering.

However, I was mindful of the power relationship that forms during the research process, as discussed by Karnieli-Miller, Stier and Pessach (2009) and considered how this perceived power imbalance, may impact on the information that the participants chose to share with me during the interviews. Therefore, I wanted the participants to feel empowered and I employed various techniques to establish a rapport, including meeting informally with the young person and a familiar adult.

2.3 Data analysis

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was deemed the most appropriate method of analysis, as there was one research aim, broad in nature, which aimed to explore in detail LAC's personal and lived experiences of secondary school.

IPA is a recognised and established method in clinical, health and social psychology and aims to explore the meanings that participants assign to significant life experiences (Reid, Flowers & Larkin, 2005; Smith et al., 2009). While there is not a single, prescribed method, the process emphasises convergence and divergence, commonality and nuance (Smith et al., 2009). Central to IPA is hermeneutics, the theory of interpretation. As stated by Smith et al (2009) "the IPA researcher is engaged in a double hermeneutic, because the researcher is trying to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of what is happening to them" (p.3). As recognised by Smith et al. (2009) while the results or IPA analysis are subjective and cannot be generalised, they can be cautiously applied to professional practice, offering further insight and important detail to existing literature.

The possible limitations associated with this form of interpretive data analysis are acknowledged. For example, I was aware of my active role in constructing the themes that emerged from the data, which could have been subject to biases based on my role and experiences as a trainee EP. However, I wanted to stay true to the voice of the participants and their lived experiences and therefore consciously focused on the linguistic and descriptive comments to inform the emergent themes.

I also continually reflected upon the guidance by Smith et al. (2009) to try to ensure the analysis was rigorous and transparent. As a novice IPA researcher, Smith et al. (2009) was an invaluable resource. As advised by Smith et al. (2009), I kept a research journal to record any reflective and reflexive comments throughout the research process (Appendix 17). The journal was repeatedly referred to during the process of data analysis to ensure the interpretation was kept as close as possible to the participant's narratives.

In addition, I recruited another researcher to cross-examine my interpretation of the data and a meeting was held before the main themes were finalised to increase reliability and internal validity. Yet, it is recognised that I may have subconsciously chosen this person because they held similar viewpoints to me and would have been more likely to agree with the proposed themes. Arguably, this may have accounted for the unanimous interpretation of the data and using an independent researcher would have guarded against this.

Authors such as Yardley (2000) posit that for “researchers who believe that knowledge cannot be objective, but is always shaped by the purposes, perspective and activities of those who create it, the use of inter-rater reliability as a check on the objectivity of a coding scheme is meaningless” (p.218). Indeed, from an interpretivist approach it is plausible that even the most transparent qualitative method could be replicated and a different ‘reality’ emerge. Another researcher, who holds different beliefs and assumptions and has a different set life experiences, may interpret the data differently to me. Therefore, I recognise that the analysis

completed may not be the only possible way of interpreting the data. Although, the active role I had in collecting the data and the time spent immersing myself in the data, developing emergent themes and looking for convergence and divergence across the data set, has given me confidence in the interpretation and conclusions generated.

Nevertheless, other forms of data analysis were considered, for example Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). While thematic analysis is a flexible approach, which aims to provide depth of meaning to the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006), it was felt that it would miss the nuances of the individual experiences and therefore was excluded. Moreover, I had conducted thematic analysis as part of the courses requirement to complete a small-scale research project. Therefore, I was mindful not to limit my experience to one methodology.

Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was not deemed appropriate, as I had engaged with the research literature, and central to Grounded Theory is developing a theory from the data, as opposed to being directed by the research literature. In addition, within Grounded Theory the participant sample size is determined when saturation of information is reached (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and I was unsure if the participant pool would allow for a large enough sample. I was also conscious that the time scale did not readily lend itself to Grounded Theory and could have compromised the quality of the research. Moreover, while there are undoubtedly considerable overlaps between IPA and Grounded Theory, as identified by Smith et al. (2009), IPA aims to offer a “more detailed and nuanced analysis of the lived experience of a small number of participants with an emphasis on the convergence and divergence between participants” (p.202). Conversely, a grounded theory approach aims to use individual accounts to illustrate a theoretical claim (Glaser & Straus, 1967).

2.4 Ethical considerations

In accordance with guidelines from the British Psychological Society (BPS) (2009; 2018) and the Health Care Professionals Council (HCPC) (2016) there were fundamental ethical considerations that I was mindful to address during my ethical application.

Indeed, due to the vulnerability of the participant population, I anticipated that gaining ethical approval may be challenging. Therefore, I ensured that considerable attention was given to the ethical implications of working with this participant population and a detailed ethics proposal was submitted to the University's Ethics Committee. Surprisingly, this stage of the research process progressed smoothly, and ethical approval was granted following minor revisions.

During the recruitment stage, key stakeholders advised that young people would be unlikely to engage with the research, as there was no incentive for their participation. This raised ethical considerations, which were discussed through supervision. I felt that it was ethically not appropriate to offer an incentive, as this could be viewed as a bribe. I hoped that the opportunity to discuss their experiences of secondary school, with a view that the information could be used to inform practices and improve the educational experiences of their peers, would motivate young people to engage. Indeed, participants reported that they valued the opportunity to sit down and talk with me. Moreover, all the young people that were approached agreed to take part.

Due to the fluidity of the foster care system, I had to be mindful of sudden changes in a young person's circumstances and how this may change their eligibility to participate. For example, one young person was told that her foster carers had given notice, due to a change in personal circumstances and she would be moving foster placement. While this young person no longer met the inclusion criteria, I did not want the young person to experience further rejection by being told she could no longer participate. Therefore I still offered her

the opportunity to meet with me to share her experiences of school. However, in light of her personal circumstances, the young person chose to withdraw.

2.5 Reflections on the research process

I had to develop a level of resilience throughout the research process, most notably during the recruitment stage. This stage of the research process was undoubtedly the most challenging, as without the support of key stakeholders, the research would not progress. I had to strike a balance between being persistent, but also mindful of the wider systemic issues and my place within the system as a TEP. At times it felt as though my research had to be ‘marketed’ as being of benefit to the LA, before the research would be considered by key stakeholders. This was very frustrating, as I was passionate about ascertaining the voice of LAC.

Another critical point of personal development came during the data analysis. Hefferon and Gil -Rodriguez (2011) criticise an apparent lack of understanding that IPA is primarily an interpretive approach, and this results in broadly descriptive IPA that lacks depth. While I was conscious of ensuring my analysis was interpretive, I also battled with the idea of staying true to the young people’s experiences. I did not want my findings to be dominated by adult discourse. I discussed my concerns during supervision and consulted the IPA literature (Reid et al., 2005; Smith et al., 2009).

In the 1970s Noel Burch suggested that with any new learning, the learner goes through a process of unconscious incompetence, conscious incompetence, conscious competence and unconscious competence (as cited in Adams, n.d.). On reflection, it is plausible that as a novice IPA researcher, that my feelings of uneasiness with the analysis process was more a reflection of my conscious incompetence rather than the process itself. Therefore, if I were to

carry out IPA in the future, I do not think I would feel the same uneasiness with the analysis process.

Finally, I was very aware of my belief that attachment theory can help us to understand the difficulties faced by LAC in school. Therefore, it was very interesting for me to read Meins (2017) criticisms of attachment theory and to reflect on these. This research adopted a constructionist research paradigm and therefore the aim was not to imply that LAC's difficulties are due to attachment needs. However, I acknowledged that this was the view I held and following the guidance of Smith et al. (2009) I used a research journal to 'bracket off' any reflective and reflexive thoughts.

References

- Adams, L. (n.d.). *Learning a new skill is easier said than done*. Retrieved on 29th April 2018, www.gordontraining.com/free-workplace-articles/learning-a-new-skill-is-easier-said-than-done/
- Bagnoli, A. and Clark, A. 2010. Focus groups with young people: a participatory approach to research planning. *Journal of youth studies*, 13, 101–119.
- Bombèr, L. M. (2007). *Inside I'm Hurting: practical strategies for supporting children with attachment difficulties in schools*. London: Worth Publishing Ltd.
- Bombèr, L. M. (2011). *What about me? Inclusive strategies to support pupils with attachment difficulties make it through the school day*. London: Worth Publishing Ltd.
- Bombèr, L. M., & Hughes, D. A. (2013). *Settling to learn. Settling troubled pupils to learn: why relationships matter in school*. London: Worth Publishing Ltd.
- Bowlby, J. (1969). *Attachment and loss Volume 1: Attachment*. London: Penguin.
- Bowlby, J. (1973). *Attachment and loss Volume 2: Separation, anxiety and anger*. London: The Hogarth Press.
- Bowlby, J. (1980). *Attachment and loss Volume 3: Sadness and depression*. London: The Hogarth Press.
- Braun, V, & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 77-101.

British Psychological Society (BPS) (2009). *Code of Ethics and Conduct*: Leicester: BPS. Retrieved on 10th October, 2016, from www.bps.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/data_protection_act.pdf.

British Psychological Society (BPS) (2018). *Code of Ethics and Conduct*: Leicester: BPS. Retrieved on 12th March 2018, from [https://www.bps.org.uk/sites/bps.org.uk/files/Policy%20-%20Files/Code%20of%20Ethics%20and%20Conduct%20\(2018\).pdf](https://www.bps.org.uk/sites/bps.org.uk/files/Policy%20-%20Files/Code%20of%20Ethics%20and%20Conduct%20(2018).pdf)

Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods (5th Edition)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Burr, V. (2003). *Social constructionism*. London and New York: Routledge.

Burr, V. (2015). *Social constructionism*. London: Routledge.

Clark, A., & Statham, J. (2005). 'Listening to Young Children: Experts in Their Own Lives'. *Adoption & Fostering*, 29(1), 45-56.

Cohen, D., & Crabtree, B. (2008). *Qualitative research guidelines project*. Retrieved on 20th January 2017 from <http://www.qualres.org/HomeSemi-3629.html>

Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches (3rd Edition)*. London: Sage Publications.

Farrell, P., Woods, K., Lewis, S., Rooney, S., Squires, G., & O'Conner, M. (2006). *A review of the functions and contributions of educational psychologists in England and Wales in light of 'Every Child Matters: Change for children'*. Nottingham: HMSO.

Forshaw, M.J. (2007). Free qualitative research from the shackles of method. *The Psychologist*, 20(8), 478-479.

- Gameson, J., & Rhydderch, G. (2008). The constructionist model of informed and reasoned action (COMOIRA). Frameworks for practice in educational psychology: A textbook for trainees and practitioners, 94-120.
- Geddes, H. (2006). *Attachment in the classroom: the links between children's early experience, emotional well-being and performance in school*. London: Worth Publishing Ltd.
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company.
- Goddard, J. (2000). Research review: The education of looked after children. *Child and Family Social Work*, 5, 79-86.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. K., Denzin & Y. S., Lincoln (Ed). *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks CA: Sage.
- Harker, R. M., Dobel-Ober, D., Lawrence, J., Berridge, D., & Sinclair, R. (2002). Who takes care of education? Looked after children's perceptions of support for educational progress. *Child and Family Social Work*, 8, 89-100.
- Harker, R. M., Dobel Ober, D., Berridge, D., & Sinclair, R. (2004). More than the sum of its parts? Inter professional working in the education of looked after children. *Children & Society*, 18(3), 179-193.
- Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) (2016). *Standards of conduct, performance and ethics*. London: HCPC. Retrieved on 10th October 2016, from www.hpc-uk.org/publications/standards/index.asp?id=38
- Heffron, K., & Gil-Rodriguez, E. (2011). Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis. *Methods*, 24(10), 756-759.

- Jacob, S. A., & Furgerson, S. P. (2012). Writing interview protocols and conducting interviews: Tips for students new to the field of qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report*, 17(42), 1-10.
- Karnieli-Miller, O., Strier, R., & Pessach, L. (2009). Power relations in qualitative research. *Qualitative health research*, 19(2), 279-289.
- Kelly, B. (2008). Frameworks for practice in educational psychology: Coherent perspectives for a developing profession. In B. Kelly, et al. (Eds.), *Frameworks for practice in educational psychology – a textbook for trainees and practitioners*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Krueger, R. A., & Casey, M. A. (2014). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research*. Sage publications.
- Mannay, D., Staples, E., Hallett, S., Roberts, L., Rees, A., Evans, R., & Andrews, D. (2015). *Understanding the educational experiences and opinions, attainment, achievement and aspirations of looked after children in Wales*. Retrieved on 10th January 2017, from <http://gov.wales/docs/caecd/research/2015/151111-understandingeducational-experiences-opinions-looked-after-children-en.pdf>
- Mannay, D., Evans, R., Staples, E., Hallett, S., Roberts, L., Rees, A., & Andrews, D. (2017). The consequences of being labelled ‘looked-after’: Exploring the educational experiences of looked-after children and young people in wales. *British Educational Research Journal*, 43(4), 683-698.
- Meins, E. (2017). Overrated: the predictive power of attachment. *The Psychologist*, 30, 20-24.
- Morgan, R. (2009). *Life in children’s homes: a report of children’s experience by the Children’s Rights Director for England*. London: Ofsted.

- Pietkiewicz, I., & Smith, J. A. (2012). Praktyczny przewodnik interpretacyjnej analizy fenomenologicznej w badaniach jakościowych w psychologii. *Czasopismo Psychologiczne*, 18(2), 361–369.
- Reid, K., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2005). Exploring lived experience. *The Psychologist*, 18 (1), 20-23.
- Robson, C. (1993). *Real world research*. London: Blackwell.
- Robson, C. (2011). *Real world research: a resource for social scientists and practitioner researchers* (2nd Ed). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Robson, C., & McCartan, K. (2016). *Real world research* (4th Ed). Hoboken: Wiley.
- Sampson, H. (2004). Navigating the waves: the usefulness of a pilot in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, 4(3), 383-402.
- Sebba, J., Berridge, D., Luke, N., Fletcher, J., Bell, K., Strand, S., Thomas, S., Sinclair, I., & O'Higgins, A. (2015). The educational progress of looked after children in England: Linking care and educational data. Retrieved on 23rd October 2017, from http://reescentre.education.ox.ac.uk/wordpress/wpcontent/uploads/2015/11/EducationalProgressLookedAfterChildrenOverviewReport_Nov2015.pdf
- Smith, J. A., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, Method and Research*. Sage: London.
- Stone, L. D., Underwood, C., & Hotchkiss, J. (2012). The relational habitus: Intersubjective processes in learning settings. *Human Development*, 55, 65-91.
- Thomas, G. (2013). *How to do your research project: A guide for students in education and applied social sciences* (2nd Edition). London: Sage Publications.

Trevarthen, C. (2010). *What is it like to be a person who knows nothing? Defining the active intersubjective mind of a new born human being*. Retrieved on 25th April 2018, from www.psych.uw.edu.pl/lasc/Trevarthen2.pdf

Turpin, G., Barley, V., Beail, N., Scaife, J., Slade, P., Smith, J.A., Walsh, S. (1997). Standards for research projects and theses involving qualitative methods: suggested guidelines for trainees and courses. *Clinical Psychology Forum*, 108, 3-7.

Welsh Government (2018). *Wales Children Receiving Care and Support Census, 2017 (Experimental Statistics)*. Retrieved on 10th April 2018 from, <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/wales-children-receiving-care-support-census/?lang=en>

Willig, C. (2008). *Introducing qualitative research in psychology* (2nd Ed). Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Winter, K. (2006). Widening our knowledge concerning young looked after children: the case for research using sociological models of childhood. *Child & Family Social Work*, 11(1), 55-64.

Yardley, L. (2000). Dilemmas in qualitative health research. *Psychology and Health*, 15, 215-218.

