Doctorate in Educational Psychology (DedPsy)

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# Elective Home Education in Wales: Post-16 Transition and the Role of the Educational Psychologist

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## Abstract

The increasing population of home educated children and young people (CYP) in Wales is in line with the pattern of increased numbers of home educated CYP in the UK as a whole. In order to shed light on this social phenomenon, Elective Home Education (EHE) facilitators, EHE CYP, Educational Psychologists (EPs) and Trainee EPs (TEPs) were recruited to explore EHE families' experience of Post-16 transition, and the potential role for EPs in supporting this process. Using a mixed methods design, the researcher employed online questionnaires and semi-structured interviews during data collection. Thematic Analysis (TA) and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)) analysis, as well quantitative analysis, was applied to relevant data. Findings suggested that EHE enabled numerous benefits to EHE CYP during post-16 transition, though participants also noted systemic challenges that were specific to EHE CYP. EP and TEP respondents indicated that EPs are generally not involved in work with EHE CYP, or non-EHE CYP, during post-16 transition in Wales, although several areas in which EPs could support this process have been outlined. The research highlights a number of implications for educational psychology practice which should be cautiously explored, including developing practice through increasing EP knowledge and awareness of the provisions available to transitioning EHE CYP, and increasing all new partners' and key stakeholders' understanding of how EPs can support them during EHE CYP post-16 transition. In order to extend and deepen our understanding in this field, it is suggested that future researchers capitalise on imminent educational changes in Wales (i.e. implementation of the ALN Act 2018) by conducting action research in order to enrich our understanding of EHE in Wales, and how best to work with this population during post-16 transition.

# Summary

This thesis is split into three parts: a literature review, an empirical study, and a critical appraisal.

Part one is split into five sections: introduction, home education, the purpose of education, home education research and the role of educational psychologists (EPs). It will provide a thorough review of the existing literature on home education. Following the introduction, which will outline the structure of the review, the review will focus particularly on the United Kingdom (UK) context, including socio-political factors and its legal status. This will be followed by a discussion of the purpose of education. The final sections will present and critically consider the research literature on home education before identifying gaps in existing literature, particularly in relation to the role of the educational psychologist and post-16 transition. The review will conclude with the rationale and subsequent research questions for this piece of research

Part two, the empirical paper, is an account of the empirical study, which aimed to explore the experiences of elective home education (EHE) families during post-16 transition, as well as the potential role for EPs in supporting these families during this transition. The section includes a brief review of the existing literature to outline the rationale and research questions. A detailed methodology is provided, including information on the research design and ethical considerations. Quantitative and qualitative findings are discussed and considered in relation to current and future potential research, as well as highlighting the practical implications for the role of EPs.

Part three, the critical review, will provide a critical appraisal of the research process and the researcher's own professional development. It provides a reflective account of the decisions made throughout the research process in addition to its philosophical underpinnings. It is split into two sections: a consideration of the researcher's contribution to current knowledge and understanding; and a critical account of the research practitioner.

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# List of abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| ALN | Additional Learning Needs |
| BPS | British Psychological Society |
| COP | Code of Practice |
| CYP | Children and Young People |
| DCFS | Department for Children, Schools and Families |
| DfE | Department for Education |
| DHCS | Department for Health and Social Care |
| DfES | Department for Education and Skills |
| EHE | Elective Home Education |
| EP | Educational Psychologist |
| EPS | Educational Psychology Service |
| HCPC | Health and Care Professions Council |
| JW | Jehovah's Witness |
| LA | Local Authority |
| LEA | Local Education Authority |
| NEET | Not in Education, Employment or Training |
| OFSTED | Office for Standards in Education |
| SEN | Special Educational Needs |
| SEND | Special educational Deeds and Disability |
| TEP | Trainee Educational Psychologist |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| US | United States of America |
| WG | Welsh Government |
| YP | Young People |

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**Part I: Major Literature Review**

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Structure of the Literature Review

This literature review begins with a consideration of Elective Home Education (EHE) in the United Kingdom (UK). This includes a brief summary of its modern history in the United States of America (US) and the UK, as well as a consideration of EHE terminology and structures. This is followed by an in-depth consideration of EHE in a UK context, including social and political implications of current policies and legislation.

In light of this contextual consideration, the review will then lead to a discussion of the purpose of education. Theoretical models of education will be considered in relation to EHE and the apparent factors influencing increasing popularity.

The review proceeds to provide an overview of the EHE research landscape, which is noted to be heavily situated in a US context. A discussion of this literature is omitted in favour of a review of UK based EHE literature, which is argued to be more ecologically relevant to the current study. This will include a discussion of the limited research which relates to the work of educational psychologists (EPs) with EHE families in general, and in supporting these families during post-16 transition.

The review will conclude by highlighting gaps within the existing research base, the value of further research, and its relevance to EPs. The aims of the current study are introduced and the key research questions are presented.

## 1.2 Databases, Web-based Sources and Search Engines Used

The types of documents applicable to this area of research were established prior to commencing the literature search. These included academic journal studies and doctoral theses. Further literature was drawn from published books on home education, school transition and educational psychology. The search parameters went beyond the UK and incorporated studies published in Europe, North America and Asia, primarily targeting publications from the last decade. Both quantitative and qualitative designs were considered, in addition to systematic reviews and meta-analyses papers. A comprehensive search was

conducted using evidence from a variety of sources and the academic databases PsychINFO 1806- 2016, PsycArticles Full Text, Cardiff University Books@Ovid and ERIC in September 2017, January 2018, July 2018, and in December 2018 and January 2019. The search was updated in March and April 2019. Additional peer-reviewed journal articles were sourced using Google and Google Scholar, alongside Government policies. These sources were chosen to include a variety of empirical research articles available in peer-reviewed journals and publications. The search for literature detailing theoretical perspectives utilised a broad range of dates to accommodate historical perspectives that have informed research and practice.

*1.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria*

Combinations of the search terms – 'Elective Home Education', 'Homeschool', 'Home school', 'post-16', 'Educational Psychology', 'Transition', 'United Kingdom', and 'Wales' were used.

Throughout the searching process relevant literature was filtered by using the following inclusion criteria:

- Published in the English (or Welsh) language
- Published in the period 1970-2019
- Including topics related to home education and/or post-16 transition.

Conversely, studies were not included if they met the following exclusion criteria:
- Published in a language other than the English (or Welsh) language
- Published outside the period 1970-2019
- Not including topics related to home education and/or post-16 transition.

*1.4 Identification of Studies Relevant to this Literature*

Previous studies relevant to this topic area were located using Boolean phrases and a 'snowball' method (Creswell, 2009). In addition, reference lists of relevant articles were

searched for additional relevant article and reference lists, and so on. By the end of this process, no new references were being encountered, indicating the extant body of literature had been exhausted. Titles were screened by using the research abstract and then secondary screening took place by the researcher reading the articles in full.

While the vast majority of research on home education emanates from the US, it is acknowledged that the socio-cultural landscape of the USA, including religious, racial and political factors, differs to the one in the UK. Therefore, whilst overviews of US governmental policies and research trends are included, the review is strongly reliant on articles that were published in the UK. This extends to research on home education and post-16 transition, as well as home education and educational psychology. Research based outside western populations has generally been excluded, as it was felt that non-western attitudes and education contexts differed too substantially. Some articles that were not in peer-reviewed journals were included due to their relevance to the current research. Only documents published in English were included. In total, 144 references were included in the literature review.

**2. Elective Home Education**

*2.1 Introduction*

EHE is a complex area of education. The purpose of this thesis is not to advocate for or against home education but to investigate it in its current form in Wales, especially in relation to post-16 transition and the potential role for EPs in this process.

*2.1.1 Terminology Definition*

The official UK government wording to describe home education is 'Elective Home Education' (Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) 2007a, 2013).  This is the term the researcher will use throughout this thesis. In line with Davies (2015), though the researcher acknowledges that there are differences, the researcher includes terms such as homeschooling and unschooling as being synonymous with EHE.

*2.1.2 Brief History*

Elective Home Education (EHE), or "homeschooling" in the US, is a practice in which parents or legal guardians educate their children at home instead of sending them to school. Neuman & Guterman (2017a) note that this is not a new practice, with parents having borne the responsibility for their children's education up until the time governments established public schools and enacted mandatory education laws in response to the Industrial Revolution. Over time, governments came to assume the responsibility for the education of children; however, beginning in the US in the 1960 and 1970s, there has been a resurgence in the numbers of parents opting to assume full responsibility for the educational process (Collom, 2005; Neuman & Guterman, 2017a). Presently, it is estimated that around 2 million children are home educated in the US (e.g. Noel, Stark & Redford, 2016).

Similarly, modern home education emerged in the UK in the late 1970s (Meighan, 1981). Today, the UK has an increasing population of EHE children which amounts to the largest in Europe, with numbers generally estimated to be between 50,000 (Office of the Schools Adjudicator, 2018) and 80,000 (Badman, 2009). In Wales, the pattern of increased numbers of EHE children is in line with that of the UK as a whole, as numbers of EHE children are reported to have increased from 986 (0.27%) in 2011/12, to 1964 (0.56%) in 2017/18 (Welsh Government, 2017a, 2018a). In addition, it is noted that parents in the UK are not required to register their children as electively home educated, meaning that the actual totals of home educated children in Wales, and the UK as a whole, is potentially higher.

Reasons for the growth in the numbers of EHE children are numerous, and have been reported to include ideological reasons (Rothermel, 2003); special educational needs (SEN) not being met, bullying and school refusal (Arora, 2006); and schools' inability to meet the needs of gifted and talented children (Winstanley, 2009).

*2.1.3 EHE structures*

Morton (2010) notes that methods of EHE are at the parents' discretion and as such, there is no one way of 'doing' home education. Still, some research has set out to ascertain the type of education that home educators offer their children. This is often done by identifying the

degree of structure employed by home educators: structured EHE and unstructured learning (Aurini & Davies, 2005; Kunzman & Gaither, 2013; Rothermel, 2011). This traditional division characterizes structured learning in the home as adhering to a defined curriculum, while unstructured learning advocates that study content is not externally dictated, but rather, determined in accordance with the child's wishes (Neuman & Gunterman, 2017a). Gray and Riley (2013) identify an intermediate group between these two groups, termed *relaxed homeschooling*, in which they ascertain "some relatively specific educational goals" for their children and "seemed to work deliberately toward achieving those goals" (p. 9).

More recently, Neuman and Gunterman (2017a) argue for a further distinction to be made through acknowledging content and process as distinct dimensions of learning. They argue that by considering content and process as two axes it is possible to conceive of combinations of different degrees of the structure of content and process in learning (e.g. unstructured content, structured process), making it easier to characterise each family's style of EHE. To add to this already complex picture, it must also be noted that Kunzman and Gaither (2013) highlight the potential for families to move between structured EHE and a model of EHE that is less structured.

*2.2 UK Context*

*2.2.1 Overview*

The legal status of EHE varies greatly from nation to nation. While EHE is a legal and growing practice in several countries (e.g. Australia, New Zealand and Canada), it is illegal or highly regulated in other countries such as Germany, the Netherlands and Poland (Nelson, 2013). While a description of the political and legal positions of most countries is beyond the remit of this review, it is arguably worth briefly mentioning the US context, where it is reported that many homeschooling families have been engaged in concerted political and legal action to enable the practice, (Gaither, 2008) and where the homeschooling population is by far the largest in the world. Indeed, though an accurate count is impossible, the US Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) estimated that in 2016 there were around 1.69 million (3.3%) homeschooled students aged 5–17 in the US (NCES, 2016).

Historically, the US has been at the forefront in implementing changes to legalise home education (*home schooling*/*homeschooling* in the US), and currently takes a liberal approach to the provision that, potentially, most closely resembles the UK (England and Wales) context.  For example, the US offers no national definitive policy or guidelines on EHE; instead, US states have their own sporadic and diverse policies, like LA EHE practices in England and Wales. However, despite these similarities, Kraftl (2013) highlights the potential divergence between the home education context in the US, where there has been legalisation of HE and increased freedom over time, and that of the United Kingdom, where EHE is legal "but has been subject to increasing scrutiny" (p. 440).  In light of this divergence between the two countries, as well as the complexities that arise from the politically-charged nature of the practice in the US (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013), with "every state in the US has its own unique homeschooling law" (p.5), it is felt that a further, detailed discussion of the US context is beyond the remit of the researcher.

To illuminate the current UK EHE landscape and help to situate the current research project within a broader theoretical framework, the following section outlines the political context and legal position of elective home education (EHE) in England and Wales over the last two decades.

### 2.2.2 Policy: UK

During this century, the scrutiny of EHE in the UK centres most controversially on child protection concerns and calls for mandatory registration of home educated children. The death of Victoria Climbie, an eight-year-old girl from London in 2000 reinforced the notion that children of school age who are not registered at a school are vulnerable. Though Victoria Climbie was not home-educated in a formal, legal sense, her death provided significant impetus for several policy and practice initiatives to be introduced from 2002 onwards (Jennens, 2011). Initiatives such as Every Child Matters (2003) tended to set local authorities (LAs) and home educators in opposition to one another, with LAs tasked with the responsibility of ensuring the safety and well-being of all children in their authority (e.g. *Children Act*, 2004; *Every Child Matters*, 2003).  In the case of home educated children, this meant that LAs were responsible for children they did not even necessarily know about, and

arguably conflated home educated children and young people with children and young people missing from education, which the UK Government required LAs to track.

Six years later, in part due to several high-profile child protection cases, such as the death of Khyra Ishaq in 2008, the then Labour government commissioned Graham Badman to lead the first comprehensive review of home education in England (Smith & Nelson, 2015). The Badman Review (2009) was highly contentious, due in part to its recommendation that all home educated children were mandatorily registered with their LA, and that LAs' powers and duties were enhanced to include annual home inspections to ensure the safety of home educated children. The EHE community rejected these recommendations, arguing that the confluence of EHE to child safeguarding issues was unfounded, and that inspections would limit parents' rights to design, select or provide the educational provision as they wished (Nelson, 2013). Though the recommendations of the Badman Review were dropped following a change of Government in May 2010, the debate on registration and LAs' ability to carry out safeguarding duties in relation to home educated children has persisted.