Appendix 1: Gatekeeper Letter – Head of Children’s Services

Date

Dear

I am a postgraduate student in the School of Psychology, Cardiff University. As part of the Educational Psychology Doctorate programme, I am required to carry out a research project during Years 2 and 3. I am interested in examining Looked After Children’s lived experiences of secondary school. I am currently undertaking my placement with ***** Educational Psychology Service and therefore it is hoped that the proposed research will be used to inform the practice within the Educational Psychology Service.

A review of the literature has highlighted that generally there is a paucity of published research on Looked After Children (LAC) in education. Furthermore, while legislation and policy has long highlighted the importance of the participation of children and young people in the planning and decision-making processes relating to them, the views of LAC have not always been directly presented in the research literature. Therefore, the proposed research aims to address this gap in the literature by ascertaining the lived experiences of LAC in secondary school.

In order to be eligible to participate in the research, participants will need to meet the following criteria;

- ✓ Currently be classified as ‘Looked After’ by the local authority and have held this status for at least 6 months.
- ✓ Residing in a stable foster care placement for at least 6 months.
- ✓ Be on role at a secondary school within the local authority and have been for at least 6 months.

The research will require the eligible young people to attend a semi-structured interview with me that will last approximately 30 minutes. The interviews will take place in their school setting and the young people will be asked if they would like a key adult to be present. This could be an adult they know well in school or their foster carer(s).

During the interview I will be asking the young people to talk about their experiences of secondary school. I will not be asking any questions in relation to specific teachers or other professionals and if any names are mentioned these will be omitted from the transcripts.

The interviews will be voice recorded on a password-protected device, to which only I will have the password. All participants will be reminded that they are free to withdraw at any time and ask that any information they have contributed is removed, without explanation. Furthermore, participants can choose to make no comment on given questions and can withdraw at any time without any recriminations.

The voice recordings will be anonymously transcribed after 14 days of the interview. It is at this point that participants will no longer be able to withdraw their contributions, as they will no longer be traceable.

I am writing to enquire whether you would be willing to give your permission for me to carry out this piece of research within the local authority. Furthermore, as the young people I hope to work with are in the care of the local authority, I am also writing to enquire if you would be willing to provide informed consent to allow the eligible LAC to be contacted and asked if they would participate in the research.

If you agree for the research to take place and grant consent, all the eligible young people will be contacted via their social workers and provided with detailed information sheets and an assent form (please see attached). The young people's participation in the research is entirely voluntary and their informed assent will be documented on the attached assent form. The interviews will be arranged for dates and times that are mutually convenient.

I will send out a summary report of the general research findings to you and the Educational Psychology Service. A summary of the findings will also be included in a research report submitted to Cardiff University.

If you are happy for the young people that provide informed assent to be a part of this research project, I would be very grateful if you could please sign the attached consent form and return this to me on the email address below.

This research project is being supervised by Dr Ian Smillie, who can be contacted on the details below.

Should participants have any complaints, they can contact the secretary of the Cardiff University School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee (02920 874007; psychethics@cf.ac.uk).

Thank you in anticipation for your consideration of this project. Please do not hesitate to contact me (DougallRA@cardiff.ac.uk) if you require further information or have any questions, I would be happy to assist you.

Kind regards,

Rebecca Dougall
Trainee Educational Psychologist
School of Psychology,
Cardiff University
DougallRA@Cardiff.ac.uk

Dr Ian Smillie
Research Supervisor
School of Psychology
Cardiff University
Smillie@Cardiff.ac.uk

Appendix 2: Informed Consent Form - Head of Children's Services

School of Psychology, Cardiff University

Consent Form- Confidential

Please tick the box if you agree with the statement:

- ☐ I confirm that I have read and understand the information provided.
- ☐ I understand that the young people's participation in the research is voluntary.
- ☐ I understand that the researcher will contact all eligible participants.
- ☐ I understand that all eligible participants will be provided with detailed information sheets and assent forms.
- ☐ I understand that any personal information collected during the study will be kept confidentially until transcribed, at which point it will be anonymised.
- ☐ I understand that the anonymised information will be included in a research report submitted to Cardiff University.
- ☐ I understand that feedback around the research findings will also be made available to the Educational Psychology Service and myself.

I _____ consent to the implementation of the research conducted by Rebecca Dougall, School of Psychology, Cardiff University, under the supervision of Dr Ian Smillie. I also provide consent for the participation of the eligible looked after children currently in the care of the local authority, provided that the young person provides informed assent.

Signed:

Date:

Appendix 3: Information for prospective participants

Dear

My name is Rebecca and I am currently studying at Cardiff University to be an Educational Psychologist.

{insert photo}

An Educational Psychologist is someone who helps children and young people in school. One of the things I need to do for my course is a research project.

I am really interested in young people's experiences of secondary school. You have a special understanding of what secondary school is like for someone who is 'looked after'. Therefore, I would really like to hear your views on what school is like for you. It is hoped that the information I find out will be used to help young people like you in school.

I would be very grateful if you would talk to me, so I can find out more about how secondary school is for you. I am talking to other young people like you, to hear their views too.

What will happen?

- ✓ You will meet with me and we will chat about your experiences of secondary school.
- ✓ I won't be asking you to give me any names of your teachers or friends, but if you do say a name by mistake, don't worry! I will make sure no names are included when I type up our chat.
- ✓ We will spend about half an hour talking together about how school is for you.
- ✓ We will meet for our chat at your school.
- ✓ We will meet on a day and at a time that you would like.

- ✓ You can bring an adult with you if you want to and they can stay with you while we chat. This could be someone you know well in school or your foster carer.
- ✓ You will be able to leave at any time and you don't need to tell me why.
- ✓ I will be recording our chat on my iPad so that I can remember what we have talked about and, so I can type it up later.
- ✓ Only I have the password for the iPad, so no one else will hear the recordings.
- ✓ If I ask any questions that you don't want to answer, that's ok! You don't have to answer anything that you don't want to.
- ✓ You can ask me questions at any time.
- ✓ I will give you my email address and telephone number, so you can contact me if you have any questions about my project.
- ✓ If you change your mind and decide that you don't want the information you have shared with me to be included in my project, that's ok. I just need you to tell me you have changed your mind within 14 days of our chat. After this time, I will be typing up the voice recordings without using any names, so I won't know which answers were yours.
- ✓ The information I find out from you and the other young people will be included in my project for university, but the information will be anonymous- so nobody reading the report will know what you have said.
- ✓ Anything you say to me is confidential, so I won't be sharing anything you say about school with your teachers or foster parents, **BUT** if you share any information that suggests that you or someone else is at risk of harm, I will have to share this information with another adult. I will tell you if I have to do this and we can talk to another adult together.

If you would be happy to come and talk to me about your experiences of secondary school, please read the next page and sign your name at the bottom.



I look forward to meeting with you and finding out more about your time at school.

Rebecca Dougall
Trainee Educational Psychologist
School of Psychology,
Cardiff University
DougallRA@Cardiff.ac.uk

Dr Ian Smillie
Research Supervisor
School of Psychology
Cardiff University
Smillie@Cardiff.ac.uk

Appendix 4: Informed Assent

School of Psychology, Cardiff University Assent Form- Confidential

Please circle 'yes' or 'no' to the following statements:

- I have read the information sheet and asked any questions that I may have.

Yes   NO

- I understand that it is my choice if I want to take part.

Yes   NO

- I understand that taking part involves me talking to Rebecca about my experiences of secondary school, which will last about 30 minutes.

Yes   NO

- I understand that I can take a key adult with me if I want to and that they will stay with me while I talk to Rebecca.

Yes   NO

- I understand that I can leave at any time, without saying why.

Yes   NO

- I understand that the talk with Rebecca will be voice recorded on an iPad and that only she has the password, so no one else will hear the voice recordings.

Yes   NO

- I understand that I can ask for anything I say to be deleted without explaining why, within 14 days of me talking to Rebecca.

Yes   NO

- I understand that the voice recordings will be typed up without any names, after 14 days of my talk with Rebecca.

Yes   NO

- After this time, I understand that my answers will no longer be able to be deleted, as Rebecca won't know which answers were mine.

Yes   NO

- I understand that what I say will be kept private and only shared after it has had my name or any other details that could identify me taken out.

Yes   NO

- I understand that I don't have to answer anything that I do not want to and I can ask Rebecca questions at any time.

Yes   NO

- I understand that I will be provided with more information about the research and have another opportunity to ask any questions at the end of my talk with Rebecca.

Yes   NO

I agree to take part in the research conducted by Rebecca Dougall

Yes   NO

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date _____

Appendix 5: Debrief

Dear [insert name]

Thank you for coming to talk to me today and for helping me with my project!



I am really interested in finding out more about young people's experiences of secondary school. I have been going in to schools and chatting with other young people like you. I hope that by finding out more about what school is like for you, that adults will be better able to understand how they can best support young people who are looked after in secondary school.

Please remember that if you change your mind and you don't want your answers to be included in my project, you can email me and ask me to delete your answers up until _____ 2017. After this date I will have typed up the information without using any names, so I will not know which answers yours were.

I'm going to use the information I have found out through talking to you and the other young people in my research project for University. Remember no one will know what you said to me, as I won't be writing any names in my report.

If you think of any questions about my project you can email at the following email address DougallRA@Cardiff.ac.uk.

Or if you have any questions about my project and you don't want to ask me, you can also email my research supervisor Dr Ian Smillie at the following email address Smillie@Cardiff.ac.uk

If you want to talk to an adult about how it felt to talk to me today or about any of your answers, you can talk to *****. I understand that you know ***** already and he/she would be very happy to talk to you.

Your foster parent(s) and social worker also know that you have spoken to me today and they are also there to talk to.

Thank you again for coming to talk to me today

Rebecca ☺

Appendix 6: Information Sheet- Social Workers

Dear

I am a postgraduate student in the School of Psychology, Cardiff University and I am currently undertaking my placement with ***** Educational Psychology Service. As part of the Educational Psychology Doctorate programme, I am required to carry out a research project.

I am interested in ascertaining the views of Looked After Children (LAC) at KS3 on their experiences of secondary school. It is hoped that this piece of research will be used to inform the practice within the Educational Psychology Service.

The Head of Children's Services has already provided consent for this piece of research to take place. However, *[insert name]*'s participation in this research is entirely voluntary and [he/she] will be provided with a detailed information sheet about what the research will involve (please see attached). If *[insert name]* is happy to participate in the research, they will be asked to complete an assent form (please see attached).

The research will require *[insert name]* to attend an interview with me that will last approximately 30 minutes. The interview will take place in *[insert name]* school setting and *[insert name]* will be asked if they would like a key adult to be present. For example, this could be someone they know well in school or their foster carer.

During the interview I will be asking *[insert name]* to talk about their experiences of secondary school. I will not be asking any questions in relation to specific teachers or other professionals and if any names are mentioned these will be removed from the transcripts.

The interviews will be voice recorded on a password-protected device, in which only I will have the password. *[Insert name]* will be reminded that he/she is free to withdraw at any time and ask that any information that he/she has provided is removed, without explanation. Furthermore, *[insert name]* will have the right to refuse to answer or respond to any question that is asked of her/him during the interview. The voice recordings will be anonymously transcribed after 14 days of the interview. It is at this point that participants will no longer be able to withdraw their contributions, as they will no longer be traceable.

This project has received ethical approval from the University's Ethics Committee and will adhere to the ethical guidelines as outlined by the British Psychological Society (BPS).

The project will also be supervised by Dr Ian Smillie, School of Psychology, Cardiff University.

If you have any questions or would like any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me or my research supervisor on the contact details below.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Rebecca Dougall
Trainee Educational Psychologist
School of Psychology,
Cardiff University
DougallRA@Cardiff.ac.uk

Dr Ian Smillie
Research Supervisor
School of Psychology
Cardiff University
Smillie@Cardiff.ac.uk

Appendix 7- Information Sheet- Foster parents

Dear

I am a postgraduate student in the School of Psychology, Cardiff University and I am currently undertaking my placement with ***** Educational Psychology Service. As part of the Educational Psychology Doctorate programme, I am required to carry out a research project.

I am interested in ascertaining the views of Looked After Children (LAC) at KS3 on their experiences of secondary school. It is hoped that this piece of research will be used to inform the practice within the Educational Psychology Service.

The Head of Children's Services has already provided consent for this piece of research to take place. However, *[insert name]*'s participation in this research is entirely voluntary and [he/she] will be provided with a detailed information sheet about what the research will involve (please see attached). If *[insert name]* is happy to participate in the research, they will be asked to complete an assent form (please see attached).

The research will require *[insert name]* to attend an interview with me that will last approximately 30 minutes. The interview will take place in *[insert name]* school setting and *[insert name]* will be asked if they would like a key adult to be present. For example, this could be you or someone they know well in school.

During the interview I will be asking *[insert name]* to talk about their experiences of secondary school. I will not be asking any questions in relation to specific teachers or other professionals and if any names are mentioned these will be removed from the transcripts.

The interviews will be voice recorded on a password-protected device, in which only I will have the password. *[Insert name]* will be reminded that he/she is free to withdraw at any time and ask that any information that he/she has provided is removed, without explanation. Furthermore, *[insert name]* will have the right to refuse to answer or respond to any question that is asked of her/him during the interview. The voice recordings will be anonymously transcribed after 14 days of the interview. It is at this point that participants will no longer be able to withdraw their contributions, as they will no longer be traceable.

This project has received ethical approval from the University's Ethics Committee and will adhere to the ethical guidelines as outlined by the British Psychological Society (BPS).

The project will also be supervised by Dr Ian Smillie, School of Psychology, Cardiff University.

If you have any questions or would like any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me or my research supervisor on the contact details below.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Rebecca Dougall
Trainee Educational Psychologist
School of Psychology,
Cardiff University
DougallRA@Cardiff.ac.uk

Dr Ian Smillie
Research Supervisor
School of Psychology
Cardiff University
Smillie@Cardiff.ac.uk

Appendix 8: Semi-structured interview questions – first interview

Preamble

Thank you for coming to talk to me today.

My name is Rebecca and I am currently studying at Cardiff University to be an Educational Psychologist. It's a strange name, but an Educational Psychologist is someone who helps children and young people in school. One of the things I need to do for my course is a research project.

I am really interested in children's experiences of secondary school. It is hoped that the information I gather will be used to support children like you in secondary school, as you have a special understanding of what secondary school is like for someone that is looked after.

I'm just going to ask you to tell me what school is like for you. I may ask some questions to help you to tell me a bit more about what school is like for you. There are no right or wrong answers; I just want to hear about how school is for you.

Please remember that you don't have to answer any of the questions if you don't want to and you don't need to tell me why.

I will be recording our chat on my iPad, so I can type up your answers later. My iPad has a password, and only I know the password, so the recordings will be safe on here and no one else will hear them.

Please remember that you can ask for your answers to be deleted without telling me why within 14 days, however after this time I will be unable to delete your answers as I won't know which answers were yours.

The information I gather today will be included in my research report for University. I will be sending a summary of the general findings to the Educational Psychology Service, so they can use the information to understand how they can best support young people in school.

Remember that anything you say to me is confidential, so I won't be sharing anything you say about school with your teachers or foster parents, **BUT** if you share any information that suggests that you or someone else is at risk of harm, I will have to share this information with another adult. I will tell you if I have to do this and we can talk to another adult together.

Is that ok? Do you have any questions before we begin?

Semi-structured interview questions

In order to prompt discussion about the participant's experiences of secondary school, the following open- ended questions will be asked;

1. Can you tell me about what school has been like for you? I would like you to think about how you have found school, from when you began secondary school until now.

What has gone well?

What has not gone so well?

What have you enjoyed?

What have you not enjoyed?

What has helped you?

What has not helped you?

2. What does a good day at school look like?

Who was there?

What adults were there? What did they do?

What did your friends do?