At present, the context for EHE in England remains liberal, with minimal, informal LA oversight of the process possible through voluntary agreement with parents. The Department for Education (DfE) (2018) states that the UK Government does not intend to supplant "the primary duty of parents to lead their children's education, including the provision of home education" (p.5). However, the subject of home education and mandatory registration remains a perpetual topic in the UK media (e.g. Davies, 2017; Coughlan, 2018), while the DfE's call for evidence (2018) continues to seek a discussion of the registration of children who are home educated and the monitoring of the educational provision by local authorities in relation to elective home education.

### 2.2.3 Policy: Wales

The Government of Wales Act (1998; 2006), and the Wales Act (2014; 2017) mean legislative powers concerning Education and Social Care have been devolved to the remit of the National Assembly for Wales. The Welsh Government is responsible for the implementation of policies and legislation passed by the National Assembly for Wales, which holds its government ministers to account (National Assembly for Wales, 2018). Pre-

devolution legislation, such as the Education Act 1996 remains in effect until it is amended or repealed by the National Assembly for Wales.  It is also noteworthy to home education that as there is a common legal system across England and Wales, some safeguarding elements continue to be affected by legislation and policy from both the National Assembly for Wales and the UK Parliament (Forrester, Maxwell, Slater & Doughty, 2017).

In Wales, The Badman Review (2009) also captured the attention of policymakers, and the tragic death of Dylan Seabridge in 2011 refocused the spotlight on some of the sensitive issues regarding home-education. While a period of relative inactivity characterised the context in England since the turn of the decade, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in Wales undertook various consultations on home-education (Fensham-Smith, 2017). However, proposals following these consultations to introduce a compulsory registration and monitoring were not legislated following a backlash from home-educating parents (BBC News, 2014).

In 2017, a review by Forrester *et al.* (2017) was commissioned by the National Independent Safeguarding Board to explore possible risks in relation to safeguarding, health and well-being for children and young people who are educated at home. Forrester *et al.* (2017) concluded that the "state is not supporting home educated children or their families", and that they had "no confidence that the minority of children educated at home who are being abused or neglected are being identified or protected" (p. 12). The review recommended a new approach for home education in Wales based on the principles of the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014, and subsequently put forth several recommendations for the WG and LAs regarding EHE in Wales. This included ensuring a "significantly enhanced support service" (p.52) for EHE children, developed in partnership with the local home education community and "delivered by professionals who understand the needs and circumstances" of EHE families (p.52).  However, as in the English context, the report returned to ideas of registration and monitoring of EHE in order to ensure a "clearer assessment of the needs and well-being of home educated children" (p.12).  The review was quick to highlight the potential for compulsory registration and assessment to create high levels of resistance from a significant proportion of home educating parents.

Currently, the most recent guidance issued by the DfES for Local Authorities on developing and maintaining relationships with EHE families is non-statutory (Welsh Government, 2017b). However, as in England, the debate surrounding a compulsory register of EHE in Wales remains a frequently discussed topic in the public sphere (BBC News, 2018; Pollock, 2018; Wightwick, 2018).

### 2.2.4 Law: UK

The legal status of EHE in the UK is clear: education is compulsory; schooling is not (Smith & Nelson, 2015). In England and Wales, the primary legislation on which the legality of home education is based comes from the Education Act 1944 and the Education Act 1996, as well as Article 2 of Protocol 1 of the European Convention on Human Rights. Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 indicates that education can be provided at school or "otherwise". The right to home-educate in England and Wales falls under the inclusion of the word 'otherwise' (Education Otherwise 2010a), with sole responsibility for a child's education in these instances placed with parents.

There is no absolute requirement for parents to notify an LA of a child being educated at home if that child has never attended school. In the case of a child registered at school being deregistered to be educated at home, parents should notify the head teacher: though this requirement is not relevant to children who leave school because of moving to a different area or during an age-related transition (e.g. at the end of key stage 2). Upon receiving a parent's notice that their child is to be educated at home, LAs have no power to refuse to de-register a child and are obliged to respect a parent's choice of home education even when there is strong evidence that it would be advantageous for a particular child to be attending school (though more stringent requirements apply to a child registered at a special school) (Jennens, 2011).

Parents are under no obligation to follow a school-type curriculum or timetable, or to undertake formal teaching (DCFS, 2007a). Instead:

> *the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient*
> *full-time education suitable-*

*(a) to his age, ability, and aptitude, and*

*(b) to any special educational needs he may have,*

*either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.*

(Education Act 1996: Section 7)

An LA's power to intervene in relation to the education being provided is contingent upon it appearing to the LA that a child of compulsory school age is not receiving a suitable education (Section 436A, Education Act 1996; Education and Inspections Act 2006). In these instances, LAs are encouraged to address situations informally before escalating issues to formal procedures, i.e. serving a notice in writing to parents to obtain evidence that a child is receiving a suitable and efficient education (within 15 days) before issuing school attendance orders (an authoritative response to concerns that a parent is not making effective arrangements for their child's education) (DCSF, 2007; 2013).

Still, there are two main factors that highlight they have limited powers in this area. Firstly, although LAs may inquire about a child's education or aim to meet with a family to assess a child's education, parents are under no legal obligation to provide any evidence or allow representatives from the LA into their home. The second factor takes root in the language used in EHE legislation.

### 2.2.5 "Suitable" and "Efficient"

Reference to the Education Act 1996 (Section 7) is ubiquitous throughout EHE legislation, policy and research. However, although the act states that parents are responsible for ensuring that their children (aged 5-16) receive an 'efficient' and ' suitable' full-time education, what exactly is meant by these terms is left undefined. This has left the legislation open to different interpretations, making it difficult for LAs to advise parents (Hopwood, O'Neill, Castro & Hodgson, 2007, Monk, 2009).

Among others, Badman (2009, Section 3.5) noted that the term 'efficient education' is broadly defined in case law as "an education that achieves what it sets out achieve", while "suitable" education is outlined as:

> "[o]ne that primarily equips a child for life within the community of which he is a member rather than the way of life in the country as a whole, as long as it does not foreclose the child's options in later years to adopt some other form of life if he wishes to do so"

(Mr Justice Woolf in the case of R. v. Secretary for State for Education and Science, cited in '*Elective home-education guidelines for Local Authorities*', DCFS, 2013, p. 4)

Still, some have argued that this case law is not much of a resource for identifying a suitable education (Davies, 2015a), echoing Badman's (2009) recommendation for some oversight of the extent to which provision was deemed suitable and efficient.

As previously discussed, Badman's recommendations were not acted upon, and currently, a fulltime, "suitable" and "efficient" home education does not necessarily include, amongst other things, providing a broad and balanced education, having premises equipped to any particular standard, having any specific qualifications, formally assessing progress or setting development objectives (DCFS, 2013, p. 10). In some cases, who defines whether an education is "efficient" or "suitable" is left to an LA officer, who must subjectively adjudge how an education "appears" (DCFS, 2013, p. 5), though who is likely to have never considered the importance of semantics in undertaking this duty.

### 3. The Purpose of Education

In discussing the legitimacy of home education as a human right, Monk (2004, 2015) highlights the tensions between individual liberty and state intervention. For Monk (2004), civic, political, social and economic rights raise concerns against, and legitimise state intervention. While the arguments for and against the right to home-educate may be considered a fruitful area for research and exploration, this is not the main focus of the current review, but rather a catalyst. Specifically, the reviewer sees home education, its legal

status, and the ensuing implications, as necessarily leading to a discussion of the purpose of education. While it is beyond the current review to definitively answer this question, the researcher contends that it is a topic that needs addressing in order to further explore the terms "suitable" and "efficient" and their perennial association with EHE.

*3.1 Three tenets of education*

In summarising the combined work of education theorists, Neuman & Guterman (2017b) highlight a theoretical model of three primary educational objectives: socialisation, acculturalisation and individualisation (Lamm, 1972, 1976; Egan, 1997; Rorty, 1999). These three approaches to the objectives of education, which are in constant competition (Aviram 2010; Lamm 1986), are summarised below:

### *3.1.1 Socialisation*

Socialisation is a principle based on the notion of humans as social beings that need to live in a society. In educational terms, providing CYP with the skills to enable them to function in society is the objective of this principle (Lamm, cited in Neuman & Guterman, 2017). Accordingly, this necessarily includes teaching students to comply with social expectations and guidelines in order to successfully fulfil their role in society and function in personal and professional capacities.

In modern discourse, the process of socialisation is tied to citizenship and the preparation of children and young people for life as citizens (Lawy, 2014). In a democratic society, the production of democratic citizens is, therefore, a necessary role of the education system and requires a curriculum that teaches the accepted behaviour patterns, customs, approaches, information, skills, values, and ideals of their social group to young people (Neuman & Guterman, 2017b).

### *3.1.2 Acculturalisation*

Acculturalisation is an objective which ensures that the educational process passes on to young people the views, values, and beliefs that help form the culture to which they belong

(Neuman & Guterman, 2017b). Egan (1999) discusses culture in terms of hierarchies, in which cultural products – books, paintings, plays, music, etc. – and the approaches associated with them are ranked in accordance with culturally accepted standards. For young people, successfully completing the educational process of acculturisation involves applying these standards in evaluating experiences, cultural products, and events.

### 3.1.3 Individualisation

The third educational objective, individualisation, represents a departure from the other two primary objectives in that it is absent of pre-determined models imposed by external influences (i.e. society and culture). From this point of view, education is not perceived as a preparation for life in a society, or as an initiation of the individual into a culture. Rather, it is an expectation that education will support the growth of the individual, hopefully leading to a state of self-realisation (Lamm, 1986). The individual's development takes its own direction, and, if unhindered, will lead the individual.

Compared to the more well-established concepts of socialisation and acculturisation, individualisation is a modern primary objective of education which was first embraced in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (Neuman & Guterman, 2017b). Indeed, the philosophy of John Dewey, a pioneer in modern education, hinted towards ideas relating to individualisation, as he proposed development, personal growth and self-fulfilment to be the purpose of education (Samuel, 2015). This growth – in biological, moral, aesthetic, intellectual, and religious terms – will lead the individual to find her/his place in society and culture. As such, education may be seen as a functional pursuit which should better equip the young person for future experiences:

> *... the ability to learn from experience; the power to retain from one's experience something which is of avail in coping with the difficulties of a later situation.* (Dewey, 1916, p44)

*3.2 Education across dimensions*

*3.2.1 For Who? Individual and state*

From the objectives summarised above emerges the tensions implicit in the potential dichotomy between the individual and society. While families wishing to home educate in Germany, for example, feel they must emigrate due to the illegal status of EHE (Donelly, 2016), UK families are free to practice EHE under the proviso that the education received enables their children and young people to take a place in society and their community. Exactly what this 'place' in society amounts to is less clear. In his 2015 speech entitled *The Purpose of Education*, Nick Gibb MP cast education as "the engine of our economy" and "the foundation of our culture" (Gibb, 2015). For Gibb, a representative of UK democracy, education is a means of maintaining and nourishing society. Gibb's discourse limits the extent to which education is for the individual to being "an essential preparation for adult life", by which time, in theory, the emerging adult is ready to contribute economically to society. For others, however, education should not merely be seen as a form of training for entering the labour market. In a time where education has been reduced to "a kind of algorithmic mode of regulation in which everything is reduced to a desired measurable economic outcome" (Giroux, 2016), EHE might well represent a move towards a more private education with more holistic outcomes in mind. While studies have noted that parental motivations are numerous (e.g. Rothermel, 2003), other findings have suggested that social, emotional and well-being outcomes, such as good health, independence and having a fulfilling job, are more important to home educators than using education as a means to maximise their child's future command over economic resources (Brown 2011; Stevens, 2001).

Depending on the prevailing pedagogical ideology, the CYP tends to be analysed as unsocialised or unacculturated and needing to be socialised or acculturated, or more progressively, the child must be allowed freedom from the societal and cultural impositions of education to reveal his/her autonomous and authentic natures (Harpaz, 2015). However, for students to be critically engaged agents, who critically question "the institutions, policies, and values that shape their lives, their relationships to others, and their myriad of connections

to the larger world"(Giroux, 2016), this zero-sum game of society versus the individual may be a false paradigm.

### 3.2.2 For when?

Donnelly (2016) contends that "a system that justifies or endorses state control over education for the purposes of cultural conformity" (p. 284) is incongruous with a key principle of a free and democratic society: individual liberty.  What is perhaps less clear, however, is whose individual liberty should take precedence, and when?

While for some, legal home education may signify the freedom for parents to educate their children as they see fit, it is arguable that the price of this freedom, in some cases, may be the future individual liberty of the child or young person.  Indeed, Marples (2014) suggests that it is optimistic to assume that the interests and needs of parents are in line with those of their children.

Davies (2015) contends that in the case of EHE, it is more pertinent to focus on the competency of the family than on the characteristics of education, in the same way that schools' competencies are evaluated (e.g. Estyn rankings). Framing the argument like this, it is possible to view the question of parental vs. state rights to educate as: should parents have the right to provide an equally, potentially poor education to their children as a state school would?  What options and avenues in life are being closed to the child due to this inadequate education? Taking this line, one could see how, in theory, there are provisions in place to hold schools accountable for their performance in educating children, but very little regulation in place in the UK to hold a home educator accountable for providing a sub-par education to their children.

The UK courts have seemingly come to this same conclusion and have offered guidance on this issue in the form of Justice Woolf's aforementioned advice (see Chapter 2).  In contrast to focusing on the here-and-now decision of the parent, this guidance is future-orientated, and suggests that a suitable education is one which prepares children for life in a modern, civilised society and enables them to achieve their full potential (Arora, 2006).

## 4. Home Education Research

*4.1 Introduction*

The field of Home education has been described as one of the "most dynamic contemporary educational trends" (Kunzman and Gaither, 2013, p.6), though analysts have pointed out that it is in need of further high calibre work to add to the thin empirical knowledge base that currently makes up its mixed body of scholarship (Reich, 2005; Kunzman & Gaither, 2013; Murphy, 2014).

Kunzman and Gaither (2013) note that homeschooling literature is primarily limited by being almost entirely qualitative and anecdotal in nature. In addition, the inherent difficulties of research into the EHE phenomenon are noted throughout the literature, and include the diversity of individuals engaged in the practice, the deinstitutionalised nature of the phenomenon, and the distrust with which some home educators regard external surveillance (e.g. Nelson, 2013; Morton, 2010; Kaseman & Kaseman, 2002). Similarly, quantitative research on EHE has been hampered by several factors, including difficulties in collating basic demographic data (due to varying and diverse EHE/homeschooling laws and approaches to data collection). Taken together, home educators present as a notoriously difficult demographic to study in the literature.