What were you doing?

3. What does a bad day at school look like?

Who was there?

What adults were there? What did they do?

What did your friends do?

What were you doing?

4. If you could design the 'worst' secondary school, what would it look like?

What would the teachers be like?

What would the classrooms be like?

What would your friends be like?

5. If you could design the 'perfect' secondary school, what would it look like?

What would the teachers be like?

What would the classrooms be like?

What would your friends be like?

Appendix 9: Semi-structured interview questions – second interview

'It would be helpful to use your experience on being looked after to help me to think about what the experience of secondary school is like for looked after children and what they might need to help them'.

- What does being looked after mean to you?
- How has school been for you?
- What's starting secondary school like for a young person who is looked after? Is there anything that schools should be aware of? Could help them with?
- What advice would you give to a school about how to meet the needs of a pupil who is looked after?

How do you think being 'looked after' may impact on a young person's experience of secondary school?

Do you think being looked after has impacted on your experiences of secondary school?

If so,

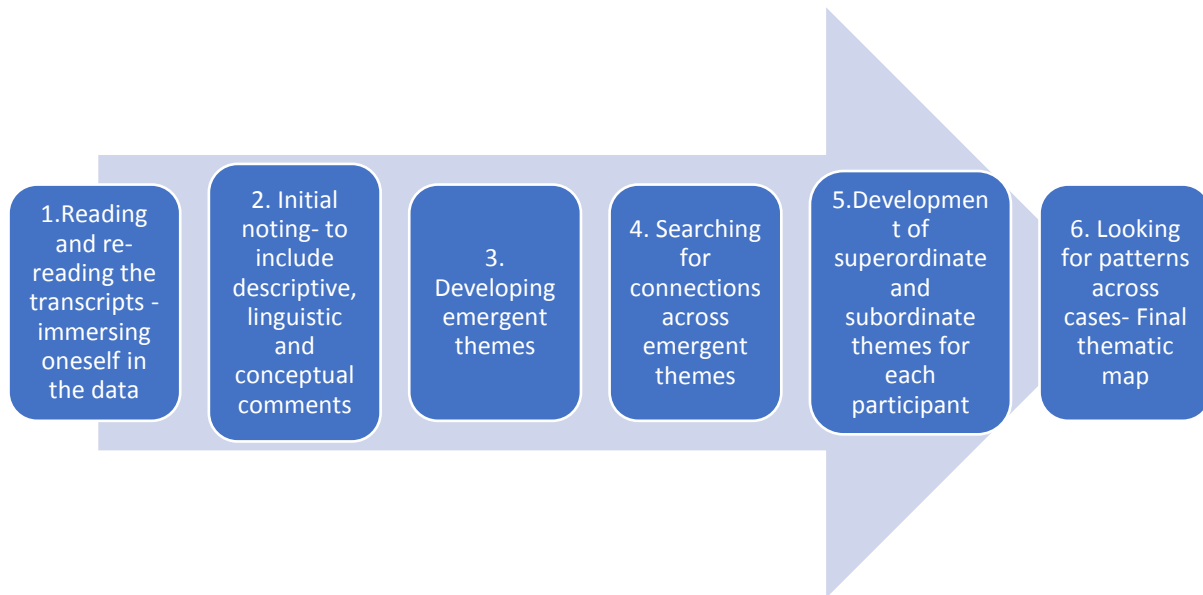
'In what ways?' 'Could you tell me about an example?'

How do you think teachers could support looked after children in secondary school?
How have teachers supported you in secondary school?

How do you think friends can support their looked after friends in secondary school?
How have your friends supported you in secondary school?

How important do you think the pastoral support in school is for looked after children in secondary school? How important has the pastoral support in school been for you?

Appendix 10: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis Procedure



Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009

Appendix 11: Table of database search terms and returns

Literature searches were conducted between January 2017 and January 2018*. However, the researcher remained mindful of research papers and policy documents that became available after this time.

'Looked after children' was searched both as a subject heading and as a keyword in the PsycINFO database. The search terms 'children looked after', 'foster care' and 'care leavers' were also included.

In addition to the more traditional databases, general searches were conducted using Google Scholar as well as library searches for books through the Cardiff University library service. General media searches using Google were also completed.

Due to the size of the literature base, not all research was included and was selected based on its relevance to the current study

Database	Search terms	Results
PsycINFO 1806-2018	Looked after children (keyword)	314
	Looked after children (title)	100
	Looked after children (keyword) AND education (keyword)	15
	Looked after children (title) AND education (title)	5
	Looked after children (title) AND school (title)	8
	Foster care (keyword)	5,207
	Foster care (title)	2,081
	Foster care (keyword) AND school (keyword)	501
	Foster care (title) AND school (title)	51
	Foster care (keyword) AND education (keyword)	66
	Foster care (title) AND education (title)	29
	Educational experiences (keyword)	2,166
	Educational experiences (keyword) AND looked after children (keyword)	1

British Education Index (BEI)		
	Looked after children AND education	67
	Looked after children AND school	51
	Foster care	230
	Foster care AND school	90
	Foster care AND education	128
	Educational experiences	7, 531
	Educational experiences AND looked after children	12
	Educational experiences AND foster care	14
	Educational experiences AND children in care	215
	Children in care	5, 546
	Children in care AND school	2, 552
	Children in care AND education	4, 031

*Search returns have been recorded from searches completed in December 2017.

Appendix 12: Superordinate and subordinate themes for all participants

Participant 'A'						
Relationships	Foster care experience	Pastoral support	The need to be understood	Exposure to judgement	Sense of belonging	Coping mechanisms
Support of her older sister during the transition-security	Optimistic about the future	A designated safe place	Frustration due to lack of understanding demonstrated by friends in primary school	Anxiety associated with being judged by others	Having a clear role and responsibility	School work as a distraction
Support provided by teachers	Future aspirations	Nurturing environment		Guarded about sharing too much information about the past	A desire to have a role and responsibility	Humour and laughter as a mask
Positive relationships with key adults	Increased independence	Free of judgement	Feeling understood by more friends in secondary school	Risk of being exposed to judgement if you share too much	The opportunity to come together with other foster children	Escapism through music and art
Importance of establishing friendships	Increased confidence	Emotional literacy support	Feeling understood by teachers in secondary school	Anxiety associated with not having anyone to talk to		Normalising being in care
Friendships support sense of belonging	Improved mental health	A second family	Acknowledging individual differences	Anxiety around teachers sharing information with parents		
Support from friends	Improved academic attainment		Anxiety associated with people saying things that could upset her about her past	Feeling exposed talking in school		
Importance of peer support	Increased emotional awareness		Teachers demonstrating understanding	Feeling less exposed talking outside of school		
Establishing a connection with your foster carer			Consideration of what is said in lessons	Importance of being treated the same		
The importance of having someone there if things go wrong						

The need for unconditional love			Peers demonstrating understanding			
Loyalty			Sharing her story			

Participant 'C'						
Foster care experience	Transition to secondary school	Relationships	The need to be understood	Sense of belonging	Exposure to judgement	Pastoral support
Increased stability		Support of teachers	Acknowledging individual differences	The opportunity to be introduced to the older students in school	Guarded about how much information you share	A designated space
Adult company	Isolated from old friends and family	Relationship with a key adult	Teachers demonstrating understanding	Support of the older pupils	Knowing who to trust	Emotional literacy support
Being taken care of	Fear of the unknown	Teachers holding him in mind	Importance of being treated the same as his peers	Importance of realising he wasn't going through it alone	Anxiety associated with being asked lots of questions	Nurturing environment
Given time	A period of adjustment	Teacher's communication styles	Peers demonstrating understanding	Opportunities to come together with other children in foster care		Time with the school councillor
Anxiety	Support of his sisters as important	Support of friends				Practical support with work
Negative impact on behaviour in school	Feeling intimidated by the older pupils	Teachers talking				

Participant 'N'						
Transition to secondary school	Relationships	Pastoral support	Coping mechanisms	Exposure to judgement	Foster care experiences	The need to be understood
Disruption and uncertainty	Importance of friendships	A designated place	School work and lessons as a distraction	Sensitive about birth family	Feeling over protected	Loyalty towards birth family
Feeling isolated from his old friends	Relationship with teachers	Nurturing environment	Having things to look forward to	Emotionally vulnerable	Feeling limited	Importance of teachers taking his problems seriously
Feelings of anxiety	Relationship with a key adult	Supported to make friends	Access to extra-curricular activities	Vulnerability in lessons	Future aspirations	Teachers to be mindful of topics covered in lessons
Feelings of loneliness	Warm and nurturing	Emotional literacy support		Vulnerability to bullying	Feeling jealous of what other children can do	Anxiety associated with being asked lots of questions
Urgency to make friends	Teachers putting pupils first	Access to practical support with work		Anxiety associated with people making fun of his past	Frustration with the care system	Importance of friends demonstrating understanding
Lack of consistency	Connection with foster carer				Opportunity to attend a better school	
	Support of friends					

Participant 'Co'				
The need to be understood	Foster care experiences	Exposure to judgement	Pastoral support	Relationships
Importance of being treated the same	Normalising being in care	Vulnerability to jokes	A safe place	Support from designated teacher
Teachers showing understanding	Feelings of anxiety and sadness associated with first going in to care	Feeling exposed to the judgement of others	A place to come together	Support of a best friend
Importance of friends treating you the same	Sense of loneliness when leaving old friends		1:1 support	Trust
			Supported to make friends	

	Improved school attendance			
	Sense of belonging			
	Disruption of siblings leaving the care placement			
	More opportunities			

Participant 'R'				
Relationships	The need to be understood	Foster care experiences	Exposure to judgement	Pastoral support
Support of the teachers	Construction of being looked after as being away from your family, as if on holiday	Birth family missing the opportunity to see you grow up	Feeling more comfortable meeting with her social worker outside of school or foster home	Emotional literacy support
More teachers who were supportive in primary school	Importance of being able to make own decisions	Feeling isolated	Anxiety about information being shared	A designated, safe place
Relationships with key adults	Teachers demonstrating understanding	Restricted financially due to foster care budgets	Feeling able to share more with her social worker, when talking outside of her foster home	Nurturing environment
Support of key adults	Importance of being treated the same as other children	Identity as being in care linked to self-worth		
Support of friends	Acknowledging individual differences	Foster care as a positive experience		
Support of other children in care	Friends demonstrating understanding			
	Teachers not to not make excuses for children in foster care			

Participant 'T'					
Transition to secondary school More transitions to make in secondary school Sense of confusion More people who understand her in secondary school Sense of loneliness being separated from her friends in school	Foster care experiences Sense of belonging Frustration with the care system Over protected Restricted Normalising being in care	Exposure to judgment Importance of being treated the same as her peers Sense of isolation Frustration with being treated differently Frustration associated with being asked lots of questions Feeling exposed to judgement Being exposed to judgement Vulnerability to bullying Anxiety associated with peers finding out about her past Importance of inclusion 'Us and them'	The need to be understood Frustration associated with peer's lack of understanding Staff being attuned to pupils needs Importance of maintaining normality Teachers demonstrating understanding	Relationships Support of friends Support from teachers A dislike of teachers shouting Relationship(s) with key adult(s)	Pastoral support A designated space Emotional literacy support Secure base

Appendix 13: Participant 'A': Exploratory comments and emergent themes

Emergent themes	Transcript	Exploratory comments
<p>The opportunity to make her own choices</p> <p>Hope for the future</p> <p>Increased independence</p>	<p>Ok, lovely. I'm just going to pop that there like last time (iPad). Ok, so, as I just touched on before I started the recording, it would be really helpful for me to use your experiences of school, as someone that is in foster care....</p> <p>Yeah</p> <p>.... to help me think about, how we might be able to make experiences of school a bit better for other young people in foster care and what they may need to help them or support them. So just to start, what does being looked after mean to you?</p> <p>It means having a new experience of a new life, so where I had a bad past, I'd be like, right ok, I can forget about that, I can make the choices that I want to make and now I can live my life as if I had a normal life anyways</p> <p>Ok, so it's been a positive experience?</p> <p>Yeah definitely</p> <p>And how has school been for you?</p>	<p>Repetition of the word 'new'</p> <p>Repetition of 'I can'- suggests a determination?</p> <p>Acknowledgement that she has had a bad past, but she can forget about that now</p> <p>Suggests foster care has given her an opportunity for a new life? Does she now feel she has more control over her life? Increased independence?</p> <p>Conveys a sense of hope for the future?</p> <p>Self-talk as a coping mechanism?</p> <p>What is her construction of a normal life? Would have been interesting to explore this</p> <p>Use of the word- definitely-strong word to use- Suggests she is sure of her position?</p> <p>Confirmation that she feels being in foster care has been a positive experience</p>

<p>Laughter to mask anxiety</p> <p>Importance of having fun with friends</p> <p>Frustration due to lack of understanding demonstrated by friends in primary school</p> <p>More friends who understand her in secondary school</p>	<p>School's fine, no problems <i>{laughs}</i></p> <p>In particular, what's secondary school been like?</p> <p>Urm... not that different from primary, it's still like you're at the young stage, where you're like 'yay I can have a little fun with my friends'. It's basically been the same throughout. But in secondary you get to have more fun. You have more friends that understand you. So, like in primary, when I was in my actual like real home and that, they would be like, "ohhh I don't understand you". I'd be like ok, "get out my way then". And now here, they are just like, yeah, I understand. "Come on let's go and do this, this and this"</p> <p>How do they understand you? What is it that they understand?</p> <p>It's just they like.... Well because most of them know how I've been treated and stuff, they'd be like "ah right ok", and some will say this around you. And then I'll tell 'em how I feel. But half the time I don't even have to tell them</p>	<p>Short, succinct response Laughing- perhaps nervous laugh? Lu</p> <p>Use of urm, pause- thinking/reflecting?</p> <p>Does the young stage she references reduce the level of responsibility/expectation?</p> <p>Quoting people- to strengthen her point?</p> <p>Acknowledgement that primary school is not that different to secondary school. Interesting that she has constructed primary and secondary school as not being that different, as she has talked about friends not understanding her in primary school and the frustration she felt towards them i.e. "get out of my way then", which would suggest that her experiences of primary and secondary school were different?</p> <p>Feels she has more friends that understand her in secondary school and she gets to have more fun – does she perceive secondary school to be more fun because she associates primary school with being in her parent's care?</p> <p>Feelings of aggression towards her friends in primary school because they didn't understand her, suggests people understanding her is very important to her?</p> <p>Use of they, them- plural- suggests a number of teachers know what she has been through?</p>
---	--	---

<p>Feeling understood by teachers in secondary school</p> <p>Anxiety associated with people saying things that could upset her</p>	<p>how I feel, as they can see it by my face. Because I'm very expression....able?</p> <p>Is it important to you, that people know what you've been through and understand?</p> <p>Most of the time I think it is, because they could say something that could get me upset and then I'd be like, oh right ok, and its running through my head the whole day..... <i>{inaudible}</i></p> <p>So, do you think for other young people in foster care, do you think it's important for people to know what they have been through?</p> <p>It doesn't really matter, but it depends on who you are, so like, if you're a person who gets upset easily by someone saying something, then obviously say to that person that you can't say this. But don't go in to too much detail. Just give them a brief overview</p>	<p>Hesitation as unsure of the word</p> <p>Her secondary school teachers know what she has been through, which supports their understanding of her?</p> <p>The teachers can just tell by her face how she is feeling, suggests a stronger/deeper connection with some staff?</p> <p>She will tell her secondary school teachers how she is feeling- suggests that she has developed trusting relationships with staff in secondary school? Why was she not able to tell her primary school teachers? Perhaps too close to the time of going in to care?</p> <p>It's important that people are aware of what she has been through, so they don't say things that could upset her- conveys a sense of anxiety?</p> <p>Suggests level of distraction with things running through her head all day? How does this impact on her school work? Would have been useful to explore this comment further</p> <p>Acknowledging individual differences Guarded about sharing too much information about the past. Sense of not being able to trust everyone? Suggests that you can protect yourself if you don't go in to too much</p>
--	---	---

<p>Guarded about sharing too much information about the past</p> <p>Risk of being exposed to judgement if you share too much</p> <p>Support of her older sister during the transition</p> <p>Importance of making friends</p>	<p>Ok so is it more individual to the person?</p> <p>Yeah, just because if you tell everyone and then it goes wrong in school. And they bully you and there are people that take the mick, but yeah you know, yeah.</p> <p>So how was starting secondary school for you? What was that like?</p> <p>It was... quite easy, even though there was only one person in the whole school, that was from my primary. But my sister came here, she was here when I was here. So, she's from, she's in foster care as well. Just gone to college. But, I, I like hung out with her for like a few weeks, until like I fell in, I fell in front of one of my best friends. And then we became like best friends because I fell over <i>{laughter}</i></p> <p>That' s nice you had your sister here</p> <p>Yeah, yeah</p> <p>And that helped the transition from primary to secondary school for you?</p> <p>Yeah</p> <p>And what do you think starting secondary school is like for other young people that are in foster care?</p>	<p>detail?</p> <p>Risk of being exposed to the judgement of others if you share too much. Has this been her experience? Has she confided in someone and they have taken the mick out of her or bullied her?</p> <p>Interesting that she has constructed the transition to secondary school as quite easy</p> <p>Only one person she knew from her primary school transitioned with her to secondary school</p> <p>Her older sister was in the same school – conveys a sense that it was reassuring to have her sister there? Sense of security?</p> <p>Hesitation and repetition- difficulty remembering the story?</p> <p>Repetition. Confirmation that she thought it was nice that she had her sister at school with her</p> <p>Further confirmation she felt having her sister there helped the transition from primary to secondary school</p> <p>Use of 'again'- reiteration. Suggests past experiences</p>
---	--	---

<p>Impact of past experiences on your emotional well being</p> <p>Anxiety associated with keeping things in and not having anyone to talk to</p> <p>Support of her sister reduced her anxiety about school</p> <p>A clear role and responsibility</p>	<p>Again, it depends on their past, like you can't really tell, like how a person's feeling, because they could be the most amazing person in the world, like, they could feel, they could feel amazing, but by their face they could look really sad. But also like, inside they could feel really sad, but on the outside, they just put a face on. So, you never really know, when it comes to other people. You just really know about yourself, but I think that, if I was in somebody else's shoes, that had like a past, where they just hid like everything, and they had no one to talk to... I would feel like they would be a bit more anxious n stuff. But because I had my sister, I didn't really feel that anxious.</p> <p>That's lovely that you had your sister here and that helped you to feel less anxious when you started secondary school.</p> <p>Yeah, yeah, it was</p> <p>Is there anything that you think secondary schools should be aware of, or anything they could be doing to help young people who are in foster care, when they start secondary school? Or as they move through secondary school?</p> <p>Urm.... <i>{silence}</i></p> <p>If you could give secondary schools some advice based on your experiences, what would that be?</p> <p>I know the schools already got something in place, but I don't think it's particularly for them it's for all pupils in school. I'm a part of this. It's the Duke of Edinburgh volunteering in the school. It like, you have these badges. I don't know where mine is <i>{laughter}</i>.</p> <p>That's alright...I misplace things all the time <i>{laughter}</i></p>	<p>have an impact on experiences of school</p> <p>Acknowledgement that you can't really tell how other people are feeling – is this confusing for her? Or does she put a face on?</p> <p>Repetition of really sad</p> <p>Anxiety associated with keeping things in and not having anyone to talk to?</p> <p>Having her sister there, helped her feel less anxious-shared experiences and someone to talk to, who she could trust? Sense of security?</p> <p>Confirmation having her sister at the same school, helped her feel less anxious</p> <p>Interesting use of 'particularly for them' - separating herself from the other children in care? is that because she feels she doesn't need the support?</p> <p>She has a role as part of the Duke of Edinburgh volunteering scheme in school as a Pupil Coach.</p> <p>Sense of responsibility? Conveys a sense of belonging, being a part of something?</p>
---	--	---

<p>A clear role and responsibility</p>	<p>We have these badges and it's called urm... a pupil coach. So, we'll have certain names given to us. We have a folder, like the names, and then we'll have why we need to talk to them and how to build them up and make sure that they get confident through our high school. So, I have two students, so do lots of other people in Duke of Edinburgh.</p> <p>And we'll start, we'll have like meetings with the student every Thursday to check how they are, and make sure that they're goals are being met. But instead of telling them what to do, we have to keep asking them questions, without giving advice. So, they kind of work their way through it on their own, not depending on us.</p> <p>Ok....</p> <p>So, we kind of help them in school in that way</p> <p>Ah ok, so do you think that's a helpful thing to have in place?</p>	<p>Clear role and responsibility</p> <p>She has been assigned two students, who she meets with every Thursday</p> <p>A desire to feel wanted/needed?</p> <p>Sense of belonging?</p> <p>Focus on building them up and developing their confidence – important to her? Does it help her to feel less vulnerable if she is helping other vulnerable pupils?</p>
<p>The importance of peer support</p>	<p>Yes, because if I was in the child's shoes, I would want that too. Because not only am I in year 9 and they could be a year 7. Like sometimes, they don't feel comfortable talking to teachers, just in case it does get fed back to parents. And then they can get a bit anxious about what their mum is like gonna say and stuff like that.</p>	<p>Acknowledgement that sometimes pupils don't feel comfortable talking to teachers about things, as they could tell their parents</p> <p>Importance of peer support?</p> <p>Suggests difficulties trusting teachers? Has a teacher fed something back to her mum?</p> <p>Conveys a sense of anxiety around her mum knowing things?</p>
<p>Pupils feeling uncomfortable talking to teachers</p>	<p>That sounds like a useful initiative to have in place in schools, that is helping a lot of young people. It's lovely that you are a part of it. Do you think there is anything else secondary schools could be doing to help young people in foster care?</p>	
<p>Anxiety around teachers sharing information with parents</p>	<p>{Silence}</p>	
	<p>Maybe something you have found helpful?</p>	<p>Use of urm, pause, - thinking/ reflecting?</p>

<p>Educating others on experiences of foster care</p> <p>Coming together with other foster children</p> <p>Sense of belonging</p> <p>Importance of friendships</p>	<p>Urm...</p> <p>If we were giving advice to another secondary school about how to support young people who are in foster care?</p> <p>Urm... I know that this hasn't, probably hasn't been done anywhere. But like, it might be a bit bias, but I don't know, it's just how, I think it should happen. There should be like a, urm, an assembly for like... say, for me for instance. Like I'm in year 9 and say there is a year 7 who is in care or a year 8. We should have like a lesson, where we can all like talk together. Like so, I would be giving a presentation at the front, and then I'd be like, what's your views and talk to them like. Instead of making them answer questions, so I'd be like, oh, put your hand up in you have any questions. They would ask me a question and if I feel after the assembly, I'll ask them like, "oh is everything ok, because of what you said. Do you need to speak to me?" Something like that. So, I think there should be like an assembly, where, maybe a foster kid, if they feel, like, very confident, but then they might not be in school, because there are different people in the world. But I do feel like there should be a foster kid assembly where they can talk to other foster kids. Instead of feeling alone. So, like they'll be sat in the hall and be like I'm not alone in this, I have got these people and maybe they would make new friendships and stuff</p> <p>Ah ok, so would this assembly just be for other children who are in foster care?</p> <p>Yeah... or if they have anything wrong at home, or they might be going in to foster care</p> <p>That's a nice idea...</p> <p>They can socialise too</p> <p>That's a really lovely idea. Is there anything else you can think of?</p>	<p>Educating others- an assembly or lesson for all the children in foster care, where they can come together and talk- A sense of belonging?</p> <p>A desire to have a role and responsibility? Wanting to help other young people with similar experiences? Does she want to be needed?</p> <p>A sense of control as the person delivering the presentation? Suggests a level of confidence that she would want to give a presentation?</p> <p>Acknowledgment that people are different and react differently</p> <p>Suggests that children in foster care can feel alone or isolated?</p> <p>An assembly could encourage the formation of new friendships</p> <p>The assembly to include children who have anything wrong at home and those who might be going in to care</p> <p>Opportunity to socialise together</p>
--	---	--

	<p><i>{Silence}</i></p> <p>That's ok, you've shared some lovely ideas. In terms of you experiences of school. You talked about how your experiences have been positive. What do you think has helped you have a positive experience of secondary school?</p>	<p>Having her sister in school really helped her, identified as the main thing that has helped her in secondary school.</p>
Support of her sister	<p>Mainly knowing my sister being in school. So, if something happened, I would be able to go to her. But even though she didn't help me, she helped me find my own way past it. So instead of her being like "oh well, ok don't do this", my sister would go talk to them and make sure they were all ok and stuff. I also think it was cause of the entrance I had with my friends. So, where I like fell over and then made a joke, I became best friends with this girl called * and then they'd be there like that little connection. She would go on telling a few friends of hers and then I'd be in the friendship group. I have been in the same friendships group for like 2 years now. So, it's all memories and stuff</p>	<p>Did she see her sister as a mother figure? Who would look after her and protect her?</p> <p>Importance of developing friendships and a connection with others – sense of belonging?</p> <p>Importance of shared experiences and memories</p> <p>She has been in the same friendship group for approximately 2 years, which conveys a sense of security and stability?</p>
Importance of developing friendships	<p>Ahh lovely, so you have shared experiences together...</p> <p>Yeah</p> <p>And how do you think being in foster care may impact on how a young person experiences school? What sort of impact do you think it can have?</p> <p>Again, it also depends on like who the foster carers are. Like, it different personalities in everyone. So, say that like the foster carer might be like, sarcastic but also has a joke and like, there's a good connection, like me and my family. Like we have a really good connection. Sometimes they annoy me, but that's fine (laughter). But, in my, there might be a problem with the placement sometimes, so that's when people get switched over. But it all depends on who they have the best connection with, cause if they have a really good connection then it's more likely for the child to be more confident</p>	<p>Use of the word again, reiteration.</p> <p>Acknowledgement that the type of foster carer has an impact on the experiences of school</p> <p>Suggests humour is important to her?</p> <p>The importance of having a connection with your foster carer/family</p>

160

Increased emotional awareness		emotions than hold them in?
	<p>So, you've talked about how important the foster placement is and how this can impact on young people's experiences of school</p> <p>Yeah because it could have multiple effects on you...</p> <p>Do you think being in foster care has impacted on your experiences of secondary school?</p> <p>Yeah, very. Cause if I was with my real family, I'd be more shy and more, I dunno. I just wouldn't be, in a way, like. Urm in a way, I wouldn't be as clean as I am, like my head wouldn't be as urm, like, clean and stuff. And where, if I was still with my real family, I would be like, head all over the place. I wouldn't be able to have the levels or grades I have now. And if, cause of, I am in care, I achieve more than I ever thought I would....</p>	<p>Further reiteration that the type of foster placement can influence young people's experiences of school</p> <p>Acknowledgement that foster care has increased her confidence and supported her mental health</p> <p>Use of the phrase real family – suggesting she sees her foster family as her family as well?</p> <p>Repetition of clean</p> <p>Hesitation, broken sentences. The use of urm and I dunno- suggests that she finds it difficult talking about her real family?</p> <p>Acknowledgement that her head would be all over the place if she was with her real family</p> <p>She feels she has achieved more, being in care, than she ever thought she would</p> <p>She has good levels and grades</p>
The impact of the foster placement on school experiences		
Increased confidence		
Improved mental health		
Achieving academically since being in care	Ahh that's lovely, so it's had a positive impact?	Short, succinct answer- suggests she is sure of her position

<p>Increased confidence since being in foster care</p>	<p>A very positive impact</p> <p>That's lovely to hear *</p> <p><i>Interview stopped for break time</i></p> <p>So just before we finished for break, we were talking about how being in foster care has had a positive impact on your experiences of school and that you're doing really well with your grades. I was just wondering if you had any examples of something that has gone really well in school that you would be happy to share with me?</p> <p>Urm, I mean, foster care has given me a lot of confidence and an example for that is, I actually went on stage in school, and sung in front of everyone.</p> <p>Oh wow! Tell me a bit more that...</p> <p>It was scary. It was like a talent show. So, you get ranked for like, talent. I think I came 2nd, but it was, I have never sung in front of someone before. I have sung in Egypt, but that was like a small crowd and I felt a bit more confident. But in school, there's like, loads more people, more than 300. Like singing in front of them, was like, really scary. But if I was still at home, like with my real family, I wouldn't have been able to do it. But I was able to do it and just go for it. So like foster care has given me a lot of confidence.</p> <p>And what do you think it is about foster care that's given you that confidence?</p> <p>To know that people are there. So, if it went wrong, I would still have people</p>	<p>The use of very preceding the word positive Being in care has had a positive impact on her experiences of school</p> <p>Being in foster care has given her a lot of confidence. Provides an example of going on stage in front of everyone</p> <p>She sang on stage as part of a talent show. She came 2nd. Acknowledgement that if she had been with her real family she would not have had the confidence to sing on stage.</p> <p>Use of the phrase real family – suggesting she sees her foster family as her family as well? Foster care has given her a lot of confidence</p> <p>The importance of having someone there if things go wrong</p> <p>Unconditional positive regard?</p>
--	---	--

<p>The importance of having someone there if things go wrong</p> <p>Unconditional love</p> <p>Normalising being in care</p>	<p>who would still love me for who I am. So, if it went wrong, I would have people teasing me, but I'd also have people who were, who would be like, oh don't worry about it...they are just being weirdos.</p> <p>That's a really lovely example of something that has gone well for you in school</p> <p>They all think its scary (foster care), but when I actually tell them I have been in care for 4 years, it's completely fine. They're like..." no way". I'm like, "yeah. What's different?" They are just adults who look after you. Like, in a better way than you would be (with your real family).</p> <p>If you can think back to when you were with your family and then you moved to foster care. Do you think your experiences of school changed?</p> <p>Yeah</p> <p>What was school like before?</p> <p>I barely went to primary because of my family. Urm, but I know that used to go in to school really upset and stuff. Like, just, even on days where it would all be fine. Like I would be really shy and feel disappointed in myself. Like for no reason. But like when I went in to care in year 5. It all like changed, I was a really happy student and my teacher even said, "you've changed" and I said, "yeah I know"</p> <p>Is there anything that school did to help you through that time? When you moved in to foster care?</p>	<p>They-plural- does she mean her friends or teachers? Foster care is just adults taking care of you. Normalising being in care? A need to help and reassure others?</p> <p>Acknowledgment that foster care are adults who look after you in a better way than your real family</p> <p>Acknowledgement that her attendance at primary school was affected when she was with her real family</p> <p>She was upset and felt shy and disappointed in herself when she was with her birth family</p> <p>Use of quoting people to support her point</p> <p>Acknowledgement that things changed for the better when she went in to care</p> <p>Impact of length of time in care? conveys a sense of the distance which may make it easier to talk about?</p> <p>Support of a teacher – individual sessions, to make sure</p>
---	--	--