### *4.1.1 A note on US Literature*

The majority of home education scholarship addresses the US context. Indeed, in the most comprehensive literature review on home education to date, Kunzman and Gaither (2013) compiled a list of eight general categories of homeschooling scholarship, seven of which pertain specifically to the US context. These categories include Homeschooling demographics in the United States, US homeschool curricula and practice, and US homeschooling law at both the constitutional and statutory levels.

However, much of the literature emanating out of the US context has been described as politically motivated, with analysts pointing out that most of the research has been undertaken by investigators interested in moulding results into positive stories (Kunzman

2005; Reich 2005). For example, the Home School Legal Defense Advocates (HSLDA), a prominent homeschooling advocacy organization that has conducted a large number of US studies and is frequently cited in popular accounts and in the media (Ray, 1990; Ray, 1994; Ray, 1997a, Ray, 1997b; Rudner, 1999; Ray, 2004a; Ray, 2004b; Ray, 2010), have been deemed to employ "serious design limitations and are often used disingenuously to make generalisations beyond what their specific conclusions warrant" (Kunzman and Gaither, 2013, p. 5). For example, though Rudner (1999) reported that home school participants scored "exceptionally high--the median scores were typically in the 70th to 80th percentile" (p. 1) on either the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills or Tests for Achievement and Proficiency (as age-appropriate), these test were mostly administered by participants' parents. Furthermore, Rudner's (1999) sizable sample (20, 760 participants) all came from a fundamentalist Protestant homeschooling service provider (Bob Jones University Press Testing and Evaluation Service). Similarly, both Ray (1994) and (1997) were comprised of volunteer, homogenous samples (i.e. white (94%; 97%), two-parent (97%; 98%), religious (>90% Christian), with a large family size (3.5 children; 3.3 children)), making it difficult to generalize findings.  The testing outcomes of these participants were then compared to national average outcomes without controlling for these and other potentially confounding variables (e.g. parents' level of education and parent's level of income). In a discussion of McCracken's (2010) review of Ray (2010), Gaither (2014) emphasises that Ray's (2010) sample is "much whiter, richer, more married, more Christian, and more educated than the general population. They are not representative Americans nor even representative homeschoolers".

This is not to denigrate the entire body of US literature on homeschooling by homeschoolers. Indeed, Murphy (2014) notes that homeschoolers in the literature have "provided a trace of good reports on how to engage the work of educating a child at home, and fine collections of resources to assist in those efforts" (p245). However, it has also been suggested that the controversial nature of homeschooling has led to "an obsession" with the performance of homeschooled children on standardised tests by researchers who are motivated to validate homeschooling (Wyatt, 2013). Thus, whilst most of the empirical contributions to the field of home-education research originate in the US, the researcher has taken the decision to side-step an in-depth review of this literature. Given that the legal, political, and social differences between homeschooling in the US and EHE in the UK render direct empirical and theoretical

applications problematic (Fensham–Smith, 2017), the researcher believes this will enable a more coherent and logical rationale for the current research. While this review will discuss some select literature from the US, it mostly focuses on home-education research in the UK

*4.2 UK Research*

Despite the small, growing body of academic scholarship on UK EHE in recent years (Fensham-Smith, 2017), EHE remains an under-researched phenomenon in England and Wales. Jennens (2011) argues that until 2004, research on EHE in the UK had been conducted by "individuals working alone pursuing an enthusiastic personal interest" (p. 147) (e.g. Arora, 2003; Rothermel, 2002; Thomas, 1998), and as such it persists as an area of research marked by partisanship (Fensham-Smith, 2017). For example, research into the academic achievement of EHE children (e.g. Rothermel, 2002; 2004) has been described by Webb (2011) as having similar flaws of uncontrolled testing conditions and sample flaws to many US studies (e.g. Ray, 2010).

Over the past two decades, much of the literature produced in the UK has aimed to identify "the parameters and characteristics of the home educating population" (Morton, 2010, p. 46), including the parental motivations for choosing to home educate (Parsons & Lewis, 2010; Rothermel, 2003) and the prevalence and demographics of EHE families (e.g. Badman, 2009; Fortune-Wood, 2005; Rothermel, 2003).

### *4.2.1 Demographics & Difficulties: Numbers, Types and Reasons*

In Wales, Forrester *et al.* (2017) conducted 6 telephone interviews and 134 online questionnaire surveys with home educators in Wales, and found that despite being a very diverse group, home educators tended to fit into two broad groups: those who removed a child from school and those who had not sent their child to school. Forrester *et al.* (2017) found that the former group often had children with additional needs, and tended to be very disappointed by the quality of education and care their child had experienced. This dissatisfaction with formal provision and the perceived failure of the school to meet a child's needs adequately has been found to be the main motivating factor in other research (Nelson, 2013; Parsons & Lewis, 2010). For the latter group, home education was sometimes part of a

wider rejection of the state, with home educators critical of the nature of school provision and favouring more "child centred" approaches. However, other research attempting to ascertain and categorize the reasons UK parents decide to home educate their children has proven difficult, as further research into these questions seemingly reveals the complexities of doing so.

Rothermel (2003) is one of the largest studies into EHE motivations in the UK, with a total of 419 EHE families participating in the study (1099 children, aged eleven years and under). Rothermel (2003) found that home education was pursued as a provision for several different reasons: disappointment with education and schools; ideological reasons; bullying and child depression and stress, as well as, parents' own negative school experiences and peer pressure. Fensham-Smith (2017) found that although home educators "share a perceived, somewhat abstracted affiliation with one and another through their shared pursuit of home-education, there exist important markers of identification and dis-identification" (p. 135) (e.g. their child's needs, parental ideologies, and mutual interests) among the population. Rothermel (2011) concludes that home educators are "a very diverse set of people" (p.52), and that attempts to establish and address the motivations of parents to home educate through reductive 'types' is a "fruitless and flawed methodology" (p. 52).

Furthermore, the limited nature of research studies in general make it difficult to generate nationally representative data on the characteristics of the home educating population in the UK. For example, despite a number of explorations into the prevalence of home education in the UK – from Fortune-Wood's (2005) study to the DCSF feasibility study into EHE (2007b) to the Badman Review (2009) - the relatively small sample sizes of each of these studies in general mean it remains difficult to accurately determine how many children are being home educated in England and Wales. Numerous efforts have also been made to identify specific types of parents who choose to home educate in the UK (e.g. Morton, 2010; Ofsted, 2010, Fortune Wood, 2005). However, Rothermel (2003) suggests that while these groups might exist, the growth in numbers of EHE children over the decades, as well as the fluid nature of EHE, has made categorisation complex. Both Morton (2010) and Ofsted (2010) have noted that though they attempt to provide categorisations of home educators, the categories they do provide are not exclusive. This echoes findings throughout the 21st century, which highlight that home educators tend not to be confined to a particular geographical location, family type,

occupational background or ethnic group (Fensham-Smith, 2017; Fortune Wood, 2005; Nelson, 2013; Rothermel, 2003).

In an attempt to overcome the lack of nationally representative data that exist in the UK, Smith & Nelson (2015) used a national omnibus survey to collect data on the home education experiences of over 6000 households from across the UK. While their findings largely confirmed previous findings in UK research (that around 1% of families with dependent children have home educated either on a full or part-time basis), Smith and Nelson's (2015) novel research design allowed them to attempt to address the issue of generalisability and homogeny of participants, which characterizes much of the literature. Using the Office of National Statistics (ONS) Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN, formerly the Omnibus Survey)[1], Smith and Nelson (2015) demonstrated that there is potential for gathering data from a nationally representative sample of a small and diverse social group, without having to specifically seek out and recruit the home educating communities, which often lacks a comparison with the general population. This new approach to home education research is perhaps reflective of contemporaneous UK research that is attempting to better understand EHE through new designs and topics.

### 4.2.2 New EHE Research Questions

EHE in the UK remains a topical issue (Smith & Nelson, 2015), and more recent research has begun to broach what Kunzman and Gaither (2013) describe as "beyond typical homeschooling topics" (p. 36). Indeed, Jennens (2011) notes the increase in publicly commissioned research (e.g. Atkinson, Martin, Downing, Harland, Kendall & White, 2007; Hopwood *et al.*, 2007; Ofsted, 2010) post-2004 has begun to focus on aspects of policy and practice, including the potential for LAs to provide positive support for home-educating parents. Research has also begun to consider varied topics such as EHE and engagement in education (Jones, 2013) and the effect of new technologies on EHE (Fensham-Smith), as well as those highlighted by Kunzman and Gaither (2013) as being missing from EHE literature,

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[1] Smith & Nelson (2015) state that the OPN "was established in 1990 to meet the needs of Government departments who wanted access to a survey with a quick turnaround time but which offered high statistical reliability as well as a properly designed random sample" (p.313).

namely the experience of ethnic minorities who home educate (D'Arcy, 2014) and EHE in relation to SEN (Parsons & Lewis, 2010).

Fensham-Smith (2017) explores how new technologies, particularly the social media platforms of Yahoo! and Facebook groups, empower home educators and EHE children and young people to network, exchange practice, and learn from one another. Through an online survey of 242 home-educators and 52 individual and group interviews with 85 parents, children and young people that reside across England, Wales and Scotland, Fensham-Smith (2017) found that new technologies have helped some home educators to create and participate in new online communities, as well as helping to extend offline communities to support their local practice. As home education practices become embedded within these networks and communities, it becomes less of a socially isolated practice, and provides home educators with social and educational enrichment opportunities that would have been difficult to do without the planning and involvement of other home-education families.

Fensham-Smith (2017) also shed light on how some learning communities are transforming and being transformed by new technologies to reach an alternative destination in education. Initially, this includes enabling parents to imagine themselves doing home-education by making relevant knowledge more accessible. Further, new technologies have freed EHE families from a school-at-home approach by providing access to resources and increasing confidence in their practice. Fensham Smith (2017) concluded that use of these resources and networks over time allow home educators to cater for learner interests and tailor education to the needs of different learners in a way that would have been previously difficult to do.

However, it is important to consider how these conclusions were reached. Fensham-Smith (2017) used a number of data collection methods, from face-to-face interviews to email interviews.  It is argued that this variation in interactions with participants means Fensham-Smith's (2017) interpretations may be influenced by the level of exposure or interaction she had with participants.  For example, during a face-to-face interview, the researcher is able to ask follow-up and clarification questions. However, during interviews conducted through email, Fensham-Smith (2017) acknowledges these interviews were "substantially shorter than the interviews using other mediums" and that it was "difficult to clarify questions to the participant retrospectively" (p. 72). Furthermore, as Fensham-Smith (2017) acknowledges,

due to the sampling techniques employed in the study, the findings of her research on new technologies potentially "do not represent the wider population of home-educating families (some of whom might not have access to the internet)" (p. 69-70). In addition, Fensham-Smith's (2017) sample was generated using virtual groups on the social media platforms of Yahoo! and Facebook. Given the sporadic and changeable nature of participation in online communities (Wenger, 1998), the wide variation in group members' level of participation and activity likely further increased the risk of selection bias in the study (i.e. individuals with a greater stake in participating in that group may potentially be disproportionately represented in an online survey sample). Taken together, the extent to which new technologies serve to promote solidarity in home-education outside of "middle-class families" (Fensham-Smith, 2017, p. 238) remains unclear.

### 4.2.3 The voice of the EHE CYP

What is also noteworthy of Fensham-Smith's (2017) research is the inclusion of what Goymer (2001) describes as the "voices" of home educated "late adolescents" (p.5). Indeed, Jennens (2011) notes that there are currently few studies in which EHE young people have been asked for their wishes and opinions. In a review of available data in the US, Murphy (2014) divides research on "post-homeschool graduates" into four categories: college preparation, access, and success; employment and military service; civic engagement; and satisfaction with education and life (p. 263). However, outside of the first category, participants in research that make up these categories are largely comprised of adults from religious, home education communities beyond college age (e.g. Knowles and Muchmore, 1995; Ray, 2004b; Pennings, Seel, Sikkink, Van Pelt & Wiens, 2011)

Though numerous researchers have noted that even the US research base is sparse (Cogan, 2010; Saunders, 2010; Kunzman & Gaither, 2013), the most researched subject regarding home educated young people in the US is their experience in college (Murphy, 2014), with research suggesting that home educated students apply and are admitted to postsecondary education in similar proportions to their school-educated peers (Lips and Feinberg, 2008). Indeed, Saunders (2010) suggests that meaningful differences between home educated students and peers from public schools with regards to college retention and academic performance are limited (Saunders 2010). College admission officers have assessed home

educated students as being as academically and socially prepared to handle the rigours of college life (Prue, 1997; Sorey & Duggan, 2008; Yu, Sackett & Kuncel, 2016). Once enrolled, some research has suggested that admission officers perceive home educated college students to be at least as successful as public school graduates (Sutton & Galloway, 2000; Sorey & Duggan, 2008; Yu *et al.*, 2016), while some earlier research found equivalence in home educated students and traditionally schooled students' earned grades (Gray, 1998; Galloway & Sutton, 1995; Oliviera, Watson & Sutton, 1994). Still, research on postsecondary academic outcomes is largely limited by small sample sizes of homeschooled students from a small number of postsecondary institutions. While research involving this age group of EHE young people has mostly focused on such comparing designs, some UK research has attempted to focus on the first-hand experiences of home educated young people.

In an effort to understand how home educated adolescents and their parents experience socialisation in relation to home education, de Carvahlo and Skipper (2018) conducted one-to-one interviews with three young people (aged 11-14), as well as interviews with their mothers. de Carvahlo and Skipper (2018) extrapolated from the data that adolescents participated in a range of social experiences that promoted their social skills, happiness and confidence, which in turn created a positive social environment and sense of community, and encouraged the adolescents to interact with a diverse range of people (de Carvahlo & Skipper, 2018). Though this research included only a small number of participants from a homogenous group (white British girls), thus rendering the results largely ungeneralizable, de Carvahlo and Skipper (2018) is an example of how UK home education researchers are attempting to find new ways of exploring the topic. The study aimed to explore a UK context-specific phenomenon (the tendency for significantly fewer adolescents to participate in home education network meetups than primary-aged children (Fortune-Wood, 2005)), and employed the use of interviews to explore the experiences of home educating families from their own perspectives, as opposed to social skills questionnaires, which are more prevalent in the socialisation literature. Furthermore, perhaps most significantly, de Carvahlo and Skipper (2018) note that research into the social development of home educated children and young people has been confined to children under the age of 11 (e.g. Rothermel, 2002), and aimed to address the absence of adolescent home educated voices in the literature. This

observation is largely representative of the absence of home educated young people's voices in home education research in general.