<p>Poor attendance when with her real family</p> <p>Poor emotional wellbeing when with her birth family</p> <p>Things changed for the better when she went in to care</p> <p>1:1 support</p> <p>Protected time</p> <p>Privacy</p> <p>Feeling exposed talking in</p>	<p>I always spoke to this teacher. So, like I had sessions with her, to make sure that everything was ok. We would go out to like Starbucks and have a little talk. But she like, had permission for that. But she, like, even when I wasn't in care, she would help me. But when she knew that I was going in to care, it was more like, we will go out and do this, because you know, school is a very closed environment. You need to get out of it and...</p> <p>Was having that time important to you?</p> <p>Yeah. If I stayed in school, talking about it, I felt like people were listening. But when I was out, I felt more safe, safer talking to my teacher, because there weren't many people out at that time. Because it was school time.</p> <p>And there has been anything that's supported you in secondary school?</p> <p>I went to the Bridge. So, I had like a problem with a teacher, which I think I told you about (last time).</p> <p>Can you remind me?</p> <p>Geography teacher?</p> <p>Oh yes</p> <p>He called me something weird. And I went in to the Bridge every lesson I had him, so I didn't do geography at all. So, I am a bit weird at the moment with</p>	<p>she was ok.</p> <p>Importance of protected time with a key adult?</p> <p>Unconditional positive regard?</p> <p>Did the relationship become more important when she went in to care?</p> <p>Interesting construct of school being a closed environment. Would have been worth exploring this further. Why does she feel you need to get out of it?</p> <p>Self-conscious that people would be listening, she felt safer talking to the teacher outside of school</p> <p>Conveys a sense of escapism?</p> <p>Suggests that she may be distrusting of people in school?</p> <p>Support of pastoral department</p> <p>Conveys a sense that relationships with some adults can be difficult</p> <p>Difficult relationship with her geography teacher</p> <p>Acknowledgement that the difficult relationship with her teacher, is impacting on how she feels towards the lesson</p> <p>She used to access emotional literacy and resilience</p>
---	--	--

school	Geography. I used to go the Bridge and used to have these emotional... something help.... Urm EPL..... and then....	support
Feeling safer talking outside of school	Emotional literacy? Yeah, emotional literacy and then resilience. And then I did a bit of maths to help me. So, they like help me with my emotional stuff, so like, now I would be able to talk about something like this without crying	Repetition of help Acknowledgement that the emotional literacy support has helped her – I wonder why she doesn't access this provision now?
Support of pastoral department	So, do you think that's something important to have available in school? Yeah, this school is really different because they have the Bridge. Like, not many schools have somewhere where you can actually go. This one just has. Like, a place where you can go, tables where you can play games, teachers who understand...	Interesting how she has constructed her school as really different, as she has only attended one secondary school She feels the school is really different to other schools, as it has the pastoral department- The Bridge A designated, safe place?
Difficult relationships with some adults	If you were giving advice to another secondary school, what would you say to them about somewhere like the Bridge? Build an environment, like the Bridge. To be able to let students know that they do have somewhere to go without somebody being able to like, judge them. So like, it's a, the Bridge is in a closed off area. Like not closed off, but like, where not many people know. But like, if you wanted to talk to someone to get to that place, it's not hard to get there. They just know that there is a board, and its closed off, so if you want to talk about something, then you can talk. But if you want to start going to the Bridge, you have to go to Reception, where you ask for Miss *. And that's how I went in to the Bridge, my mum spoke to Miss * and I went in to the Bridge.	Importance of a designated, safe place, free of judgement? Hidden away from the main area of the school. Sense of privacy? Linked to feeling safe?
Emotional literacy and resilience support	Ok, so it's a safe place, where you can go, and you know you can get support?	It's not open to everyone Did her mum or her foster carer speak to Miss * (designated teacher)?
Importance of pastoral	Yeah. It's not somewhere where you would be scared to go. It's very cosy	Conveys a nurturing environment

support	and comfortable.	
	It sounds like a nice place to be able to visit.	
	Do you think that's something that's helped you in secondary school?	Use of the word definitely- suggests she is sure of her position
	Yeah definitely	Confirmation that she feels the pastoral department has helped her
Importance of pastoral support		
A safe place, free of judgement		Short, sharp sentence- suggests she feels strongly about this
	If we are thinking about other children who have experiences of foster care. What advice would you give to teachers about how they can help support these children?	
Nurturing environment	Watch what you say in lessons. I know that in R.E a couple of times, they've talked about something I don't like, and it's made me upset and I've been taken out of the lesson and I've missed out on key information. So, like my grades have gone down. So, what I would advise them to do is, is to, make awareness that there are people who are in care, but even if they didn't know about what happened, they should always be like, oh right ok. I'll be a bit more cautious about this. Instead of being like, going in to something in to detail. When you have a student in class, who is bawling their eyes out crying. And they then have to go the Bridge and miss the lesson. Like, think about what they say.	It's important for teachers to be mindful of what they are saying and the subject areas they are covering, notably in lessons like R.E
	I think that's really good advice and perhaps something professionals don't always think about... so thank you. It's important for us to recognise that people have very different experiences.	Suggests she is conscious of missing out on her learning-conscientious?
	Is there anything else that you think teachers could be doing?	Coveys a sense of frustration of being taken out of lessons? Acknowledgement her grades have gone down because of missing lessons.
		Short sharp sentence- further suggests she feels strongly about this

<p>Importance of teachers being mindful of what they say in lessons</p> <p>Frustration of missing lessons</p>	<p>Urm, just check on how the class is. Just like, say, at the end of the lesson, “so how was your day guys? Is everything ok?” And if somebody doesn’t answer, then speak to them individually at the end. And just make sure that everything is ok with all of them.</p> <p>But if like, that will encourage more students to be able to talk to teachers. Cause if one does it, they’ll be like, oh right ok. They can do the same too. I can go and speak to them. So, they should, ask how the students are. Watch what they’re saying in lessons. And maybe, one or two times a month, make sure, not just teachers, but like class mates understand that there are people in care and they need to watch what they say, so like give them a lesson on why people might be like in care and stuff. And just make sure they understand.</p> <p>Ok, so educate the other pupils?</p>	<p>Teachers should ask how students are, but as a class, not to single people out</p> <p>Suggests that she feels the relationship between teachers and pupils is important?</p> <p>Recurring theme that people need to be mindful of what they say</p> <p>Repetition- watch what they say in lessons</p> <p>Recurring theme of friends and teachers demonstrating understanding?</p> <p>A couple of times a month there should be a lesson for teachers and pupils on children in care. Suggests she feels it’s important that people are educated about the experiences of people in care?</p>
<p>Teachers demonstrating understanding</p> <p>Consideration of what is said in lessons</p> <p>Peers demonstrating understanding</p> <p>Educating others on experiences of care</p>	<p>Yeah, it’s not just educating them on students. But if you think about it, in English, it can also boost up. Because you can give vocabulary that can help your English. Say now, I’m doing an assessment, speaking and listening assessment in English about school pupils in the curriculum and stuff. Like that could help me with like, how, writing my essay’ oh students may feel this way because So, the school curriculum should be’ it cannot just educate them, but it can educate the actual, like essays and stuff they’re doing in English and stuff.</p> <p>I think that’s a very good point, thank you. As a young person in foster care, do you mind other people knowing?</p>	<p>The lesson would have a dual purpose because it would support the development of literacy skills- does she feel she needs to make the point that the lesson would have a specific educational purpose?</p>

<p>Educating others on experiences of care</p> <p>Sharing her story</p> <p>Trusting others</p> <p>Anxiety of others saying things that could upset her</p>	<p>I, I don't mind, I've said it to a few people, after, over the past four years. I've said a lot of my life story to, like, three people. But they know everything. But the others, all they know is like certain parts. So, I'm wary that they only know certain parts, in case they do say something else and they don't realise that it's linked. But I understand that the people that know the full story, sort of, they know what to say. And if somebody says something, they'll be like, ok, you're glad they didn't hear you, pipe down a little bit and stuff like that.</p> <p>Ok, so you don't mind people knowing...</p> <p>No, I don't mind</p> <p>but you have a few people that know more details?</p> <p>Yeah, I trust them</p> <p>That's lovely that you have friends you can trust</p> <p>So, if we're thinking about other young people in foster care, in other secondary schools and we had a few of their friends come in and they wanted advice on how to be a good friend, what sort of advice would you give them?</p> <p>Urm (pause), just be there for the person who's in care, because you never know, there could be something, something could be going wrong in the placement, they could be having a hard time getting over the past, and they could just be, stuck in the past. Or, like me, I have, sometimes flashbacks. So, I'm kinda stuck in the past still, but I'm getting over it. So just like be mindful</p>	<p>Hesitation</p> <p>Length of time in care – 4 years- conveys a sense of distance has helped her feel able to share her experiences?</p> <p>She has shared a lot of her life story to three people</p> <p>Suggests she has anxiety around people saying things that will remind her of her past? Battle between wanting to tell people to protect herself, but not having the level of trust that enables her to tell them?</p> <p>Confirmation she doesn't mind people knowing she is in care- is this linked to the length of time she has been in care?</p> <p>Suggests trust is important to her?</p> <p>Urm- hesitation- reflecting</p> <p>Important for friends to be there</p> <p>Repetition of the word past- suggests she is still stuck in</p>
--	---	---

Trust	<p>of what you say, just be there for the person, when nobody else is. Don't take somebody else's side when they think that you're their best friends and you, they love you loads and stuff like that, so.</p>	<p>the past?</p> <p>She has flashbacks of her past, she describes herself as stuck in the past</p> <p>Don't take somebody else's side- suggests loyalty is important to her</p> <p>Recurring theme of people being mindful of what they say- conveys how important this is to her</p> <p>Repetition of the phrase- just be there for the person</p> <p>Her friendships- Conveys a sense of stability, consistency</p> <p>Reiteration – that her friends have been there for her</p>
Importance of friends being there for her	<p>And how have your friends helped you?</p> <p>Been there.... they've been there. It's like, I've argued with them, but then like 5 seconds later, I'll be like, I'm so <i>soorrrry</i> (childlike voice). And they'll be the same with me, then we're all friends. There has not been a day where we've all separated. Like, I do have different friends around the school, and I'll hang around with them sometimes, because I don't want everyone to be like "oh well, she's staying with them, she's just, cuddled up with them" if we get to <i>that</i> person, then we can hurt her. So, I just wanna, like, I spread myself around a lot, but it's mainly a group that I'll like stay with. So instead of just sitting at a table at lunch then, I sat at the table with my friends and i said to them, so have you seen the new soap, de le le. Then all of a sudden, my boy best friend he was on another table, with my other best friend...</p>	<p>Does she not want to be dependent on one group of friends? Is it linked to trust? Does she need to feel wanted and needed by lots of people?</p> <p>Suggests that she is fearful people could hurt her through her friends?</p>
Being stuck in the past		
People to be mindful of what they say		<p>Acknowledgment that she spreads herself around a lot, but that she has one main group of friends- coping mechanism?</p>
Loyalty	<p>It sounds like you have lots of best friends, which is nice</p>	<p>Suggests she has lots of best friends?</p>

<p>Support of friends</p>	<p>yeah quite a lot (laughter)</p> <p>and I went over to his table and just started messing around for a bit. Like I'm going out with them on Saturday, just to make sure that the group, and my group of friends, know that I'm there for them, but I also have other friends. Just in case they're like 'well she can't do this' and they get jealous. But I went over to his table and started messing about like, "oh remember the group called de le le" and then I went back over to my other best friends table and they were like "oh hi, we haven't seen you in a long time" and I was like "yeah, I know, I've been spread about".</p> <p><i>Laughter</i></p> <p>It sounds like you're very popular</p> <p>Yeah (laughs)</p> <p>so, friendships are really important to you in school....</p> <p>Yeah, yeah</p> <p>Do you think your friendships have helped make your experiences of secondary school positive?</p> <p>Yeah, I'm quite a talkative person, if you haven't noticed. (laughs). Quite a talkative person, so I do make friendships quite easily, but then also I'm not the person to be like, "do this do that". I'm not bossy, I'm more laid back, and just, yeeaahh, that's funny (laughs). Just stuff like that so.....(tails off)</p>	<p>Suggests loyalty is important?</p> <p>Does she need validation from lots of different people? Perhaps suggests an insecurity with friendships?</p> <p>Repetition Confirmation her friends are really important to her</p> <p>Laughter- nervous? She describes herself as a talkative person – if she holds the conversation she is more in control? She can steer it in the direction she feels comfortable? Less threatening to her? Especially in light of her worries about people saying things that could remind her of her past?</p> <p>Describes herself as laidback and not bossy</p> <p>Laughter as a shield?</p>
<p>Sense of belonging</p>	<p>We've talked about the Bridge, and how important that's been for you.</p> <p>How important do you think that sort of support is for other young people</p>	

<p>She has made friendships easily</p>	<p>that are in foster care?</p> <p>Urm, important, there's not many people out there that would be able to talk to people like I do, urm, it just gives them, like, the Bridge is sort of like a family. To students who feel like they have no one, so Miss* and Mr *, they're like, they make you feel like you're a part of their family as well. So, like you're not alone. So, if you ever feel like you're alone, well just be like 'ah well Miss* and Mr *, they're there'. Even though they're like way older than us, not being rude (laughs). Even though they are like way older than us, it just makes you realise you have a friend and you're apart of somebody's family. Without even having to be related to them.</p>	<p>The Bridge is an important resource to have</p> <p>Interesting construct that she feels there's not many people out there that would be able to talk to people like she does – conveys a level of confidence?</p> <p>Mr and Mrs- parent figures?</p> <p>The Bridge is like a family, to students who feel like they have no one</p> <p>Repetition of word – family</p> <p>Acknowledgment that you don't have to be related to someone to feel apart of their family- is this an echo of how she feels towards her foster family?</p>
<p>Importance of pastoral support</p>	<p>The Bridge sounds like a lovely place to have in school, somewhere where you know you can go and people are there to support you and who make you feel part of their family.</p> <p>Just finally then, is there any other advice you would give to schools or staff about how they can help or support other young people in foster care? It sounds like you have had a positive experience of school....</p> <p>Yeah, yeah</p>	<p>Repetition</p> <p>Further confirmation she has had a positive experience of school</p>
<p>Sense of belonging</p>	<p>And I was just wondering if there was anything else that you think may help those young people that perhaps don't have positive experiences in school?</p> <p>I know people in care will be, I've been afraid of this for like a long time, but</p>	

<p>Feeling exposed to judgement</p> <p>People who are in care are no different to anyone else, they just have different experiences</p>	<p>I've kinda gotten over it. I know that there will be students who are in care who will be worried, that even adults will judge. So, just make it clear to like students who are in care, we are not gonna judge. We will just give you ways to move forward and.... we won't like to add to your fear. They just have to like, be there for the students, and just make sure that everyone understands that judging is wrong, especially for people in care. I'm not saying that people who are in care are any different to anyone outside, it's just they have different experiences and luckily some students who aren't in care, are still in a place where they don't wanna to be. So just, where people are judging, they have no way of speaking up, they're just too afraid to feel judged by anyone. It's just like the way this society has been working, really weird the past few years. Cause everyone is really opinionated and just stuck in the moment, where they just like 'oh well look at her <i>de le le le</i>', just make them aware that no one should judge and make sure they give views on why they shouldn't. Maybe that would change people's minds and the world would be a better place.</p> <p>I think that's a really valuable point, thank you, I think the society we live in can be very judgemental</p> <p>I know I have judged one person before and that's my best friend now (laughs), but I've never really judged anyone else. Like, I understand that they may judge me, but if I see someone and be like 'they look rough', I wouldn't just them, I'd just me like you look kinda rough, do you need any help with anything. I wouldn't judge them. I'm just giving the view if you get</p>	<p>Shares her worry that adults will judge her because she is in care- suggests that perhaps adults have judged her previously?</p> <p>Use of we and they- plural</p> <p>Separating herself- dissociation? i.e. people in care</p> <p>Judging is wrong</p> <p>Adults need to be there for the students</p> <p>Repetition of judge, judging and judged</p> <p>Interesting that she has constructed that judging is worse for people in care?</p> <p>Suggests she is afraid of being judged?</p> <p>Society described as really weird- everyone is opinionated and stuck in the moment</p> <p>People who are in care are no different to anyone else, they just have different experiences. Interesting that she uses the word lucky to describe students who aren't in care who are in places they don't want to be?</p> <p>Feels the issue of judgement is an issue with society and/or the world</p> <p>Acknowledgment that she has judged someone before, but that it was her best friend- suggests that its ok as she is her best friend now?</p>
---	--	--