Indeed, the first-hand experience of home educated young people has been largely difficult to find in home education literature. Goymer (2001) references Webb's (1999) in-depth research, which found that home educated students went on to engage in a variety of employment and ongoing education courses, participate in a range of extracurricular activities, and were active in their communities. However, Webb's research (1999) comprised of participants in their twenties and thirties (despite Webb first speaking to a quarter of them as teenagers in the early 1980s). Goymer's (2001) own research did include home educated young adolescents (five participants aged 16 and over), whom he concluded could be successful in transitioning into "institutionalised further or higher education" (p. 192) and could gain access to "rewarding occupations" (p.193).

Following Goymer (2001), literature in this area remained under-researched and small scale in the UK until Nelson (2013), who focuses on the trajectory of 41 EHE CYP (aged 16 to 25) in England in terms of qualifications, transition to further education (college/university) and employment, describing these factors as 'outcomes'. Nelson (2013) found that 40 of the 41 respondents were in further education, employment or training. Furthermore, respondents felt that the development of skills they had gained from their education, such as initiative, self-motivation, and creative and critical thinking, and their transferable nature, were regarded as imperative for future success in further education or the job market. While Nelson (2013) is limited by methodological limitations and practical constraints experienced by other researchers (e.g. heterogeneity of the population and difficulties in obtaining adequate sample sizes), it is potentially the most comprehensive UK study of home educated young people by an individual who is not affiliated to the EHE community. Furthermore, Nelson (2013) represents a welcomed and needed space for EHE young people's voices, and reignites "one of the most commonly held questions in home education research: 'How does home education prepare young people for further education or the world of work?'" (p. 206).

# 5. The Role of the Educational Psychologist

While Jennens (2011) notes that "questions have been raised about the professional background and training of LEA officers" (p. 151) who work with EHE children and young people, which includes teachers, EPs and education welfare officers (Kendall & Atkinson, 2006; OFSTED, 2010), there remains little research into the role of the EP in supporting this population. This is despite a number of researchers noting the failure of schools to support or provide suitable and effective provision for SEN to be a motivating factor for families in choosing EHE (e.g. Nelson, 2013; Fortune-Wood, 2005). This was described by Parsons and Lewis (2010) as a 'push' factor away from school, as they found that two-thirds of the 27 parents of EHE children and yoiung people with SEN they surveyed identified this as the main reason for EHE. In addition, Nelson (2013) contends that EHE parents often feel they are left with no other choice than to home educate, in the face of what they perceive to be the failure of schools to decently address SEN. This trend was most recently supported by Fensham-Smith (2017), whose study found the SEN, mental health conditions and other general health problems of EHE learners to be a prominent theme within the 140 qualitative responses received in accounting for the reasons for choosing home education.

## 5.1 EPs and EHE

The role of the EP in supporting EHE families is an under-researched topic, though Arora (2003) suggested that EPs should become more involved in the EHE debate, outlining four reasons for doing so:

1. Equal rights - The status of EHE parents as taxpayers and their subsequent rights to receive the same services that are offered to schools, including educational psychology services (EPSs).

2. The psychological well-being and educational achievement of children with SEN, especially in light of contemporaneous research suggesting that a number of parents whose children were considered as being disruptive at school or who had learning difficulties (e.g. autism) were opting to home educate (Thomas, 1998; Dowty & Cowlishaw, 2002).

3. The growing numbers of the EHE population group.

4. Teaching and learning practices taking place in the EHE community.

On this final point, Arora (2003) suggested that a greater understanding of the learning processes involved in successful EHE has the potential to inform EPs about teaching approaches which could be used with children and young people failing within the school system. In particular, Arora (2003) noted the potential for exploring how a relaxed learning atmosphere and the flexible applications of discipline and use of time, which she sees as characteristics of EHE, might be applied in schools to better cater for individual needs. Finally, Arora (2003) described how an "increasing emphasis on life-long learning and the technologically induced shift from schools to the community as a resource for education" (p. 111), was forcing EPs to question whether it was suitable to continue to exclusively focus their professional endeavours to education in schools.

Like Nelson (2013), Jones (2013) is an excellent example of research which looks to enable the voice of EHE children and young people. Jones (2013) creatively explores nine children's (aged 7-14) experiences and perceptions of home education, encouraging EHE children and young people to take photographs of their lived experiences, which in turn are used to structure their written and verbal narratives (i.e. Photovoice). Using a flexible, qualitative design, Jones (2013) employed grounded theory and found that flexible and supportive learning contexts which provide a sense of active and autonomous involvement, as well as EHE children's sense of self, are linked to their learning choices and their engagement and passion for learning.

Similarly to Arora (2003), Jones (2013) also recognises how "a deeper awareness of the positive aspects of alternative forms of education may assist educational psychologists" (p.118) in providing support to families who are experiencing problems with schools and/or are considering EHE as an educational alternative. Jones (2013) suggests that this could range from designing specific interventions to address concerns regarding an individual child's engagement within school, to enabling families who want to educate their children at home to make more informed choices through providing advice and guidance (e.g. on

teaching and learning practices, cognitive development, additional support needs, etc.). Again, like Arora (2003), Jones (2013) questions the extent to which EPs should consider schools their sole working arenas, and draws attention to the focus of educational psychology as community psychology (King & Wilson, 2006), and the potential for EPs working in the broader community to assist LAs in supporting EHE families. Still, while Jones (2013) remains one of the few research projects into EHE which considers the role of the EP, the study's sample and size create issues with the generalisability of its findings with regards to EHE children and young people's outcomes.  In addition, it is suggested that limitations in the study's design may affect the validity of its findings. While the Photovoice method is reported to change the power balance in the research process by providing children with control over the data collection process (Alderson, 2001; Nelson and Christensen, 2009), Jones (2013) notes the influence of the participants' parents as a potential confound during the study as they supported their children in taking photographs.  In addition, it has been noted that interpretations of children's voices can be influenced by researchers' views about child development and what constitutes childhood (Hobbs, Todd & Taylor, 2000), which may be particularly important considering that children's active participation in the study was limited to the data collection stages, with their narratives subsequently interpreted by the researcher.

Considering the dearth of research in this area, it follows that the role of the EP in supporting the EHE population during post-16 transitions represents unchartered territory in the literature. Therefore, in order to provide context to this research, the following section considers the work of EPs to support school-based CYP and families during post-16 transitions.

*5.2 EPs and Post-16 transition*

*5.2.1 The psychology of transition*

One of the hallmarks of the structure of the UK education system is the major educational transitions that occur at specific ages and stages.  From the age of 16, children and young people in the UK can choose to continue their education at general Further Education (FE)

colleges, sixth form colleges or sixth forms attached to secondary schools. While educational psychology practice in Wales has remained within the sphere of 0 to 19 provision, the development of the Scottish Post-School Psychological Services (PSPS) has allowed EPs in Scotland the opportunity to grapple with the issues and dilemmas associated with working with the extended 0-25 age range (MacKay & Hellier, 2009). This provision has enabled an emerging research base which has explored the role and contribution of EPs in post-16 educational practice, including during transitions (Morris & Atkinson, 2018). For example, research has outlined a strategic role for EPs, including developing and promoting collaboration between education providers and external agencies, providing training, and overseeing the development of LA procedures and protocols (Craig, 2009; Mallinson, 2009).

For EPs in the rest of the UK, supporting post-16 learners represents a contemporary area of practice with a growing interest in how this can be best achieved (Atkinson & Dunsmuir, 2015). Indeed, interest has ranged from identifying and supporting young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) (Arnold & Baker, 2012; Currie & Goodall, 2009), supporting the development of young people's sexuality (Robinson, 2010) and working with children and young people at risk of social exclusion (Jane, 2010). In addition to these areas, Hayton (2009) argues that EPs are uniquely positioned to support young adults to improve self-awareness, identify strengths and raise aspirations, which may be particularly important in preparing for the transition to post-compulsory education and into vocational settings. Furthermore, Hayton (2009) emphasises that transition to adulthood can involve an exploration of issues for which many children and young people, especially those with SEND, need support and guidance, such as identity formation, personal values and future aspirations. Indeed, this transition represents the end of established home–school relationships and can be a challenging and emotional time for young people and their families (Esbrand, 2016; Knox, 2011; Tyson, 2011; White & Rae, 2016). Taken together, the wider post-16 transition literature suggests that EPs could have a role during this period in supporting children and young people in forming and managing new friendships, facilitating peer and parent support groups, and managing anxiety and building resilience (Bell, 2015; Esbrand, 2016; Knox, 2011).

*5.2.2 Person-Centred Practice*

There has been a longstanding interest in educational psychology practice in ascertaining the "Voice of the child" (Atkinson & Dunsmuir, 2015). As such, researchers have highlighted the role EPs might undertake in ensuring children and young people's views and aspirations are reflected in their post-16 options and in the decisions made regarding their future destinations. This includes enabling the meaningful inclusion of children and young people with specific and complex needs in decisions about their transition (Barrow, 2013; Franklin, 2013), as is congruent with the central ethos of legislation and guidance (i.e. the Children and Families Act (2014), the special educational needs and disability (SEND) Code of Practice (COP) (DfE/Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), 2014) and the proposed direction of ALN reforms in Wales), which advocate a person-centred planning approach for harnessing the needs, wishes and goals of children and young people.

This emphasis on person-centred practice is further supported by research findings detailing the importance of children and young people's involvement in decision making and their feelings of self-determination in relation to future outcomes (Carter, Cameron, Houghton, & Walton, 2013; Shogren, Wehmeyer, Palmer, Rifenbark, & Little, 2015). This is particularly pertinent, given Bason's (2012) finding that the extent to which FE pathways support young people's long-term aspirations is often unclear. Necessarily, the literature suggests EP's role in supporting post-16 transition should not be limited to transitions between compulsory-age educational providers and post-16 educational providers, with researchers highlighting a role for EPs in building links with post-16 settings, local employers and adult services in order to promote a broader inclusion agenda (Abbott & Carpenter, 2014; Bason, 2012; Knox, 2011). This would extend to maintaining an educational and employment focus within transition planning as necessary (Esbrand, 2016; Tyson, 2011), including supporting the development of life and employment skills, as well as work experiences that facilitate access to chosen future pathways (Morris & Atkinson, 2018), in order to facilitate a coherent and purposeful post-16 transition.

*5.2.3 Extending EP practice*

Morris & Atkinson (2018) noted the need for educational psychology practice to develop in order to facilitate this type of work. In the first instance, this involves increasing EPs'

knowledge and awareness of the specific needs and issues pertaining to post-16 populations. This includes EPs extending their understanding of the potential cultural differences surrounding the expectations of adulthood and the interdependence between young adults and their parents, as well as of theories of adolescence and the transition to adulthood (Atkinson & Dunsmuir, 2015; Esbrand, 2016; Dunsmuir & Hardy, 2016; Hayton, 2009). In addition, researchers suggest that EPs should look to support post-16 provisions to increase their feelings of competency and responsibility in transition practice. This might be achieved through promoting staff's understanding of organisational and developmental psychology (Bason, 2012; Knox, 2011) and emotional aspects of transition (Esbrand, 2016). Furthermore, by liaising with stakeholders and signposting families to other services (Esbrand, 2016; Craig, 2009), EPs could also act as a professional link between families and FE settings. However, EPs will need to increase their own understanding of FE curricula and existing support structures in order to achieve this (Atkinson & Dunsmuir, 2015).

*5.3 Rationale*

The structure and operationalisation of EPSs have been shown to be influenced by the socio-political context in which they operate (Farrell *et al.*, 2006; Stobie, 2002). Furthermore, Fallon, Woods, and Rooney (2010) found that the type of work EPs engage in, as well as the skills they utilize, is shaped by the model of service delivery. As such, it is reasonable to suggest that exterior influences, such as various legislative frameworks and socio-economic and political factors, have had consequences for the role of the EP and practice over the past decade. As such, the rationale for the current study has been designed and implemented with the following socio-political and legislative factors in mind:

1. *Increasing numbers of EHE children and young people in Wales*

In Wales, the pattern of increased numbers of EHE children and young people is in line with that of the UK as a whole (which amounts to the largest EHE population in Europe), as numbers of EHE children and young people in Wales are reported to have increased from 986 in 2011/12, to 1964 in 2017/18 (Welsh Government, 2017a, 2018a).

2. *Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018*

Changes to legislation and practice in England (i.e. Children and Families Act (DfE, 2014) and the SEND COP (DfE & DHSC, 2014)) mean EPs have experienced an extension in their role to cover the birth to 25 years age range (Morris & Atkinson, 2018). In Wales, similar reform is due to take place under the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018, which will see children and young people with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) supported from birth; whilst they are in school; and, if they are over compulsory school age, while they are in FE up to the age of 25 (Dauncey, 2018). For many EPs, meeting the needs of the post-16 SEND population, their families, and the staff supporting them is a role that is likely to involve working in new contexts (e.g. in FE settings, with different educational and training providers, and with adult services) (Morris & Atkinson, 2018).

In order to help inform professionals and policymakers how the growing EHE population is experiencing their children's transition into adult life in Wales, and investigate the role of education in this process, the current study will investigate the thoughts of EHE families on the post-16 transition process. In addition, as Fallon *et al.* (2010) point out, EPs need to demonstrate "professional flexibility and adaptability in the application of psychology" (p. 14) in accordance with socio-political shifts. Given the two factors listed above, it is argued that it is appropriate to suggest that one of the areas EPs should look to develop and extend their practice in is in supporting EHE families during EHE children and young people transition post-16 into FE and/or employment.

### 5.3.1 Research Question

A thorough literature search (See Chapter 1 for details) revealed no studies that have comprehensively addressed the role of the EP in supporting EHE children and young people and families during post-16 transition. This thesis, therefore, seeks to make a timely and significant contribution to this under-researched area by addressing the following research questions:

1. What are the current views of Welsh EHE families on transition post-16?

2.  What are EHE children and young people's views on what constitutes an 'efficient' and 'suitable' education, and whether they feel they received one, in light of their transition experiences?