	<p>what I mean. If I judged them, I would be like' well I don't like you, you look like a right weirdo', do you get what I mean?</p> <p>It's lovely to hear that you have had such a positive experience of school. You have made some lovely suggestions about things that could be put in place to support other young people in foster care to have more positive experiences of school, so thank you very much. I will just pause the recording now.</p>	<p>She gives an example of being honest with</p>
--	--	--

Appendix 14: Participant 'A': Superordinate and subordinate themes with supporting quotes

Superordinate themes Subordinate themes	Page/line number	Transcript extract
Importance of relationships		
Support of her older sister during the transition	1/7-8	<i>But because my sister used to come here, she's just left, so like I used to hang around with her group.</i>
	1/12-14	<i>I found secondary school easy because my sister came here. When I used to come up to see the school I used to be able to walk around and be like "Ah I know this class" so it used to be easy and I used to like, help everyone else</i>
	2/40-42	<i>It was... quite easy, even though there was only one person in the whole school, that was from my primary. But my sister came here, she was here when I was here.</i>
	2/56	<i>But because I had my sister, I didn't really feel that anxious.</i>
	4/114	<i>Mainly knowing my sister being in school. So, if something happened, I would be able to go to her.</i>
Support provided by teachers	1/15-18	<i>And in year seven they showed like loads of support. Because they knew that I was in care, they had to say that I was. They showed loads of support because like in a way I'm still not mentally strong if you know what I mean, like in ways.</i>
	1/22-26	<i>And if I'm ever upset and the teacher, they're really good at spotting it. If you're not crying they'll be like, "Are you okay?" they'll see. And that's how they helped, because they will take me out of class and be like, "If you don't want to sit in class I'm going to take you out of the class and we're going to talk about, I feel like you're upset," or whatever so.</i>
	1/40	<i>but like in a way they'll use their life experience to help you with yours.</i>
	3/85-86	<i>Yeah, like some of the teachers are really, if they see me crying they're like, "Right, I know what to do."</i>

Positive relationships with key adults	1/38-39 5/187-188	<i>And there's like two teachers there that are absolutely amazing. I know one of them. They won't talk to you unless they know you.</i> <i>I always spoke to this teacher. So, like I had sessions with her, to make sure that everything was ok. We would go out to like Starbucks and have a little talk.</i>
Importance of establishing friendships	2/59 3/103-104 4/118-119	<i>Making new friends. Because if I had the friends from primary I think I would be bored by now.</i> <i>Maybe they would make new friendships and stuff</i> <i>I became best friends with this girl called * and then they'd be there like that little connection</i>
Friendships support sense of belonging	2/71-72 4/119-120	<i>I have this little group where there's like E, R, C, N. There's like loads of them, but they're like really close friends</i> <i>Then I'd be in the friendship group. I have been in the same friendships group for like 2 years now. So, it's all memories and stuff</i>
Support from friends	8/274-275 8/281-283	<i>Just be there for the person who's in care, because you never know, there could be something, something could be going wrong in the placement</i> <i>Been there.... they've been there. It's like, I've argued with them, but then like 5 seconds later, I'll be like, I'm so sooooo (childlike voice). And they'll be the same with me, then we're all friends. There has not been a day where we've all separated.</i>
Importance of peer support	3/80-81	<i>Yes, because if I was in the child's shoes, I would want that too. Because not only am I in year 9 and they could be a year 7. Like sometimes, they don't feel comfortable talking to teachers</i>
Establishing a connection with your foster carer	4/126-128 4/134-135	<i>Again, it also depends on like who the foster carers are. Like, it different personalities in everyone. So, say that like the foster carer might be like, sarcastic but also has a joke and like, there's a good connection, like me and my family. Like we have a really good connection</i> <i>So, it depends on who the carers are and what sort of connection they have.</i>

	4/130-132	<i>But it all depends on who they have the best connection with, cause if they have a really good connection then it's more likely for the child to be more confident and like more, social able.</i>
	4/132-134	<i>... but whereas if they have a bad connection, they could feel like lonely, because they don't have anyone to talk to, except for like one of their friends, but if they don't have any friends, how can they talk to someone.</i>
The importance of having someone there if things go wrong	5/172-173	<i>So, if it went wrong, I would have people teasing me, but I'd also have people who were, who would be like, oh don't worry about it...they are just being weirdos.</i>
The need for unconditional love	5/171-172	<i>So, if it went wrong, I would still have people who would still love me for who I am.</i>
Loyalty	8/277-279	<i>Just be there for the person, when nobody else is. Don't take somebody else's side when they think that you're their best friends and you, they love you loads and stuff like that, so.</i>
Foster care experiences		
Optimistic about the future	1/18	<i>But the school has helped loads with that, so I can be who I want to be now</i>
	6/225	<i>I like to look forward, I don't like sort of look backward.</i>
	1/9-10	<i>It means having a new experience of a new life, so where I had a bad past, I'd be like, right ok, I can forget about that</i>
	5/184-186	<i>But like when I went in to care in year 5. It all like changed, I was a really happy student and my teacher even said, "you've changed" and I said, "yeah I know"</i>
Future aspirations	7/234	<i>I have two things. I want to be a singer. Or a beautician</i>
Increased independence	1/10	<i>I can make the choices that I want to make</i>
Increased confidence	5/160-161	<i>Urm, I mean, foster care has given me a lot of confidence and an example for that is, I actually went on stage in school, and sung in front of everyone.</i>
	5/166-168	<i>Like singing in front of them, was like, really scary. But if I was still at home, like with my real family, I wouldn't have been able to do it. But I was able to do it and just go for it. So like foster</i>

		<i>care has given me a lot of confidence.</i>
Improved mental health	4/149-151	<i>Yeah, very. Cause if I was with my real family, I'd be more shy and more, I dunno. I just wouldn't be, in a way, like. Urm in a way, I wouldn't be as clean as I am, like my head wouldn't be as urm, like, clean and stuff. And where, if I was still with my real family, I would be like, head all over the place.</i>
Improved academic attainment	4/152-153	<i>I wouldn't be able to have the levels or grades I have now. And if, cause of, I am in care, I achieve more than I ever thought I would....</i>
Increased emotional awareness	4/142-144	<i>So, if somebody said something, then I would be strong enough to be able to hold it back. I would just be there crying in the moment. But it's better for like, everyone to have the emotions out.</i>
Pastoral support		
A designated, safe place	1/29-30 6/211-213	<i>It's like a safe community.</i> <i>Yeah, this school is really different because they have the Bridge. Like, not many schools have somewhere where you can actually go. This one just has. Like, a place where you can go</i>
Nurturing environment	5/184-185 5/185-188 6/211-212 6/214	<i>Like nice...a comfy area where there's seats where you can just sit if you're upset and then you can have like an iPad or something where you can just like watch something, take your mind off it.</i> <i>Then have like a few tables at the front, have like a whiteboard, have like certain seats around the area where you could talk with your friends, have like some alone time or you can just like play some certain games and stuff like that.</i> <i>Like, a place where you can go, tables where you can play games, teachers who understand...</i> <i>Yeah. It's not somewhere where you would be scared to go. It's very cosy and comfortable.</i>
Free of judgement	6/216-220	<i>To be able to let students know that they do have somewhere to go without somebody being able to like, judge them. So like, it's a, the Bridge is in a closed off area. Like not closed off, but like, where not many people know. But like, if you wanted to talk to someone to get to that place, it's not hard to get there. They just know that there is a board, and its closed off, so</i>

		<i>if you want to talk about something, then you can talk.</i>
Emotional literacy support	1/21-22 1/32-33 6/207-209	<i>Like the Bridge down there. The Bridge is like if I'm upset, you can just go there, or I have lessons that are like emotional or literacy helping on that as well</i> <i>And the Bridge is just to help support and just make sure that you're getting on okay with your life. And if you're not, then they'll give you some support no matter how small it is.</i> <i>So, they like help me with my emotional stuff, so like, now I would be able to talk about something like this without crying</i>
A second family	9/310-313 9/313-115	<i>The Bridge is sort of like a family. To students who feel like they have no one, so Miss* and Mr *, they're like, they make you feel like you're a part of their family as well. So, like you're not alone. So, if you ever feel like you're alone, well just be like 'ah well Miss* and Mr *, they're there'.</i> <i>It just makes you realise you have a friend and you're apart of somebody's family. Without even having to be related to them.</i>
The need to be understood		
Frustration due to lack of understanding demonstrated by friends in primary school	1/19-21	<i>So, like in primary, when I was in my actual like real home and that, they (friends) would be like, "ohhh I don't understand you". I'd be like ok, "get out my way then".</i>
Feeling understood by more friends in secondary school	1/18-19 2/21-22	<i>But in secondary you get to have more fun. You have more friends that understand you.</i> <i>And now here, they are just like, yeah, I understand. "Come on let's go and do this, this and this"</i>
Feeling understood by teachers in secondary school	1/23/24	<i>It's just they like.... Well because most of them know how I've been treated and stuff, they'd be like "ah right ok"</i>
Acknowledging individual differences	2/51-53	<i>Again, it depends on their past, like you can't really tell, like how a person's feeling, because they could be the most amazing person in the world, like, they could feel, they could feel amazing, but by their face they could like look really sad.</i>
Anxiety associated with people saying things that could upset her about her past	1/29-30	<i>Because they could say something that could get me upset and its running through my head the whole day.....</i>

	7/261-263	<i>So, I'm wary that they only know certain parts, in case they do say something else and they don't realise that it's linked. But I understand that the people that know the full story, sort of, they know what to say.</i>
Teachers demonstrating understanding	1/24-26 7/240-242	<i>It's just they like.... Well because most of them know how I've been treated and stuff, they'd be like "ah right ok", and some will say this around you. And then I'll tell 'em how I feel. But half the time I don't even have to tell them how I feel, as they can see it by my face.</i> <i>Just like, say, at the end of the lesson, "so how was your day guys? Is everything ok?" And if somebody doesn't answer, then speak to them individually at the end.</i>
Consideration of what is said in lessons	6/210-213 7/230-231 7/232-235	<i>You know, just please be aware not to say a certain thing. And they were understanding. And I know that in RE the other day, it's like something we have to learn about for our GCSEs. And they said something, like he said a word and I was there, I froze. And all I could feel was everyone turn at me.</i> <i>Watch what you say in lessons. I know that in R.E a couple of times, they've talked about something I don't like</i> <i>So, what I would advise them to do is, is to, make awareness that there are people who are in care, but even if they didn't know about what happened, they should always be like, oh right ok. I'll be a bit more cautious about this. Instead of being like, going in to something in to detail.</i>
Peers demonstrating understanding	7/246-249	<i>And maybe, one or two times a month, make sure, not just teachers, but like class mates understand that there are people in care and they need to watch what they say, so like give them a lesson on why people might be like in care and stuff. And just make sure they understand.</i>
Sharing her story	7/259-260	<i>I, I don't mind, I've said it to a few people, after, over the past four years. I've said a lot of my life story to, like, three people. But they know everything.</i>
Exposure to judgement		
Anxiety associated with being judged by others	9/325-326	<i>I know that there will be students who are in care who will be worried, that even adults will judge. So, just make it clear to like students</i>

	9/331-332 9/334-335	<p><i>who are in care, we are not gonna judge.</i></p> <p><i>So just, where people are judging, they have no way of speaking up, they're just too afraid to feel judged by anyone.</i></p> <p><i>Just make them aware that no one should judge and make sure they give views on why they shouldn't.</i></p>
Guarded about sharing too much information about the past	1/33-35	<i>It depends on who you are, so like, if you're a person who gets upset easily by someone saying something, then obviously say to that person that you can't say this. But don't go in to too much detail. Just give them a brief overview</i>
Risk of being exposed to judgement if you share too much	1-38-39	<i>Yeah, just because if you tell everyone and then it goes wrong in school. And they bully you and there are people that take the mick, but yeah you know, yeah.</i>
Anxiety associated with not having anyone to talk to	2/55-57	<i>But I think that, if I was in somebody else's shoes, that had like a past, where they just hid like everything, and they had no one to talk to... I would feel like they would be a bit more anxious n stuff</i>
Anxiety around teachers sharing information with parents	3/82-84	<i>Like sometimes, they don't feel comfortable talking to teachers, just in case it does get fed back to parents. And then they can get a bit anxious about what their mum is like gonna say and stuff like that.</i>
Feeling exposed talking in school	6/194	<i>Yeah. If I stayed in school, talking about it, I felt like people were listening.</i>
Feeling less exposed talking outside of school	6/195-196	<i>But when I was out, I felt more safe, safer talking to my teacher, because there weren't many people out at that time. Because it was school time.</i>
Importance of being treated the same	9/328-329	<i>I'm not saying that people who are in care are any different to anyone outside, it's just they have different experiences</i>
Sense of belonging		
Having a clear role and responsibility	2/67-68 2/70 2/71-72	<p><i>I'm a part of this. It's the Duke of Edinburgh volunteering in the school. It like, you have these badges.</i></p> <p><i>We have these badges and it's called urm... a pupil coach</i></p> <p><i>We have a folder, like the names, and then we'll have why we need to talk to them and how to build them up and make sure that they get confident through our high school</i></p>

	2/74-75	<i>We'll have like meetings with the student every Thursday to check how they are, and make sure that they're goals are being met.</i>
A desire to have a role and responsibility	3/96-100	<i>Like so, I would be giving a presentation at the front, and then I'd be like, what's your views and talk to them like, instead of making them answer questions, so I'd be like, oh, put your hand up if you have any questions. They would ask me a question and if I feel after the assembly, I'll ask them like, "oh is everything ok, because of what you said. Do you need to speak to me?"</i>
Coming together with other foster children	3/94- 96 3/102-104	<i>There should be like a, urm, an assembly for like... say, for me for instance. Like I'm in year 9 and say there is a year 7 who is in care or a year 8. We should have like a lesson, where we can all like talk together</i> <i>But I do feel like there should be a foster kid assembly where they can talk to other foster kids. Instead of feeling alone. So, like they'll be sat in the hall and be like I'm not alone in this.</i>
Coping mechanisms		
School work as a distraction	2/64-66	<i>It's like the schoolwork's definitely helped. Like if I'm upset I'll focus on something and I'll be like, "Oh, this is interesting" and just like it'll take my mind off stuff and I won't think about it later if something's changed my mind or whatever.</i>
Humour and laughter as a mask	2/72-73 2/76-78	<i>So, if they see me upset they know, like they could just say one word and I'd be hysterical laughing.</i> <i>They said like, what was it, if you like watch this comedy thing and it made us laugh and he was like pretending to be like a worm who wouldn't believe someone. So, he was like, he used to say something in like a weird voice. So, they said it to me and I would be hysterical on the</i>
Escapism through music and art	3/101-105	<i>It's like art you can express your feelings and how you just want to show everyone that you can do something, not just be that person everyone thinks, "Oh, she can't do that." You just want to show people what you can actually do. And in music you can just let yourself go. So, you can block everyone out, put your headphones in or something and you can just like do whatever you want on the keyboard</i>