3.  How much experience do EPs currently have in supporting EHE children and young people's transition post-16?

4.  What further potential role do EPs believe they can play during EHE children and young people's transition post-16?

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**Part II – Major Empirical Paper**

# 1. Abstract

The increasing population of home educated children and young people (CYP) in Wales is in line with the pattern of increased numbers of home educated CYP in the UK as a whole. In order to shed light on this social phenomenon, Elective Home Education (EHE) facilitators, EHE CYP, Educational Psychologists (EPs) and Trainee EPs (TEPs) were recruited to explore EHE families' experience of post-16 transition, and the potential role for EPs in supporting this process. Using a mixed methods design, the researcher employed online questionnaires and semi-structured interviews during data collection. Thematic Analysis (TA) and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)) analysis, as well quantitative analysis, was applied to relevant data. Findings suggested that EHE enabled numerous benefits to EHE CYP during Post-16 transition, though participants also noted systemic challenges that were specific to EHE CYP. EP and TEP respondents indicated that EPs are generally not involved in work with EHE CYP, or non-EHE CYP, during post-16 transition in Wales, although several areas in which EPs could support this process have been outlined. The research highlights a number of implications for educational psychology practice which should be cautiously explored, including developing practice through increasing EP knowledge and awareness of the provisions available to transitioning EHE CYP, and increasing all new partners' and key stakeholders' understanding of how EPs can support them during EHE CYP post-16 transition. In order to extend and deepen our understanding in this field, it is suggested that future researchers capitalise on imminent educational changes in Wales (i.e. implementation of the ALN Act 2018) by conducting action research in order to enrich our understanding of EHE in Wales, and how best to work with this population during post-16 transition.

# 2. Introduction

Modern EHE emerged in the UK in the late 1970s (Meighan, 1981). Today, the UK has an increasing population of EHE CYP which amounts to the largest in Europe, with numbers widely reported to be as many as 80,000 (e.g. Badman, 2009). In Wales, the pattern of increased numbers of EHE CYP is in line with that of the UK as a whole, as numbers of EHE CYP are reported to have increased from 986 in 2011/12, to 1964 in 2016/17 (Welsh Government, 2017a, 2018a).

Despite a small, growing body of academic scholarship on UK EHE in recent years, with researchers beginning to explore EHE from the perspectives of CYP engaged in the practice (e.g. Jones; 2013; Nelson 2013), research into EHE presents as notoriously difficult, with inherent challenges noted throughout the literature.  These challenges include the diversity of individuals engaged in the practice, the deinstitutionalised nature of the phenomenon, and the distrust with which some home educators regard external surveillance (e.g. Nelson, 2013; Morton, 2010; Kaseman & Kaseman, 2002). As such, EHE in the UK remains an under-researched phenomenon, with much of the literature produced aiming to identify "the parameters and characteristics of the home educating population" (Morton, 2010, p. 46), including the parental motivations for choosing to home educate (e.g. Parsons & Lewis, 2010; Rothermel, 2003) and the prevalence and demographics of EHE families (e.g. Badman, 2009; Fortune-Wood, 2005; Rothermel, 2003).

Following initiatives such as Every Child Matters (2003), which tasked local authorities (LAs) with the responsibility of ensuring the safety and well-being of all children in their authority (e.g. *Children Act*, 2004; *Every Child Matters*, 2003), post-2004 saw an increase in publicly commissioned research into EHE (e.g. Atkinson, Martin, Downing, Harland, Kendall & White, 2007; Hopwood *et al.*, 2007; Badman, 2009; Ofsted, 2010).  This research focused on aspects of policy and practice (Jennens, 2011), and at times, produced highly contentious findings and recommendations (e.g. Badman, 2009).  The most controversial of these was the mandatory registration of all EHE CYP with their LAs, with LAs' powers and duties enhanced to include annual home inspections to ensure the safety of EHE CYP (Badman, 2009). Although these recommendations were rejected by the EHE community, the debate on registration and LAs' ability to carry out safeguarding duties in relation to EHE CYP has persisted in both UK government (e.g. Department for Education (DfE), 2018) and media (e.g. Davies, 2017; Coughlan, 2018). Indeed, taken together, research and policy has tended to set LAs and home educators in opposition to one another, with LAs assuming responsibility for children they do not even necessarily know about.

Furthermore, the Education Act 1996 (Section 7) states that parents are responsible for ensuring that their children (aged 5-16) receive an 'efficient' and ' suitable' full-time education. However, there is currently no clear definition as to what is meant by an 'efficient'

and 'suitable' education, making it difficult for LAs to advise parents on what is considered 'suitable' (Hopwood, O'Neill, Castro & Hodgson, 2007).

Badman (2009, Section 3.5) notes that the UK court has broadly described an 'efficient' education as one that "achieves that which it sets out to achieve". A 'suitable' education has been interpreted by the court as one which prepares children for life in a modern civilised society and enables them to achieve their full potential (Arora, 2006). Davies (2015) argues that a suitable education should be similarly future-oriented, to support children's development "from neonates to interdependent adults equipping them for their lives" (p. 26).

## 2.1 The current study

The current study will investigate the thoughts of EHE families on the post-16 transition process. The study also aims to investigate the concepts of an 'efficient' and 'suitable' education from the perspectives of EHE CYP in Wales who have recently transitioned from compulsory education age into FE and/or employment. It is hoped that this research will help inform professionals and policymakers how this potentially growing population are experiencing their children's transition into adult life in Wales, and what role their education is playing in this process.

In addition, the current study will also aim to consider the role of educational psychologists (EPs) during EHE CYP transition post-16 and the potential support they can offer EHE families during this process. Considering the current focus on lifelong learning in Wales (e.g. Welsh Government, 2015), as well guidance set out in the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 for supporting all CYP with ALNs until age 25, it is appropriate to suggest that one of the areas EPs should look to support EHE families in is during EHE CYP transition post-16 into further education and/or employment.

## 2.2 Research Questions

| Research questions: |
| --- |
| 1. What are the current views of Welsh EHE families on transition post-16? |
| 2. What are EHE CYP's views on what constitutes an 'efficient' and 'suitable' education, |

| and whether they feel they received one, in light of their transition experiences? |
|---|
| 3. How much experience do EPs currently have in supporting EHE CYP's transition post-16? |
| 4. What further potential role do EPs believe they can play during EHE CYP's transition post-16? |

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Ontology, Epistemology and Methodology

Being in the process of training to become an EP practitioner, the researcher was ethically bound to frameworks which above all promote and protect the interests of service users (e.g. Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), 2018). As such, the researcher adopted a pragmatic paradigm, an approach that is concerned with enabling solutions (Patton, 2002; Creswell, 2003), rather than working towards discovering a mind-independent objective reality (e.g. Critical Realism). Pragmatism's emphasis on communication and shared meaning-making in order to create practical solutions to social problems (Shannon-Baker, 2016) make it a rational approach to research in the field of applied psychology.

In addition, pragmatism accommodates the multi-purpose nature of the current study. It is a paradigm that is congruent with the mixed quantitative and qualitative approaches taken within practitioner-based research (Armitage, 2007) and enables choices of approach (design and methodology) based directly on the purpose and nature of the questions posed (Creswell, 2003; Darlington & Scott, 2002). In this sense, the researcher is a proponent of the mantra outlined in Robson (2011): it is research questions that are central to the research process.

It is suggested that a mixed methods approach enables the current study to answer both confirmatory and exploratory questions, to present differing viewpoints through divergent findings, and the opportunity to provide stronger inferences through depth and breadth (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).

## 3.2 Method and Data collection

The study employed a multi-methods approach, as detailed in *Table 1*.

*Table 1*: Details of the methods employed in the current study.

| Participants | Data Collection |
|---|---|
| **EHE facilitators** <br><br><br> **EPs & TEPS** | **Questionnaires** <br><br> The quantitative element of the study involved two questionnaires: <br><br> – a questionnaire to EHE facilitators in Wales (Appendix A (electronic copy), Appendix B (hard copy)); <br><br> – a questionnaire to EPs and TEPs in Wales (Appendix C (electronic copy), Appendix D (hard copy)). <br><br> Each of these questionnaires also allowed participants the opportunity to offer qualitative feedback to expand on their quantitative answers if they wished. <br><br> Each of the questionnaires collected both demographic data and general feedback regarding their experiences and views of EHE, and EHE CYP's transition post-16 into future education or employment. <br><br> Data from both questionnaires were anonymised and used descriptively by the researcher to inform and provide a context for a discussion of research findings. Questionnaires for both EHE families and EPs were made available both online (Qualtrics) and as a hard copy. |
| **EHE CYP** | **Interviews** <br><br> Semi-structured, 1:1 interviews were preferred over structured interviews to ensure EHE CYP were given a central voice to inform the research (Fielding, 2004; Kvale, 1996). <br><br> An interview schedule was designed (see Appendix E) in accordance with Smith, Larkin & Flower's (2009) recommendations. However, semi-structured interviews offered the opportunity to modify the wording and order of questions, as well as to ask additional or unplanned questions, based on the flow of the interview and respondents' responses (Robson, 2011). |

## 3.3 Participants

In order to explore the research questions, the researcher recruited EHE facilitators and EPs and TEPs (see *Tables 2* and *3* for descriptive statistics). It was decided that TEPs were

included in the sample along with EPs following consideration of the emphasis placed within educational psychology practice on continuous professional development (as evinced, for example, by the British Psychological Society's (BPS) and Health and Care Professions Council's (HCPC) (2018) focus on supervision and reflective practice). As such, creating a distinction between EPs and TEPs in potentially under-developed and emerging areas of practice (e.g. work with EHE families and post-16 work in Wales) may be counterproductive.

In order to triangulate this data, the researcher also recruited a small, homogenous sample of EHE CYP (see *Table 4* for descriptive statistics). In line with IPA theory, this sample was selected purposively in order to offer the research project particular insight into a specific experience (i.e. Post-16 transition). In this sense, it is suggested that these EHE CYP "'represent' a perspective, rather than a population" (Smith *et al.*, 2009, p. 49).

*Table 2:* EHE facilitators' descriptive statistics.

| Number of participants | 18 |
|---|---|
| Average number of children | 2.78 |
| Mean age of CYP<br>(Data available for 45/50 CYP) | 12.91 years<br>Range = 29 years<br>(1-30 years) |
| Average length of CYP's EHE | 5.58 years<br>Range = 18.83 years<br>(2 months -19 years) |
| Have CYP ever attended school? | |
| - Yes | 80% |
| - Duration (mean) | 3.98 years<br>Range = 9.67<br>(4 months - 10 years) |
| Type of education (broadly) | |
| - Structured Learning | 0% |
| - Unstructured Learning | 17% |
| - A combination of both | 72% |
| - Other | 11% |
| Average hours a week on spent on EHE | 46.19 hours[2]<br>Range = 106<br>(6 - 112 hours) |

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[2] This total takes into account the answers of four participants who responded who stated that their children's education spanned the duration of a week (e.g. "24/7" or "all of the time"). In these cases, the duration has been calculated as an entire week's worth of hours minus 8 hours per night for sleep (i.e. 168 hours − 56 hours). The average number of hours spent on education per week when controlling for these four participants' responses totals 24.25 hours.

*Table 3:* EP's and TEP's descriptive statistics.

| Number of participants | 42 (31 EPs; 11 TEPs) |
|---|---|
| Place of work | Local Authority (100%) |
| Current position | |
| - PEP | 12% (*n* = 5) |
| - Senior | 17% (7) |
| - EP | 43% (15) |
| - Newly Qualified EP | 7%  (3) |
| - Locum | 2%  (1) |
| - TEP | 26% (11) |
| Number of years working in Wales:<br>- EPs | 9.32 years<br>Range = 29<br>(1-30 years) |
| - TEPs | 2 years<br>Range = 2<br>(1-3 years) |

*Table 4:* EHE CYP's descriptive statistics.

| Participant (Pseudonym) | AJ | OA | JB |
|---|---|---|---|
| Age | 16 | 16 | 16 |
| Current Post-16 educational provision | FE College<br><br>(A levels) | FE College<br><br>(Accountancy Qualification) | N/A |
| Current Post-16 employment status | N/A | Part-time Labouring/Construction work | Self-employed<br><br>(Family business) |
| Number of years in EHE | Entire life | 5 years<br><br>(since Year 7) | 5 years<br><br>(since Year 7) |
| Religion | Christian | Jehovah's Witness | Jehovah's Witness |
| Years in School | None | Reception class to Year 7<br><br>(briefly attended Secondary school) | Reception class to Year 7<br><br>(briefly attended Secondary school) |

*3.4 Research Procedure*

*Table 5*: Details of the research procedure relating to each of the participant groups.

| **EHE facilitators** | The researcher recruited EHE facilitators using a volunteer sampling method. EHE facilitators were contacted through: <br><br> – LA officers in each of the LAs in Wales. <br> – EHE groups and organizations around the country using social media and known email addresses. <br><br> All EHE facilitators with experience of EHE were considered eligible to participate. EHE facilitators were not excluded from the study based on their child(ren) 's current educational provision. |
|---|---|
| **EHE CYP** | The researcher recruited EHE CYP using a volunteer sampling method. Each EHE CYP participant was contacted through the social media pages and known email addresses of EHE groups and organizations around the country. <br><br> All EHE CYP aged 16-18 living in Wales were eligible to volunteer to participate in the study, regardless of whether their EHE facilitators participated in the study. <br><br> Each CYP participated in a structured interview from their homes via Skype. Each interview lasted approximately 40 minutes. |
| **EPs and TEPs** | The researcher recruited volunteer participant EPs and TEPs currently working in Wales through contacting each of the EPSs in Wales. The researcher also recruited via a posting on EPNET, the main professional electronic discussion forum for UK based EPs, in order to seek out EPs currently working in Wales outside of LA EPSs. All EPs and TEPs currently working in Wales were considered eligible to participate in the study. |

*3.5 Analysis*

*Table 6*: Details of data analysis employed by the researcher.

| **EHE facilitators** | Qualitative data from the questionnaires was analysed using Thematic Analysis, in accordance with Braun & Clarke's (2006) clearly outlined six-step process (see Appendix F and Appendix G for examples). Thematic analysis was chosen due to its flexibility; it does not prescribe methods of data collection (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 178). This was considered ideal |
|---|---|

| EPs & TEPS | for the qualitative data garnered from these respondents, which varied greatly in form and quantity (e.g. bullet points, lists and narrative sentences). |
|---|---|
| | Qualitative data arising from online questionnaires questions offered EHE facilitators and EPs and TEPs to expand on quantitative data was analysed inductively. During the analysis process, the researcher attempted to produce a rich description of the overall data by suspending his own analytic preconceptions, and carrying out the coding without trying to fit the data into a pre-existing coding frame (Braun & Clarke, 2006). |
| | Quantitative data was analysed using Microsoft Excel. |
| EHE CYP | Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is an established method in clinical, health and social psychology. It offers a detailed and nuanced analysis of data on topics which are often underexplored and of considerable importance to the participant (Flowers, Davis, Larkin, Church &Marriott, 2011; Smith *et al.*, 2009). |
| | Audio-recordings of EHE CYP were transcribed verbatim and analysed in accordance with the step-by-step IPA procedure (Smith *et al.*, 2009) (see Appendix H and Appendix I for examples). To ensure engagement with the data began as soon as possible, each participant's analysis was conducted separately, prior to full group analysis taking place. |

*3.6 Ethical Considerations*

In accordance with the principles of ethical practice set out by the BPS (2014, 2018), a number of ethical issues were considered in the development of this research study (see *Table 7* for a summary). The study met the ethical requirements of Cardiff University's Ethics Committee.

*Table 7*: Overview of ethical issues and the researcher's subsequent actions.

| Ethical Consideration | Researcher Actions |
|---|---|
| **Informed consent** | All participants were given a comprehensive information sheet detailing the title and aim of the study (Appendix J). |
| | All participants completed relevant consent forms in order to participate in the study (see Appendix K for EHE facilitators and EPs consent form. |

| | See Appendix L for EHE CYP consent form). |
|---|---|
| | All the participants were provided with a debrief form (Appendix M). In addition, the issue of consent was revisited with EHE CYP participants during the interview process itself, with specific oral consent being sought. |
| **Right to withdraw** | All participants were made aware of their right to withdraw from the study on the information sheet, the consent forms and, in the case of EHE CYP participants, prior to the commencement of the semi-structured interviews. |
| | The researcher explicitly stated that following the transcription of the semi-structured interview, it would not be possible for the participant to withdraw from the study. |
| | An estimated date of transcription was provided to all the participants. None of the EHE CYP participants withdrew from the study. |
| **Debrief** | Following participation, all participants received a debriefing letter (Appendix M) and were offered the opportunity to read the written research report. |
| **Confidentiality and anonymity** | The electronic questionnaires were created, linked, distributed and monitored via that researcher's personal Cardiff University account. No hard copy questionnaires were submitted to the researcher during or following the study. Only the researcher had access to participants' responses. |
| | To ensure EHE CYP anonymity, pseudonyms have been used in interview transcripts and a code has been used which links the pseudonyms to personal data; this information was stored separately. The personal data is stored securely in a locked cabinet in order to maintain confidentiality. Pseudonyms have also been used in the reporting of findings. |
| | All participants were informed of the limits of confidentiality when consenting to the research. |
| **Data management and retention** | In accordance with data protection legislation (i.e. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (2018)) the researcher took the following steps to maintain confidentiality: |
| | - All electronic recorded files were password protected.<br>- The device used to record the interviews was stored in a locked cabinet |

| | |
|---|---|
| | – All electronic files were deleted upon transcription and analysis.<br>– The researcher has not discussed or transcribed any information that might enable an individual to be traced. |
| **Risk to participants** | Although none of the EHE CYP participants expressed upset during the interview process, careful planning prior to the interviews ensured the researcher was prepared appropriately to signpost participants to further information or services. |
| **Privacy and safety** | The EHE CYP interviews were conducted via Skype, and as such, each EHE CYP participant took part in the safety and privacy of his/her own home. |

## *3.7 Researcher's Position*

Due to the important role the researcher plays in IPA and its double hermeneutic approach, the researcher notes that he was not home educated, nor is he personally or professionally invested in the reputation of the practice. Still, the researcher remains conscious of the potential for his background and his experiences during the research process to influences his view of the topic being researched. As such, in an attempt to ensure the interpretation of data remained as true to participants' constructs as possible, the researcher maintained a research journal throughout the research process (from the construction of an ethics proposal to the recruitment of participants to data analysis and report writing). In accordance with Smith *et al.* (2009), this enabled the researcher to collect and refer to reflective and reflexive comments from the research process during data analysis.

## **4. Findings**

### *4.1 EHE facilitators*

#### *4.1.1 Quantitative findings*

*Table 8:* Quantitative data from EHE facilitators' questionnaire responses.

| | |
|---|---|
| Have CYP that have transitioned to post-16 education | 50% (*n* = 9 out of 18 respondents) |
| Have CYP that have transitioned to post-16 employment | 44% (*n* = 8 out of 18 respondents) |
| My child(ren)'s education is/has been tailored with a specific future education or employment in mind. | 56% (*n* = 9 out of 16 respondents) |

| | |
|---|---|
| Has your child(ren)'s home education been tailored to prepare them for this transition in any other way? | Yes = 63% (*n* = 10 out of 16 respondents) |
| How do you feel about your child(ren)'s options post-16? | |
| - Very Confident | 47% (*n* = 8 out of 17 respondents) |
| - Confident | 24% (*n* = 4) |
| - Somewhat Confident | 12% (*n* = 2) |
| - Neither Confident or concerned | 6% (*n* = 1) |
| - Somewhat Concerned | 6% (*n* = 1) |
| - Concerned | 6% (*n* = 1) |
| - Very Concerned | 0% (*n* = 0) |
| Based on my current experience, I foresee my child(ren) pursuing the following post-16 option: | |
| - Level 3 Qualifications at home | 6% (*n* = 1 out of 17 respondents) |
| - Level 3 Qualifications at school | 0% (*n* = 0) |
| - Level 3 Qualifications at an FE college | 24% (*n* = 4) |
| - Training placement | 6% (*n* = 1) |
| - Employment with no specifically linked education or training | 6% (*n* = 1) |
| - Other (please describe) | 59% (*n* = 10) |
| How would you describe your relationship with the Local Education Authority? | |
| - Very Good | 11% (*n* = 2 out of 18 respondents) |
| - Good | 22% (*n* = 4) |
| - Neither Good nor Poor | 56% (*n* = 10) |
| - Poor | 0% (*n* = 0) |
| - Very Poor | 11% (*n* = 2) |
| Does this relationship impact on your feelings about your child(ren)'s post-16 transition? | Yes - 28% (*n* = 5 out of 18 respondents) |
| Have experience of working with an EP? | Yes - 11% (*n* = 2 out of 18 respondents) |

Results from the quantitative elements of the questionnaire indicate that the majority of EHE facilitator respondents are confident about their child/children's post-16 transition, with 14 out of 17 respondents (82.35%) rating themselves between 'Somewhat Confident' and 'Very confident' regarding this transition.

With regards to preparation for this transition, 9 of the 16 respondents (56% ) reported that their child/children's home education was tailored with a specific future education or

employment in mind, while 10 out of 16 respondents (63%) reported that their child/children's home education had been tailored to prepare them for this transition in other ways (e.g. practicing functional life skills for a child with a specific learning difficulty and personal training qualifications to learn about nutrition and keeping the body healthy).

When asked to predict the route they expect their children to take post-16 transition, 5 out of 17 respondents (30%) foresee their child/children pursuing a Level 3 qualification either at home ($n =1$) or at an FE College ($n =4$). Interestingly, none of the respondents envisioned their children entering a sixth form within a school. In addition, 1 respondent (6%) saw their child/children doing a training placement, with 10 out of 17 respondents (59%) selecting the "Other" option. Qualitative data linked to this option suggested these respondents were either unsure of how to make this prediction, given the potential for a myriad of possibilities (e.g. a combination of options and unforeseen circumstances).

The vast majority of the 18 respondents ($n = 16$; 89%) reported that they did not have any experience of working with an EP, while those that did ($n = 2$) had only worked with an EP in a professional capacity (i.e. as part of their own job role). From 18 respondents, the majority (56%) of EHE facilitators described their relationship with the Local Authority (LA) as 'Neither Good nor Poor'. Still, around a quarter (28%) of the 18 respondents reported that their relationship with the LEA in some way impacts their feelings about their child/children's post-16 transition.

### 4.1.2 Qualitative Findings

Three themes were constructed from the qualitative data derived from the EHE facilitators' online questionnaires. They are organised and presented below.

*Table 9*: Thematic tree - **Home Education Learning**

| Organising Theme | Sub Themes Level 1 | Illustrative Quotations |
|---|---|---|
| **Home Education Learning** | Effective Learning environment | *"Being home educated has allowed them to flourish in an environment which is comfortable to them". Participant 7* <br><br> *"Their education is not limited to or cut short by a timetable or classroom disruptions". Participant 15* |

| | | Person-centred practice | *"Home education allows each child to be nurtured and encouraged in line with their individual needs". Participant 15*<br><br>*"We believe each of our children is an individual and as such, they learn in their own unique ways". Participant 7* |
|---|---|---|---|

Theme 1: **Home Education Learning**

This theme communicates what EHE facilitators believe to be the positive ways in which home education allows for optimal learning conditions. Specifically, participants commented on the perceived benefits of education taking place in the physical home environment, which was seen as a context within which they feel comfortable and secure. This feeling of security extended to the sense of control a CYP can exert over his/her own learning, as learning activities are free of external constraints such as time tables and the need for classroom management. Similarly, respondents noted the bespoke nature of EHE, which was related to personal development in line with a CYP's specific needs.

*Table 10:* Thematic tree – **Home Education Enables**

| Organising Theme | Sub Themes Level 1 | Sub Themes Level 2 | Illustrative Quotations |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Home Education Enables** | Experience and Understanding of the World | Work experience | *"They have much experience of the adult world and are familiar with many work settings". Participant 6*<br><br>*"She had a part-time job whilst studying, so already has job experience". Participant 10* |
| | | Social Exposure | *"Primarily the fact that they (EHE CYP) are used to natural social exposure…the HE child is not trying to fit their experience of school environs into the workplace". Participant 1* |
| | | Thinking Differently | *"They become people who are forward thinkers, progressive, often work for themselves and are entrepreneurial". Participant 12*<br><br>*"HE is good because it helps children to see outside of the rigid regime of school /straight to uni / straight to corporate job". Participant 9* |
| | Independence | Autonomy | *"They also seem to be able to think for themselves, as opposed to waiting to be told how to do something".* |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | *Participant 13* |
| | | "Not spoon fed" | *"...independent learning skills not spoon fed what they need to know". Participant 2* <br><br> *"The way we home educate has allowed the children to take ownership of their work, and they do not need to be spoon fed and propelled every moment to do something". Participant 12* |
| | | Self-confidence | *"The confidence that my daughter has now, she is willing to try anything, she isn't worried about what the latest fad is or what others think". Participant 13* |
| | | Interest, not prescribed | *"They will have a much better idea about what their passions are and so probably will choose a pathway that meets their needs not just what society expects them to do". Participant 3* <br><br> *"They learn because they want to, not because someone says they need to". Participant 7* |

Theme 2: **Home Education Enables**

The theme 'Home Education Enables' describes the ways in which CYP benefit from engaging in the practice of EHE. The theme communicates what EHE facilitators believe to be the positive ways in which home education prepares EHE CYP for post-16 transition. EHE facilitators noted the breadth of experience EHE CYP are likely to gain through EHE, particularly with regards to the world of work, as well as to a broad and diverse range of people. Termed here as "Social Exposure", EHE facilitators commented on travel experiences and interactions with people from different cultures that would enable EHE CYP to be prepared for the social demands of adult life. These experiences were sometimes contrasted with the perceived experiences of school non-EHE children, who EHE facilitators hypothesised had a narrower range of experiences to take forward during post-16 transition. EHE facilitators described EHE CYP as being creative and unencumbered by schooling, which in turn allowed them to think about their futures in a creative way. Related to this was the sub-theme "Independence", which is characterised by a sense of autonomy and self-confidence, which EHE was reported to garner in CYP. In addition, EHE facilitators commented on the likelihood of EHE CYP following a path that is in line with their interests and needs Post-16, as opposed to conforming to any external influences or demands.

*Table 11:* Thematic tree – **Barriers to Post-16 Transition**

| Organising Theme | Sub Themes Level 1 | Sub Themes Level 2 | Illustrative Quotations |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Barriers to Post-16 transition** | Negative Effect of others | Peer effects | *"...they have sometimes struggled when other students don't get their work done and mess around".* Participant 5 |
| | | Misconceptions | *"The misconceptions of those ignorant of Home Education".* Participant 10<br><br>*"Home educated children can suffer from prejudices caused by media rhetoric".* Participant 1 |
| | Institutional Concerns | Systemic issues | *"Obstacles put in their path by the authorities quite frankly, which include not fitting into the box of entry standards for Universities etc., because they only recognise the traditional education systems measurements of competency".* Participant 12<br><br>*"Authoritarian/hierarchical structures at VIth form... Being 'too questioning'".* Participant 17 |
| | | Specialist support | *"Some Local Authority employed Ed Psychs believe they cannot make an assessment of needs on a Home Educated child, due to lack of being able to observe at school. This is unlawful and bad practice".* Participant 10<br><br>*"In the case of specific learning difficulties no official record of how they learn and help required".* Participant 2 |

Theme 3: **Barriers to Post-16 Transition**

EHE facilitators commented on the perceived negative effects EHE CYP might experience in their interactions with other people during and following post-16 transition. This included the potential difficulty for EHE CYPs to engage in learning activities due to the distracting behaviours of other CYP. EHE facilitators also noted the potential negativity EHE CYP might encounter due to the misconceptions of others when it came to EHE. In particular, there was a concern that others might be unaware of what EHE is, or have predetermined ideas about the practice based on media reports. The sub-theme 'Institutional Concerns' highlights EHE facilitators' concerns regarding the potentially oppressive nature of post-16 education systems. Much of this concern was related to tensions stemming from educational philosophies, as EHE facilitators highlighted the potential for EHE CYP not to conform to perceived systemic demands. There was also the concern that some EHE CYP would be without the necessary support post-16 due to a lack of access to professionals or a recorded history of additional needs.