Appendix 15: Participant ‘K’: Exploratory comments and emergent themes

Emergent themes	Original transcript	Exploratory comments
Foster care has provided more stability	<p>Ok *, so I've just started the recording. It would be really helpful for me to use your experiences to help me to think about what school is like for other looked after children and what they may need to help them. So just to start with, what does being looked after mean to you?</p> <p>Urm it's more, having stability, I mean going from being in, living with my parents, there was a lot of, urm, {sigh} not a lot, not a lot of stability there, because they were working or urm, they'd be doing something, so I'd, I'd have to sort of, be a lot more independent. With this, urm, a lot of stuff is done for me, urm, also as I'm older than other sort of kids in care, I am more independent, I make my own room, I tidy my room, I look after myself, I get the bus. Urm, so, it's not all, urm, all, sort of done for me in that sense. But I'm like, when it comes to meetings and stuff like that, I don't have to be like, "oh let me ask my mum", they already know, my carers know. It's just a lot better.</p> <p>So, it's really interesting that you used the word stability and you have talked about your independence. Do you think being in foster care has been a positive experience for you?</p>	<p>Key: Green – linguistic comments Red- descriptive comments Blue- conceptual comments</p> <p>The use of urm and a sigh, suggests a difficulty in articulating what was going on at home and how that felt? Or perhaps he didn't feel able to share this with the researcher?</p> <p>There was a lot of instability at home. Foster care has provided more stability</p> <p>Repetition of 'not a lot'</p> <p>Repetition of the word stability</p> <p>Repetition of the word independent</p> <p>He is more independent then other children in foster care. Independence is important to him?</p> <p>Internal conflict between being 'looked after' versus independence?</p> <p>Has he placed an expectation on himself to be more independent because he feels he is older than other</p>

Foster care has provided more stability	Yeah definitely, I mean when I first went in to care it was hard, but that's, I needed that sort of, that stability for me, at that point. Urm, yeah. It was, it was positive.	children in care?
	That's good and how has school been for you?	Acknowledging coming in to care was hard
	Urm amazing, they've helped me ridiculous amounts. Err, they, the staff in the Bridge helped me a lot, I used to have sessions there. Urm, they helped me with sort of my emotions and dealing with emotions and helping me express them to others, whether it be teachers, friends, urm. People who are just curious. Urm then you've got the teachers who, if you, if I tell them I've had a bad day or when I've had an argument with my mum or an argument with my carers, they take that in to consideration and be, like, really considerate. So, if I'm like, I can't, I'm stuck, they can tell I'm run down and tired and what not. They'll take it into consideration and they'll help me adapt to my school work or, urm, yeah.	Repetition of the word stability Hesitation and repetition - has his experiences of care really been positive?
Support of teachers in pastoral department		
Individual sessions		Very animated response. Use of words amazing and phrase ridiculous amounts
Emotional literacy support		Repetition of helped/helping
Consideration of teachers	That's lovely *, that's really lovely that you have that support in school And If we're thinking about other young people, that are in foster care, what do you think starting secondary school might be like for those young people?	Use of they- plural- suggests there a several teachers who have helped him?
	Nervous, I think especially when I went in to care and I was still in year 7. It was really nervous for me, because I was away from my family, I was away from like all my mates where I lived there, urm, it was very stressful for me as well, there was a lot of hard times there. But I	Help of teachers in pastoral department Teachers helped him to develop an awareness of his emotions and how to communicate these through individual sessions Repetition of consideration/ considerate The importance of teachers showing consideration and understanding. Importance of holding him in mind? Difference between teachers who inherently know when something is wrong and those that you have to tell?

<p>Transition to Year 7 at the same time as the transition in to care</p> <p>Isolated from friends and family</p> <p>Increased stability</p> <p>Having someone there</p> <p>Being taken care of</p> <p>Given time</p> <p>The opportunity to be introduced to the older students in school</p>	<p>think, having, having someone to go back to, having them always there, urm instead of, if I was living with my parents, they would be, I'd have to be on my own, for like half an hour until they came home from work, or whatever or what not. It was, it was nice to be there and have someone home there, they'll make you food and they'll ask how your day was and sit down and have a chat with you.</p> <p>So, do you think for young people starting secondary school who are in foster care, it can be quite a scary experience?</p> <p>Mm yeah definitely.</p> <p>Do you think then there is anything that schools should be aware of, when they are supporting young people who are in foster care?</p> <p>Urm, get them to sort of be in the same room. Most kids that come in to high school, they're nervous of, not necessarily the school itself, it's more the people in the school. Like the older students, urm, well I personally, it was the older students that scared me the most. Because they were older, you know, they were doing all these crazy things and messing around. Obviously, I was obviously quite small when I first came in to high school. Urm, but, them being a lot taller and more intimidating, sort of scared me and, you know, urm, made me want to isolate myself. So just to get...get the other schools</p>	<p>Transition in to c secondary school</p> <p>Repetition of the</p> <p>The use of 'really nervous and stre</p> <p>Acknowledgement</p> <p>Feeling nervous a family- feeling of</p> <p>Being on his own</p> <p>Confirmation tha people in foster c</p> <p>Foster care was a looked after, give</p> <p>Use of mm- refle</p> <p>Use of the word c</p>
---	--	---

Coming together to encourage friendships	to get them to sit down with the older kids, chat with the older kids, get them introduced, make friendships. Even, like, so if anything, ever happens to them or they get bullied or what not, they have the older kids to go to.	Feelings of being nervous and scared starting secondary school, because of the people, not the physicality of the school itself
Support of the older pupils	Ok, so the opportunity to be introduced to the older students in the school?	Older students – intimidating, older and taller
Risk of being bullied	Yeah... yeah	The use of 'I' and 'personally' and then 'they'
	What other advice would you give to a school about how they could meet the needs of the young people who are in foster care?	Repetition of obviously
		Bringing the older and younger pupils together, to encourage friendships
		The support of the older pupils if something were to happen
	Just be understanding that, like what they're going through is, is very traumatic. Urm, whether...there are obviously different people in care, with different circumstances and there are different reasons for being in care, but it's always, there is always something that's gone wrong, or something that makes them feel uncomfortable. Urm so, some schools can bombard them, and ask loads of questions or interrogation, which can make them feel really scared. Err, so frightened. Urm, other schools can take in to consideration, like this one, help you with other stuff urm like homework. I got loads of help with homework, after school clubs and what not. And the teachers are just really helpful.	Interesting construct that the older pupils would be able to help if something went wrong or someone was being bullied. Has that been his experience?
Importance of showing understanding and consideration		
Individual differences		Confirmation that the opportunity to be introduced to older students in the school would be helpful
Anxiety associated with being asked lots of questions		

<p>Practical support with school work</p> <p>Support of teachers</p>	<p>It was really interesting what you said about people asking lots of questions. Do you think that's something that schools should be mindful of, that actually sometimes asking lots of questions isn't the right approach to take?</p> <p>Yeah, yeah. I mean, you know, if, if the kid feels comfortable like answering the questions, but if they say, you can tell when someone's nervous and like, they can see your nervous. Some schools just carry on, we want to know as much as possible. But sometimes, it's not best for the child.</p> <p>And how do you feel about people knowing about your experiences of being in foster care?</p> <p>I mean, it depends, like, with me, it didn't really bother me too much. I mean when I first went in to care, I didn't really want to tell anyone, I didn't want anyone knowing, I wanted to keep it personal, but when, I realised there was other people in care, especially in my year there were a few of us in care, I knew, I sort of tried to open up more and get people to understand it's not all bad, but it's not all good. It's got its pros and cons. Urm, and I, I, I don't mind talking about it now, urm, it doesn't bother me, a lot</p> <p>And did it help you to know other people that were in care?</p>	<p>Importance of showing understanding about what they are going through</p> <p>Use of the word 'traumatic'- very emotive word</p> <p>Repetition of the word 'different'</p> <p>Young people will have different circumstances, but something has always gone wrong for them</p> <p>Use of words 'bombard' and 'interrogation'- strong words</p> <p>The use of 'some' and 'other'. Separating the practices in his school from the practices in other schools?</p> <p>Asking lots of questions can make others feel scared or frightened- does being asked lots of questions make him feel scared and frightened? How is he finding this experience of being asked questions?</p> <p>The school has taken his experiences in to consideration and has helped him with homework and after school clubs.</p> <p>Practical support versus emotional support?</p> <p>Reiteration that the teachers are really helpful</p>
<p>Anxiety associated with being asked lots of questions</p>		
<p>The need to keep things private initially</p>		

<p>Realising there were other people in care</p> <p>Trying to get other people to understand what he was going through</p> <p>Importance of realising he wasn't going through it alone</p> <p>Opportunities to come together with other children in foster care</p> <p>Shared understanding</p>	<p>Yeah, a lot. That's one of the main things, that sort of helped me to get through it. It was that I wasn't the only one going through this and feeling like this.</p> <p>Do you think then, that maybe there should be opportunities for children and young people who are in foster care to meet and share their experiences?</p> <p>Yeah, yeah. I mean, just to like, have a sit down with kids that have just come in to senior school. They may not even know anyone else in foster care. Like not necessarily to ask them so much to share their stories, but just to ask them how they are feeling, and you know, get them to sympathise with each other, as it helps more</p> <p>And how do you think being a young person in foster care, may impact on their experience of school?</p> <p>It can, especially if they've, they've not been in foster care since young, so they come in to school and they have just gone in to foster care up in year 9/year 10. That can affect their luck, because obviously year 9, year 10, year 11 you start your GCSE's. Throwing, having that offset, that offset, of going from normal and seeing your parents, or whoever you live with, to going to a family that you don't know, you don't know their rules. It can throw you off and sort of make you, um, mischievous, make you play up, you know. It depends on the person, how you react differently.</p> <p>Do you think you're experiences of being in foster care has impacted on your experiences of school?</p>	<p>Repetition of the word nervous</p> <p>Anxiety associated with being asked lots of questions</p> <p>Use of they and 'the kid' and 'the child'</p> <p>Not wanting to tell anyone when he first went in to care</p> <p>Realising that there were other people in care- in his year. This was a comfort to him?</p> <p>Being in care has its pros and cons</p> <p>Trying to get other people to understand what he was going through?</p> <p>Hesitation/stutter – would suggest that it is a difficult area to talk about?</p> <p>The importance of knowing that he wasn't going through it alone and experiencing those feelings</p>
---	--	--

<p>Uncertainty associated with going into care</p> <p>Impact on behaviour</p> <p>Individual differences</p> <p>School as an opportunity</p> <p>Support of teachers</p> <p>Teachers showing understanding</p>	<p>Urm, yeah, it's sort of opened my eyes up to like what this school can do for me, when it, when it comes to, like they know. Like Miss *, she is really supportive, urm, with me. Urm, you know, (hesitation) there are so many more other teachers who are supportive. Especially when it comes to care, they're always asking how I'm doing, how urm, like even if when some teachers have been away, urm, when they come back they'll be like 'how, how is it, back where you are living.' Like they know my story and they know, you know.</p> <p>It must be really nice to have those people around you, that check in with you and how you are. Can you think of any other examples of how your experiences of being in foster care may have impacted on your experience of school?</p> <p>Urm, I don't know, urm, I see it more, like just getting to the whole sort of school life, or high school life, when I first came here when I was in care and I first came back to school, I mean, coming, coming up to high school even if you're not in care is scary, you know, it's a big place, you don't know where you're going, you don't know your rooms, you don't know where to go, what lessons you will have, what the lesson, how much work you've gotta do and then, not, and then, on top of all school work you've got to do, going home to, maybe your parents, but then when you're in care going home to someone you <i>don't know</i>, it's, sort of similar thing, you know, you don't know their rules, you don't know the schools rules. Sort of, there's a lot of similarities when you go in to care, urm, with starting school</p> <p>That's interesting *, I hadn't thought about it like that.</p>	<p>Opportunities to sit down with other children in foster care who have started secondary school – emotional support?</p> <p>When they start secondary school, they may not know other young people in foster care The importance of being able to identify with other children in care?</p> <p>Interesting construct of effecting their luck? Does he feel it is better to enter foster care when you are younger?</p> <p>The normality of living with your parents</p> <p>Use and repetition of offset</p> <p>Different people will react differently</p> <p>Feelings of uncertainty and apprehension?</p> <p>Acknowledgement that it can impact on your behaviour</p>
--	---	---

Lots of uncertainty associated with starting secondary school	<p>It's interesting the comparison you make about the unknown of starting secondary school and how it's similar when you go in to care, as you don't know the family and their rules and what's expected of you. Thank you, that's a very interesting point. You've also touched on the importance of the support you have had from the teachers here. So, I was just wondering what advice you would give to teachers in other secondary schools, on how they can support young people in foster care in school?</p>	<p>School as an opportunity?</p> <p>Repetition of supportive</p> <p>The use of really preceding the word supportive</p> <p>Lots of hesitation- would suggest it is uncomfortable to talk about</p>
Similarities between going in to care and starting secondary school	<p>If you can see their struggling, urm, not even, not even with just the school work, but struggling in lessons, in other lessons, if you speak to other teachers and see that, see how they are, if you see them at break, at lunch and how, if they're, sort of not with a bunch, not with friends or anything. You just, just, if they do something wrong, if they play up, not to sort of, shout at them, or to be loud, like you know.... Urm just be nice, calm, I think that's what most kids need in care, just not to be shouted at, just nice, calm, considerate. And just speak to them like, like an adult, you know. Just to have that sort of connection with them.</p>	<p>Importance of being held in mind? The teachers knowing and understanding his story.</p>
	How have the teachers supported you here?	<p>Acknowledgment that starting secondary school is scary irrespective of whether you're in care or not</p>
Taking the time to ask if they're ok	They've, I mean obviously, urm, I speak differently to other children, like, different people have different accents, I was brought up rather to speak proper, and I was brought up to, I've sort of matured, urm so they obviously, some of the teachers can recognise that, speaking to me how I wanted, more mature, not as, not seeing me as any different to any other student, urm, which I've fully, like, like, agree with, I mean I'm no different to any other kid, whether I'm in care or not,	<p>Lots of uncertainty</p> <p>Repetition of 'you don't know'</p>
Adults not to be loud or shout		<p>A period of adjustment?</p>
Adults to be nice and calm		<p>Comparing the feelings of starting secondary school and it being unfamiliar to going in to care and a new family</p>

<p>The importance of showing consideration</p> <p>The importance of a connection with an adult</p>	<p>you know, just starting to, speak to me different, urm, and sort of, getting on my level and getting on how I was.</p> <p>Ok, so you think it's important for teachers to treat young people who are in foster care the same as they would any other young person?</p> <p>Yeah, yeah</p> <p>It was also interesting what you said about speaking to you on your level and speaking to you like an adult... do you think that's also important for teachers to think about?</p> <p>Yeah, yeah definitely</p> <p>That's really helpful, thank you. Ok so we've talked about how teachers can help young people in foster care, I was just wondering what you thought friends could do to support their friends in secondary school.</p> <p>What advice would you give them?</p> <p>Urm, Just be, just be really sympathetic, not too sympathetic that its patronising, just to be like sort of, really considerate and to understand that it's urm, it's a tough time, especially if you're arguing, and you don't get along with the carers, you don't like them, urm, it can be very, very urm, sort of, annoying and you know, you don't, you don't want to be there, you want to get away, you want to go and see, you might want to move away or run away and all this. Urm, and, it can have a big effect on your life, so like, it's, it's nice to have your friends about, so they just need to be there for you, even if you've done something stupid, they need to be</p>	<p>Similarities between going in to care and starting secondary school</p> <p>Repetition of 'struggling'</p> <p>Repetition of 'nice' and 'calm'</p> <p>The importance of showing consideration</p> <p>Taking the time to ask if they are ok</p> <p>Adults not to be loud or shout</p> <p>Adults to be nice and calm</p>
<p>Teachers talking to him on his level</p> <p>Importance of being treated the same</p> <p>Importance of being treated the same</p>		