Taken together, these results generally indicate that EHE facilitators are confident about their children's post-16 transition, whether to education, employment or training. Respondents noted the enabling nature of EHE, which develops key skills and competencies for EHE CYP to utilise during and after post-16 transition. Barriers to transition were largely limited to external factors, namely relationships with others and potential oppressive systems, which EHE facilitators suggested EHE CYP would need to overcome. Still, EHE facilitators expressed confidence in the practice of EHE and in their children's ability to successfully negotiate this transition into early adulthood.

*4.2 EPs and TEPs*

*4.2.1 Quantitative findings*

*Table 12:* Findings from EP and TEP questionnaires.

| | N | Min | Max | Mean | Std. Deviation | Variance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Experience in supporting **EHE CYP aged 5-16** | 42 | 1 | 8 | 2.98 | 1.095 | 1.200 |
| Experience in supporting EHE families during EHE CYP's transition into **future education** post- 16 | 42 | 1 | 7 | 1.43 | 1.128 | 1.273 |
| Experience in supporting EHE families during EHE CYP's transition into **future employment** post-16 | 42 | 1 | 7 | 1.36 | 1.027 | 1.055 |

Results from the ten-point scaling questions indicate that EPs and TEPs in Wales currently hold little experience in supporting EHE families during post-16 transition. EPs and TEPs reported their current experience to be low in supporting EHE families during both EHE CYP's transition into future post-16 education (*Mean (M)*) = 1.43) and employment (*M* = 1.36). Furthermore, 7 out of the 42 respondents (17 %) reported that in their experience, EPs are not currently involved in supporting EHE young people's transition into future education or employment post-16 in Wales. This lack of experience also extended to work with EHE

families in general, with respondents also reporting their current level of experience in supporting EHE CYP aged 5-16 as low ($M$) = 2.98).

Qualitative data linked to these questions provided further insight into EP and TEP experience with EHE families.  Reports from respondents with some experience in working with EHE families, in general, indicate that supporting the reintegration into school following EHE was the most typical work with this population, followed by being involved in supporting families currently considering EHE, and undertaking statutory assessments.

### 4.2.2 Qualitative Findings

Three themes were constructed from the qualitative data derived from EPs' and TEPs' online questionnaire responses.  They are organised and presented below.

*Table 13:* Thematic tree - **What's getting in the way?**

| Organising Theme | Sub Themes Level 1 | Sub Themes Level 2 | Illustrative Quotations |
|---|---|---|---|
| **What's getting in the way?** | Soft systems | Who's responsible? | *"There is no legal requirement for families who EHE to liaise with, or even inform, local authorities".* Participant 3<br><br>*"Out of sight, out of mind - I believe that is the general view of the education dept. senior management (not EPs)".* Participant 28 |
| | | Understanding EHE | *"I feel that EPs need to be mindful of the fact that families have "opted out" of the local authority system by EHE and will need to be sensitive to this with regards what role EPs may have…"* Participant 38<br><br>*"The LA's focus on getting the children back into school without consideration about why the parents have opted for EHE".* Participant 19 |
| | | Need to develop a relationship | *"Forging a real relationship with the EHE community".* Participant 16<br><br>*"Relationship between the EHE parents and the LA may make working with the population difficult".* Participant 19 |
| | | "Time out" at 16 | *"We have an EP who deals with EHE students as part of EOTAS role but tends to time out at 16".* Participant 4 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | *"The majority of time is spent with children aged 2-14".* Participant 1<br><br>*"I don't think EPs in Wales are involved enough in supporting LA-educated young people's transition into FE post-16, let alone EHE young people!"* Participant 5 |
| | Practical Barriers | Invisible population | *"I think part of the difficulty with this group is them being visible in the first place and known to agencies".* Participant 21<br><br>*"Not having the families' details".* Participant 19 |
| | | The referral process | *"At present, the majority of EPs can only be accessed through school".* Participant 38<br><br>*"There needs to be a route for EHE parents to be able to access LA support when these difficulties arise".* Participant 19 |
| | | Capacity Issues | *"Funding is the key issue. Overstretched services struggle to support children in schools let al.one supporting EHE children".* Participant 30<br><br>*"Staffing cuts in services means little support available".* Participant 29 |

Theme 1: **What's getting in the way?**

This theme considers the reported reasons EPs and TEPs feel they are currently not involved in work with EHE families. These issues related to both work with EHE transition post-16, and to work with EHE families in general, with two sub-themes emerging from the data. The sub-theme 'Soft Systems' relates to the beliefs, relationships, attitudes and assumptions held in LA services regarding EHE. EPs and TEPs reported a potential breakdown in relationships with the EHE community, as well as a lack of clarity with regards to the community needs. This confusion seemed to stem from a number of variables, such as unfamiliarity with HE communities, as well as a lack of responsibility being taken for these families in light of legal requirements and service culture. Secondly, respondents noted tangible, practical barriers to working with EHE families. This sub-theme draws attention to how standard service referral processes are currently incompatible with the nature of EHE, and recalls the ongoing debate of an EHE register, as respondents note current difficulties of identifying the EHE population in the first instance. Finally, the sub-theme 'Capacity Issues' is comprised of concerns of practitioners over services' increasing struggles to support the

level of need in schools, where work is traditionally undertaken, even before considering undertaking further work with the EHE population.

*Table 14:* Thematic tree - **Potential EP contribution during post-16 transition**

| Organising Theme | Sub Themes Level 1 | Sub Themes Level 2 | Illustrative Quotations |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Potential EP contribution during post-16 transition** | Bespoke transition | Person-centred planning | "Person-centred planning meetings with the young person and those important to them with a focus on meeting their aspirations for their future". Participant 31<br><br>"Running a PATH with the child and their family/school staff to help plan for the future". *Participant 22* |
| | | Assessing need for appropriate placement | "Making an assessment of need to ensure the education or employment placement can support the young person appropriately". *Participant 5*<br><br>"I think we could provide a good insight into needs and what provision would be appropriate for Post-16 to support employers/educators understanding". *Participant 33* |
| | Support the system | Enabling Dialogue | "Enabling dialogue between future employers, university staff and college staff to facilitate a smoother transition. These consultative discussions may ensure that support is continued after Post-16". *Participant 8* |
| | | Multi-agency working | "Closer working with other agencies where information about EHE YOUNG PEOPLE would be disseminated and where the EP role could be seen as part of a joint initiative". *Participant 25*<br><br>"Help facilitate a multi-agency approach to ensuring the young person can make an informed decision regarding transition". *Participant 5* |

Theme 2: **Potential EP Contribution during Post-16 Transition**

This theme is made up of the potential ways respondents thought EPs might be able to contribute to EHE CYP post-16 transition, organised here in two sub-themes: 'Bespoke Transition' and 'Support the System'. 'Bespoke Transition' was heavily focussed on providing individual and tailored support to the CYP to enable a suitable transition. Within this, EPs and TEPs highlighted the potential for them to use person-centred practices to ensure the CYPs voice is central to the process. Respondents also noted the potential for EPs to provide an assessment of needs to ensure the CYP is transitioning to an appropriate

provision that can support their needs. The sub-theme 'Support the System' consisted of the work EPs could potentially undertake with key stakeholders and professionals working around the CYP. This involved enabling dialogue between those currently working with the CYP and post-16 education provisions or employers, as well as engaging in multi-agency work, to ensure a well-coordinated and coherent transition.

*Table 15:* Thematic tree - **Enabling post-16 work**

| Organising Theme | Sub Themes Level 1 | Illustrative Quotations |
|---|---|---|
| **Enabling Post-16 work** | Increase awareness of EPs | *"An initial step may be EPs becoming visible to the Post-16 community in terms of educational settings and provisions and marketing what they can offer and how they can help to support CYP and families". Participant 21* |
| | The new ALN bill | *"The new Code of Practice will require EPs in Wales to take a more prominent role in planning for and working with YP aged 16 - 25 years, particularly those with ALN". Participant 27*<br><br>*"I think we will have a greater role with the new ALN bill covering up to 25 and I think it will improve outcomes for post-16". Participant 33* |
| | Increase EP knowledge on Post-16 | *"EP's need to be clued up on how to support those who work with young people within this age range". Participant 8*<br><br>*"I think there is a huge piece of work for EPs in becoming aware of Post-16 options in order to be able to support and work alongside CYP at this transition point". Participant 21* |

Theme 3: **Enabling Post-16 work**

This theme considers the ways in which EPs might increase their involvement with EHE families and CYP. Respondents noted the potential need for EPSs to become more involved with post-16 settings in order to increase these settings' awareness of the support that could be offered to post-16 CYP. Respondents also noted the need for EPs to increase their knowledge and awareness of EP provisions, as well as the needs and issues that are specific to this population and these settings. Finally, respondents expressed their expectancy for post-16 work to become more prevalent in Wales as a result of the imminent implementation new ALN Bill in Wales. Respondents reasoned that with the new 0-25 age range that services will be offering support to coming into effect, there will be a greater role for EPs working with this population which should result in greater post-16 transition outcomes.

In general, these results indicate that EP and TEP respondents feel there are a number of ways in which EPs could contribute effectively to support the post-16 transition of EHE CYP.  This involved having a key role in working with education staff and employers, as well as professionals, to ensure the voice and specific needs of these CYP and families are central to transition. However, respondents remained cautious throughout and highlighted numerous barriers to working with this population, such as clearly identified routes to support and developing an understanding of the specific needs of this population during the post-16 transition process.

*4.3 EHE CYP findings*

The following section presents the interpreted themes from the IPA exploration of the research questions. These themes represent higher order concepts and thematic patterns developed from the individual analysis. The results of the IPA are presented in a thematic map (*Figure 1*).

While the post-16 transition experiences of the CYP in this study are by their nature interlinked with their thoughts and beliefs regarding what constitutes sufficient and efficient, it was determined that two of the super-super-ordinate themes generally relate to question 1, while the remaining theme relates to question 2.

For an overview of superordinate themes (with subordinate themes) for each participant, refer to Appendix N.

*Figure 1:* the **super-super-ordinate themes**, <u>*super-ordinate themes*</u>, and *subordinate themes*.
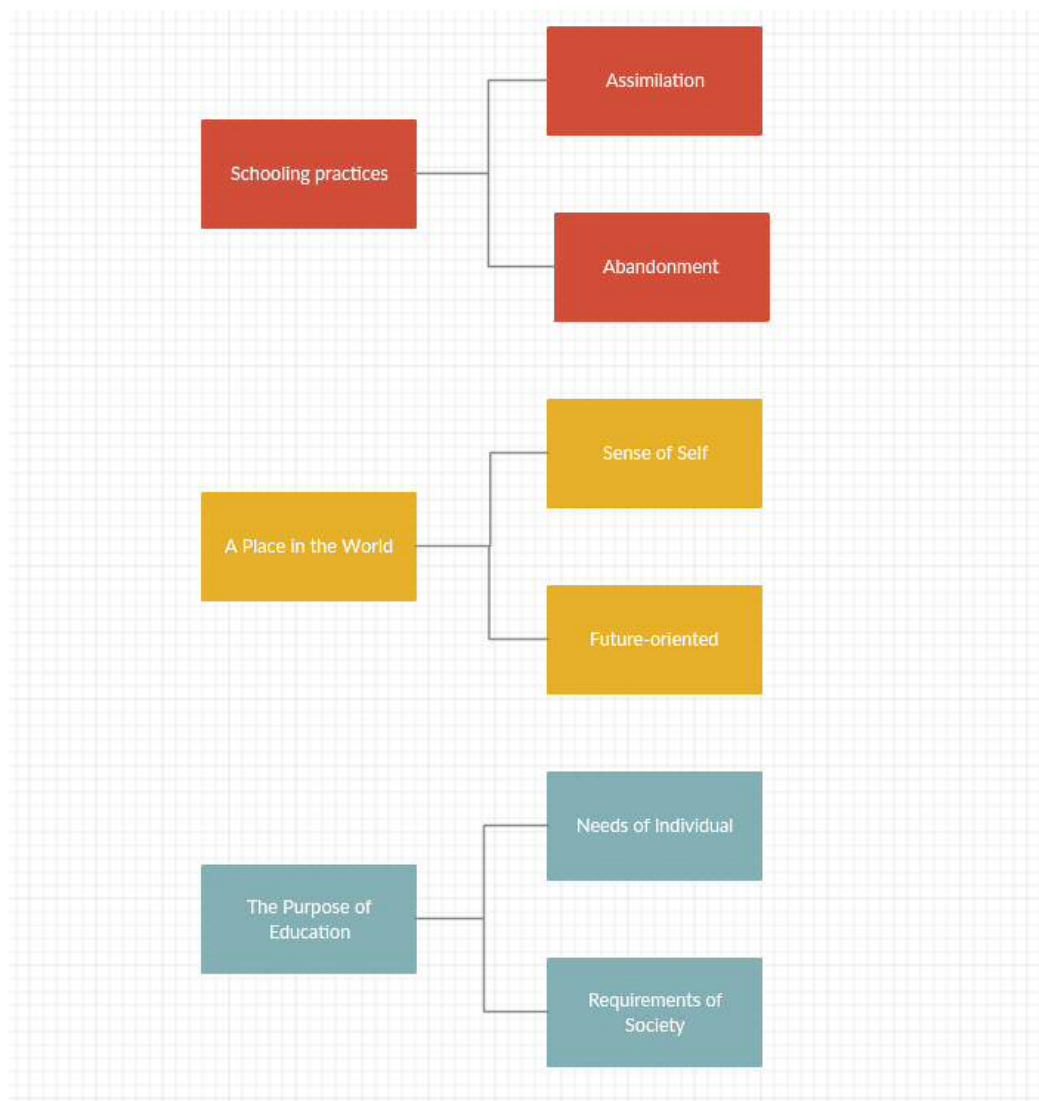


*4.3.1* **Schooling Practices**

- <u>*Assimilation*</u>
- <u>*Abandonment*</u>

All three EHE CYP reported the influence of schooling on their transition into post-16 provision.  While JB describes his transition to HE as initially "like you would be doing in

school, just at home", he and his family soon abandoned traditional schooling conventions (e.g. studying a set number of topics, working to set times, etc.). The negotiation he had with his parents at the beginning of his EHE sharpened the focus of his education towards career preparation and what he terms to be "vital" subjects (i.e. numeracy and literacy). For JB, this gradual distancing from school to preparation for a pre-agreed career casts his EHE in functional terms, and is emblematic of his idea of an efficient education: "I suppose it's doing the right amount of education and still learning the most" (line 204).