<p>Importance of friends showing sympathy, consideration and understanding</p> <p>Importance of friends being there</p> <p>Friends consistently being there for him</p>	<p>there for you and tell you not to worry</p> <p>Ok so friends need to be there for you, to be considerate and try and understand what you're going through...</p> <p>Yeah, yeah</p> <p>And how have your friends supported you *?</p> <p>They've just, they've just been there for me, even when I've sort of, shouted at them or had an argument with them, they've always come back, and you know, said sorry. Even when they haven't had to, they've apologised for nothing. Urm, and, even when I feel stupid or I'm getting something wrong, they'll help me, even now, urm, they are there for me, just... whatever I'm going through with my family or my carers, they'll just be like, "ahh I agree" or "I have the same thing with my mum"</p> <p>Have you shared your experiences with your friends?</p> <p>Yeah yeah, urm, urm, yeah, I've shared a lot with them. They've been there, they've sort of made similarities and comparisons to their lives, urm, and just given me a lot of advice, which I needed</p> <p>It sounds like you have some lovely friends * that are there for you and you can talk to about what you're going through</p> <p>You talked a little earlier about the Bridge, and I was just wondering how important you thought somewhere like the Bridge was for young people who are in foster care?</p>	<p>The importance of a connection with a key adult/s</p> <p>Have his early life experiences harboured this need to be mature and independent? Was he brought up to be independent or did he have to be independent?</p> <p>Repetition of the word mature</p> <p>Repetition of "not seeing me any different" and "I'm no different"</p> <p>Whether he is in care or not, he is the same as any other child – suggests that I's important to him not to be treated differently because he is in care</p> <p>Teachers talking to him on his level- respect? Something around a power imbalance? Importance of being on the same level?</p> <p>Confirmation that it's important for teachers to treat young people in foster care the same as they would any other young person</p> <p>Confirmation that it's important for teachers to speak to pupils on their level and like adults – something about respect? Power balance?</p>
---	---	--

Friends normalising what he is going through	I mean, my personal experience, when I went in to care, at that point I didn't have many friends, as I had moved up and a lot of my mates had other friends, I, I was really isolated and didn't have a lot of friends, I was really alone. So, you know, one of the teachers came up to me, and said we've got the Bridge and you can go there at break and lunch, and I came in and sat down. They asked me if I wanted a tea or coffee, so it's sort of like, being like home. Asking me if I wanted anything, I was able to have a chat and they asked me if I was ok. There were also other kids that were in the same situation as I was, urm similar situations, or completely different situations, but, didn't have that sort of, those friends there for them. Urm, and there, you can play games with them and stuff like that, it built, it built friendships in there. So.... Yeah.	Importance of friends showing sympathy, consideration and understanding Acknowledgement of it being a tough time
Sharing his experiences with his friends		Does * get on with his carers? Does he not want to be there, and does he want to run away?
Advice from friends	And do you think that's an important place to have in other secondary schools? Definitely, yeah, I mean, if there wasn't, I, you know. Who knows, I would probably be out there not having any friends now Ok so it helped you develop friendships?	Hesitation and repetition- suggests that this is a difficult thing for him to talk about Importance of having friends that are there for you
Feelings of loneliness linked to moving in to care	Yeah, yeah	
Support of pastoral department		Friends being there for him, consistently.
Nurturing environment	Do you think there is anything else that the Bridge has helped you with?	Acknowledgment that he has pushed them away as a result of his behaviour, but they are still there
Coming together with other young people in	Urm, my confidence really, urm, just getting to speak to	What has made him feel stupid or what has he got

foster care	people, and getting to sort of, understand their troubles, understand what sort of problems they're going through	wrong?
Shared experiences		Friends normalising what he is going through?
Importance of developing friendships	Thank you, can you think of any other advice you would give to other secondary schools?	
	Urm, no, I, I can't really think of anything. It's just been a good time.	
	So, you've had a positive experience of school?	He has shared his experiences with his friends
Support to make friends	Yeah	Repetition and hesitation
	And what do you think has helped to make it positive?	Friends normalising what he is going through?
	Urm, just the whole school environment, I mean you know, it's not one of the biggest schools ever, but it's, especially when you first come in to it, it's very demanding, you think it's big, because obviously, when you're in primary it's not so big, you know it, when you go to high school its unfamiliar, you don't know anything, urm, you don't know whether to expect the work to be hard or easy. yeah. It's just, yeah. I can't think....	His friends have given him advice
Increased confidence	It's nice to hear that you have had a positive experience of school and thank you for sharing your experiences and your ideas. It's really helpful for me to think about what has worked for you and what could be put in place in other schools to support other young people to have a positive experience of secondary school.	Use of I and my personal experience
	Yeah	Feelings of isolation and loneliness linked to moving in to care
	I'm just going to pause the recording now	Nurturing environment? A safe place? like a home?

		<p>Being held in mind?</p> <p>Comforting to be around other children who were experiencing difficulties</p> <p>The importance of developing friendships?</p> <p>Playing games, escapism?</p> <p>Acknowledgement that the pastoral department helped him develop friendships. Reflective that he may not have friends now if it hadn't been for the support from the Bridge</p> <p>Confirmation that the pastoral department supported him to develop friendships</p> <p>Importance of showing understanding and empathy</p> <p>Repetition of understand</p> <p>Shared experiences?</p>
--	--	--

		<p>Reports that scho</p> <p>Confirmation tha school</p> <p>Acknowledgeme compared to prin</p> <p>The use of very p Feelings of uncer to expect</p>
--	--	--

Appendix 16: Participant 'K' Superordinate and Subordinate themes with supporting quotes

Superordinate themes Subordinate themes	Page/line number	Transcript extract
Foster placement experience		
Increased stability	1/5-7 1/15-16	<i>Urm it's more, having stability, I mean going from being in, living with my parents, there was a lot of, urm, {sigh} not a lot, not a lot of stability there, because they were working or urm, they'd be doing something, so I'd, I'd have to sort of, be a lot more independent.</i> <i>I mean when I first went in to care it was hard, but that's, I needed that sort out, that stability for me, at that point</i>
Adult company	1/34	<i>It was, it was nice to be there and have someone home there</i>
Being taken care of	1/34-35	<i>they'll make you food and they'll ask how your day was</i>
Given time	1/35	<i>and sit down and have a chat with you</i>
Anxiety	3/88-89	<i>Throwing, having that offset, that offset, of going from normal and seeing your parents, or whoever you live with, to going to a family that you don't know, you don't know their rules.</i>
Negative impact on behaviour in school	3/90-91	<i>It can throw you off and sort of make you, urm, mischievous, make you play up, you know.</i>
Turbulent relationship with foster carer	1/16-18 4/143-147	<i>Urm It's got its ups and downs. Like sometimes it's good depending on if you move, if you stay with the first carer you've been put with or...urm yeah, just depends on who you've been really put with.</i> <i>it's a tough time, especially if you're arguing, and you don't get along with the carers, you don't like them, urm, it can be very, very urm, sort of, annoying and you know, you don't, you don't want to be there, you want to get away, you want to go and see, you might want to move away or run away and all this. Urm, and, it can have a big effect on your life</i>
Transition to secondary school		
Isolated from old friends and family	1/29-31	<i>It was really nervous for me, because I was away from my family, I was away</i>

	5/166-168	<p><i>from like all my mates where I lived there, urm, it was very stressful for me as well, there was a lot of hard times there.</i></p> <p><i>I mean, my personal experience, when I went in to care, at that point I didn't have many friends, as I had moved up and a lot of my mates had other friends, I, I was really isolated and didn't have a lot of friends, I was really alone.</i></p>
Fear of the unknown	<p>1/42-43</p> <p>5/189-192</p>	<p><i>Stressful. I didn't really know what to expect, like, I thought all the teachers hated me and I had loads of homework to do.</i></p> <p><i>especially when you first come in to it, it's very demanding, you think it's big, because obviously, when you're in primary it's not so big, you know it, when you go to high school its unfamiliar, you don't know anything, urm, you don't know whether to expect the work to be hard or easy.</i></p>
A period of adjustment	1/25-28	<i>Urm but yeah, I think eventually when I just I think settled down and actually got to understand that I am, I am where I am, I'm going to make the best situation of where I am. It sort of became a lot easier and, and, I got on with school work</i>
Support of his sisters as important	6/275-277	<i>Yeah, my sisters played a really big part in it. Both of them knowing that they went to urm, school... one of them went to this school and the other has been doing really well. Knowing that they've got at least something out of school and knowing that it wasn't that bad</i>
Feeling intimidated by the older pupils	2/41-43	<i>Most kids that come in to high school, they're nervous of, not necessarily the school itself, it's more the people in the school. Like the older students, urm, well I personally, it was the older students that scared me the most.</i>
Importance of relationships		
Support of teachers	3/95	<i>there are so many more other teachers who are supportive.</i>

	5/239	<i>Really nice. Really, really, really good. Yeah. They're supportive.</i>
	1/18-19	<i>Urm amazing, they've helped me ridiculous amounts. Err, they, the staff in the Bridge helped me a lot</i>
	2/60-61	<i>the teachers are just really helpful</i>
Relationship with a key adult (designated teacher)	2/56-57	<i>And yeah.... the relationships between the students and the teachers and sort of.... especially Mrs (designated teacher).</i>
	3/94	<i>Like Mrs * (designated teacher), she is really supportive, urm, with me</i>
Teachers holding him in mind	3/95-97	<i>Especially when it comes to care, they're always asking how I'm doing, how urm, like even if when some teachers have been away, urm, when they come back they'll be like 'how, how is it, back where you are living.'</i>
Teacher's communication styles	3/121-123	<i>You just, just, if they do something wrong, if they play up, not to sort of, shout at them, or to be loud, like you know.... Urm just be nice, calm, I think that's what most kids need in care, just not to be shouted at, just nice, calm, considerate</i>
Support of friends	1/34	<i>it was my friends that I could turn to and to say and explain to them</i>
	4/147-148	<i>It's nice to have your friends about, so they just need to be there for you, even if you've done something stupid, they need to be there for you and tell you not to worry</i>
	4/153-154	<i>They've just, they've just been there for me, even when I've sort of, shouted at them or had an argument with them, they've always come back, and you know, said sorry.</i>
	4/155-158	<i>Urm, and, even when I feel stupid or I'm getting something wrong, they'll help me, even now, urm, they are there for me, just... whatever I'm going through with my family or my carers, they'll just be like, "ahh I agree" or "I have the same thing with my mum"</i>
Teachers talking to him on his level	4/127-129	<i>I've sort of matured, urm so they obviously, some of the teachers can</i>

		<i>recognise that, speaking to me how I wanted, more mature</i>
The need to be understood		
Acknowledging individual differences	2/55-57 3/91	<i>Urm, whether...there are obviously different people in care, with different circumstances and there are different reasons for being in care, but it's always, there is always something that's gone wrong, or something that makes them feel uncomfortable.</i> <i>It depends on the person, how you react differently.</i>
Teachers demonstrating understanding	2/66-68 5/239-240 2/54 3/97-98	<i>The teachers actually got to know me. They understood that, how obviously bright and capable I am but with all the struggles at home, they understood all the struggles at home and they sort of helped me to overcome any sort of problems....</i> <i>They wouldn't take anything to heart.</i> <i>Just be understanding that, like what they're going through is, is very traumatic.</i> <i>Like they know my story and they know, you know.</i>
Importance of being treated the same as his peers	4/129-130	<i>not seeing me as any different to any other student, urm, which I've fully, like, like, agree with, I mean I'm no different to any other kid, whether I'm in care or not</i>
Peers demonstrating understanding	4/142-143 4/160-161	<i>Just be, just be really sympathetic, not too sympathetic that its patronising, just to be like sort of, really considerate and to understand that it's urm, it's a tough time</i> <i>Yeah, I've shared a lot with them. They've been there, they've sort of made similarities and comparisons to their lives, urm and just given me a lot of advice, which I needed</i>
Sense of belonging		
The opportunity to be introduced to the older students in school	2/47-48	<i>So just to get...get the other schools to get them to sit down with the older kids, chat with the older kids, get them introduced, make friendships.</i>
Support of the older pupils	2/48-49	<i>Even, like, so if anything, ever happens to them or they get bullied or what</i>

		<i>not, they have the older kids to go to.</i>
Importance of realising he wasn't going through it alone	2/71-72	<i>I realised there was other people in care, especially in my year there were a few of us in care, I knew, I sort of tried to open up more and get people to understand it's not all bad, but it's not all good.</i>
Opportunities to come together with other children in foster care	2/81-82	<i>Yeah, yeah. I mean, just to like, have a sit down with kids that have just come in to senior school. They may not even know anyone else in foster care.</i>
A shared understanding	2/82-83	<i>Like not necessarily to ask them so much to share their stories, but just to ask them how they are feeling, and you know, get them to sympathise with each other, as it helps more</i>
Shared experiences	2/76-77 5/171-174 5/180-182	<i>That's one of the main things, that sort of helped me to get through it. It was that I wasn't the only one going through this and feeling like this</i> <i>There were also other kids that were in the same situation as I was, urm similar situations, or completely different situations, but, didn't have that sort of, those friends there for them. Urm, and there, you can play games with them and stuff like that, it built, it built friendships in there. So.... Yeah.</i> <i>Just getting to speak to people, and getting to sort of, understand their troubles, understand what sort of problems they're going through</i>
Exposure to judgement		
Guarded about how much information you share with others	2/82-83 2/69-70	<i>So, it's all about sort of being careful about what you say to who</i> <i>I mean when I first went in to care, I didn't really want to tell anyone, I didn't want anyone knowing, I wanted to keep it personal</i>
Knowing who to trust	2/83-85	<i>you wouldn't go to someone you've only known for a week and tell them one of your biggest secrets. Urm, yeah, so just knowing who to tell and what to say.</i>
Anxiety associated with being asked lots of questions	2/57-58	<i>Urm so, some schools can bombard them, and ask loads of questions or interrogation, which can make them feel really scared. Err, so frightened.</i>
Pastoral support		

A designated space	3/128-129	<i>I've have from when I came in to the school until a couple of months ago, yeah until a couple of months ago, I've had quite a big part of The Bridge.....</i>
Emotional literacy support	1/19-20	<i>Urm, they helped me with sort of my emotions and dealing with emotions and helping me express them to others, whether it be teachers, friends.</i>
Nurturing environment	3/117-118 3/122-124 5/169-171	<i>It's for people who have those struggles and anyone they think that can benefit from the Bridge, go there. They have, it's more of like a homely sort of setting</i> <i>Yeah, they've got tea, coffee so you can have food and drink. And it's all about sort of urm taking them out of the classroom environment and sitting them down and just having a one on one sort of getting to know them.</i> <i>They asked me if I wanted a tea or coffee, so it's sort of like, being like home. Asking me if I wanted anything, I was able to have a chat and they asked me if I was ok</i>
Time with the school councillor	3/103-104	<i>There's a counsellor here that helps with urm, children with problems at home or children with issues with friends. That helped quite a lot.</i>
Practical support with work	3/133-134 2/60	<i>They do also have people who struggle with handwriting or spelling or reading, sort of people that struggle with those sort of things, they can take them out of class and help them with it.</i> <i>I got loads of help with homework, after school clubs and what not.</i>

Appendix 17: Research Journal Extract

<p>21/10/17</p> <p>How should I use the two rounds of interviews in the write up?</p> <p>Are the interviews long enough (20-25 mins) will they provide enough data?</p> <p>23/10/17</p> <p>Can I do thematic analysis if I have one broad research question?</p> <p>Are my transcripts long enough for IPA?</p> <p>Importance of capturing their voice & experience.</p> <p>Thematic analysis too descriptive?</p> <p>IPA too interpretive?</p> <p>Caught supervisor</p> <p>25/10/17</p> <p>IPA most suitable fits aim of research. Aim to focus on linguistic & descriptive comments.</p> <p>nb / convergence & divergence.</p>
--