In contrast, OA's and AJ's post-16 transition is a move from EHE to educational institutions. Both young people describe the challenges of assimilating into post-16 education, which involves practices closely associated with traditional schooling. For AJ, who had never previously attended school, her unfamiliarity with school procedures, such as timetabling and navigating educational sites, was particularly challenging: "They were like, 'There isn't a lesson until period 3', and I was like, "I don't know what that means'" (lines 244-5). However, for OA, re-entering a classroom environment recalled some of the challenges of learning in environments with numerous potential distractions:


*O*:        *Well when I'm on my own, if I want to concentrate, I'll stick my headphones on, put something I like on and I'll just control the environment around me. I like to be in my own head if that makes sense?*

*Researcher*:     *Yeah.*

*O*:        *So, whereas, if I'm in the college and there's people talking to me and I have to explain myself, whereas if I'm at home I can just focus on what I need to do and how I need to do it.*

*Researcher*:     *Yeah.*

*O*:        *So, there'll be no one else to interrupt that thought process.*

<div align="right">Lines 366-378</div>

### 4.3.2 A Place in the World

- *Sense of Self*
- *Future-oriented*

All three of the CYP described post-16 transition plans that are heavily influenced by their career goals. Both JB and OA expressed a sense of security in understanding the function of their post-16 provision with regards to their futures. In OA's case, his decision to study accountancy had tangible functions, namely, to enter an eventual career and way of working (e.g. part-time and self-employed) which would best allow him the freedom to engage in his religious activities. For JB, setting the foundation for his chosen career as early as he did served to validate the decision to become home educated, and gave him a sense of purpose and direction, which he valued:

> *"So, this was the thing where, if you come out, you'll still be learning, you'll be getting a few qualifications, and this will be your eventual job route. So it was a help".*

Lines 133-4

For AJ, being adaptable and having the opportunity to arrive at her ideal career in a number of ways reflect the unstructured nature of home education. In this sense, EHE has prepared her for the potential obstacles or difficulties that might arise in attempting to achieve her goal, namely by being adaptable and having alternative methods (e.g. joining the special constables, going to university, matching coherent A level subjects).

Both OA and JB expressed a strong *Sense of Self*, which seemingly relates to having a sense of purpose. OA's identity as a Jehovah's Witness (JW), which he himself reaffirmed independently of his parents, gives meaning to his aspirations as he enters adulthood. His desires for travel, social and work experiences revolve around a commitment to his faith (e.g. serving the JW community through volunteer projects). Similarly, JB's emerging identity as a gas engineer seemingly provides him with feelings of security, as he relates the profession with the stability of family and the opportunity to work independently as a business partner. During the interview, JB proudly referred to his chosen profession, pointing out the logo on the uniform he wore as he told me about his career. Conversely, the transition to further

education revealed anxieties in AJ which she struggled to articulate: "I don't know, there was something wrong with me.  Problems" (line 764).

Having never attended school, AJ identified more clearly with the label of home education more than the other CYP. EHE was closely related to the influence of her family, and AJ fondly recalled learning experiences with her siblings and mother:

> "*And then you can like explore things like that, because we kind of did that anyway, just because my family is mad*".

<div align="right">Lines 276-7</div>

AJ also shared her feelings of vulnerability when she wasn't a part of learning experiences with her family:

> "*I did English Literature again cos some people we knew were going and then so were my brother and mother and I felt left out*".

<div align="right">Lines 712-3</div>

These feelings of vulnerability were evident throughout AJ's transition to FE, where her learning was to take place outside of the home environment and without her family.

### *4.3.3* **The Purpose of Education**

- *Needs of Individual*
- *Requirements of Society*

This overarching theme relates to the study's secondary question regarding what constitutes a suitable and efficient education. For each EHE CYP, ensuring their education fulfilled their individual needs, interest and goals featured prominently.  AJ reported how she had chosen to discard subjects she described as "intense" due to their academic nature in favour of subjects which aligned with her interests, a sentiment which characterised her thoughts on education in general:

*"You could say the purpose of education is surely like, to help you learn in something that you're interested in. Whether it's towards like a goal or not".*

<div align="right">Lines 780-1.</div>

While following one's interest was prominent in the CYP's accounts, there was a necessity for it to be finely balanced with preparing the CYP for their futures. While OA notes that education shouldn't involve "playing on your Xbox all day or things like that" (lines 441-2), JB emphasises the need to be ready for "the real world":

*"Well I suppose it's going into the real world, it's like being prepared for it, so I suppose in that way it's been efficient. And it's not like, suddenly I'm 16 and working, it's yeah, I've been prepared for this, I know what I'm doing, it's that sort of thing. It's being ready for it".*

<div align="right">Lines 218-9</div>

However, **The Purpose of Education** was not deemed limited to the needs of the individual. The CYP frequently referenced the requirements of CYP to become part of society, with which education is entangled in a reciprocal relationship:

*"Things like school and that are provided by our society, so I think our working hard at school, our working hard after school, and building on society in terms of, working hard for it".*

<div align="right">(OA, lines 621-3)</div>

To ensure the needs of the society, both OA and JB commented on the "basics" and standards which make up a good education:

"*Well if you can't do Maths, even the basic things in life…It's working out, no I can't afford that. Just the basic things like that*".

<div align="right">(JB, line 242-3)</div>

"*It should have a standard of when you leave school you should be able to do this, that, that sort of thing*".

However, while OA reported that, "education is partially designed to help you become a citizen" (line 597), his status as a EHE CYP brought up feelings of having to prove and validate himself to others in society, more so than CYP who attend more traditional forms of education.  Still, despite these potentially negative consequences, OA shared AJ's and JB's view that being home educated is more efficient and suitable than traditional schooling, and remained optimistic about his future role in society:

> *"Yeah, you can be part of society and accomplish what society can accomplish without the same necessarily, education or upbringing as the standard, the standard child".*

## 5. Discussion

It is hoped that this initial exploratory study has contributed insight into the experiences of EHE families in Wales during post-16 transition, and the potential role of the EP in working with this population. A discussion of the study's findings is presented in relation to the study's research questions:

*5.1*

| Research Question 1. |
| :--- |
| ***What are the current views of Welsh EHE families on transition post-16?*** |

The results of this study indicate that EHE facilitators are confident about their children's post-16 transition, a process through which they aim to support CYP by tailoring their EHE in preparation for adulthood and their chosen post-16 route. For EHE CYP, making choices regarding their future careers featured prominently, and an understanding of the function of their post-16 provision in relation to their futures provided a sense of security and purpose. Indeed, AJ's uncertainty of how she eventually arrives at her career did not elicit feelings of anxiety in her, but rather emphasised the numerous ways in which she might realise her career ambitions.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, both EHE facilitators and EHE CYP referred to the benefits of being home educated in discussing post-16 transition. EHE facilitators and EHE CYP noted the optimal learning conditions and person-centred practice that EHE enables, which in turn provides CYP with a sense of control over their learning and the opportunity to develop in line with their own specific needs.

EHE facilitators also reported that EHE cultivates a sense of independence in their children and increases their exposure and understanding of the world. Similarly, both OA's and JB's discourse suggested a strong sense of selves based on the certainty of their places in the world.

There were also potential barriers to EHE post-16 transition evident in EHE participants' responses. EHE facilitators reported on the potentially negative experiences EHE CYP might encounter in interacting with non-EHE people.  This was evident in OA's discourse, who described how he longed for the control he enjoyed during his EHE over his learning environment.  OA and EHE facilitators also alluded to the potential for non-EHE people to have preconceived ideas about EHE which work against EHE CYP.

EHE facilitators also alluded to the potentially negative systemic factors EHECYP might experience following transition into post-16 education. While EHE facilitators' institutional concerns focused on a lack of support and potential philosophical incompatibilities, AJ's difficulties with assimilating to systemic practices following post-16 transition took root in her unfamiliarity with school-like practices (which AJ had never experienced having always been home educated), and elicited in her feelings of anxiety and confusion.

*5.2*

> **Research Question 2.**
> **What are EHE CYP's views on what constitutes an 'efficient' and 'suitable' education, and whether they feel they received one, in light of their transition experiences?**

In discussing an education that was "suitable" and "efficient", EHE CYP noted the necessity of enabling CYP to fulfil their individual needs, interests and goals.  In this sense, the ideal education was seen as a personal pursuit that prepared the individual to become the person he/she needs to be. However, this individual pursuit was not without its counterbalance, as

the context within which individuals exist, namely society, was not lost on the EHE CYP. Respondents noted that individual growth does not exist in a vacuum, and that education was, to some degree, a reciprocal relationship/pact between the individual and society to ensure mutually beneficial outcomes i.e. the production of self-actualised (Maslow, 1962) or self-realised (Lamm, 1986) individuals that in turn contribute to the continuation and development of society. Accordingly, CYP respondents suggested that a "suitable" and "efficient" education was subject to ensuring CYP attain certain standards and foundations to enable this wider contribution to society. Still, the exact nature of these standards remained unclear and largely undefined, which is reflective of findings in the EHE literature as a whole (e.g. Hopwood *et al.*, 2007; Kendall & Atkinson, 2006; Monk, 2009).

*5.3*

> **Research Question 3.**
> **How much experience do EPs currently have in supporting EHE CYP's transition post-16?**

EPs and TEPs in Wales currently hold little experience in supporting EHE families during post-16 transition to either post-16 education or employment. Furthermore, the vast majority of EP, TEP and EHE facilitator responses indicated that this lack of experience also extended to work with EHE families in general.

Whilst the majority of EHE facilitators reported that they did not have a negative relationship with the LA, or one which would impact their feelings about their children's post-16 transition, EP and TEP respondents felt the beliefs, relationships, attitudes and assumptions held in LA services regarding EHE was one of the reasons they are currently not involved in work with EHE families. These included a reported breakdown in relationships with the EHE community, as well as a lack of clarity with regards to the community's needs.

In addition, EPs and TEPs highlighted practical barriers to working with EHE families. While this involved within-service capacity issues, perhaps most interestingly given the broader literature, respondents suggested that standard service referral processes are currently incompatible with the nature of EHE. Specifically, some respondents alluded to the ongoing

debate over the need for an EHE register to ensure services are more aware of members of the EHE population in the first instance.

EPs and TEPs thought that they could increase their involvement with EHE families during post-16 transition by becoming more involved with post-16 settings in order to increase these settings' awareness of the support that could be offered to post-16 CYP. However, respondents also noted the need for EPs to increase their knowledge and awareness of the provisions available to transitioning CYP, as well as the needs and issues that are specific to this population. This finding is in line with Atkinson, Dunsmuir, Lang & Wright's (2015) suggestion that young people experience different life challenges (e.g. parenthood, drug and alcohol use and development of sexuality), and that EP practice may need to develop significantly in order to meet these challenges. Respondents in this study felt that this work, however, was imminent in Wales as a result of the new ALN Bill, which will require services to offer support to service users over a broader age range (0-25).

*5.4*

> ***Research Question 4.***
> ***What further potential role do EPs believe they can play during EHE CYP's transition post-16?***

Qualitative data linked to EP and TEP experiences indicate that supporting the reintegration into school following EHE was the most typical work reported to take place with EHE families. However, EP and TEP respondents felt there was potential for them to become much more involved with EHE CYP during the post-16 transition. Respondents felt that through enabling the CYP's voice and highlighting needs through assessment, EPs could help ensure transition was a bespoke process tailored to the individuals' needs. This finding is congruent with much of the literature relating to post-16 and SEN, with the engagement of parent/carers and young people at a wide range of levels being frequently identified as a key factor in supporting change (e.g. Harflett, Hayden and Jennings, 2017). Respondents' views are also in line with Welsh Government's (WG) stance that LAs and practitioners working with families will need to ensure through person-centred practice that there are clear targets linked to desired outcomes and destinations for CYP with ALNs accessing post-16 provisions

(WG, 2018b). However, with regards to transition planning, findings from the literature suggest that the inclusion of young people and parents in transition planning is inconsistent (Abbott & Carpenter, 2014; Bason, 2012).

EPs and TEPs also noted that EPs could contribute to a well-coordinated and coherent transition through effectively enabling communication and working practices with key stakeholders and professionals working around the EHE CYP. This finding recalls MacKay & Hellier's (2009) finding that EPs need to develop new partnerships with adult service providers in order to support the ineffective, informal or '*ad hoc*' information sharing practices reported between LA s and EHE families in previous studies (Kendall & Atkinson, 2006).

## 6. Research Limitations and Future Research

It is acknowledged that a number of the study's findings and recommendations regarding EP work with post-16 CYP are not exclusive to EHE CYP.  It is suggested that this is in part due to the currently underdeveloped landscape of EP post-16 work with CYP in Wales. However, it is argued that the findings in this study remain relevant and compliment other findings which are exclusive to the EHE community, to provide a broadened view of EHE post-16 transition.

It is important to note, however, that there are a number of factors which render the findings of this study umgeneralisable. Firstly, the interpretations and findings of EHE CYP in this study are limited to a small, homogeneous group of EHE CYP (Smith *et al.* 2009). Similarly, whilst it was hoped that the use of questionnaires would encourage a high number of EHE respondents, the final number of participating EHE facilitators remained relatively low. Furthermore, it is noted that EPs and TEPs in this study are evidently commenting upon something that many of them have very little experience of. Finally, it should be noted that all respondents in the current study were self-selecting, thus leaving the data gathered prone to bias. Taken together, the results should be considered with caution in relation to implications for professional practice, as they remain ungeneralisable.

Still, a strength of this study is that the views of the parents have been triangulated with those of EHE CYP and current EPs and TEPs in Wales. This has plausibly enabled a holistic validation of the findings.

With the imminent implementation of the ALN Act 2018 in Wales, it is suggested that a plausible next step would be to conduct action research in order to enrich our understanding of EHE in Wales, and how best to work with this population during post-16 transition and beyond.

However, it is suggested that there would be value in conducting further questionnaire-based research with an emphasis on capturing a much wider sample. Indeed, generating greater volumes of data from a larger sample could help to determine how well the current findings represent the wider population of EHE families in Wales.

## 7. Implications for EP Practice

*Table 16:* Implications for the development of EP practice.

| **Developing EP practice** | The current study has highlighted the need for EPs to increase their knowledge and awareness of the provisions available to transitioning EHE CYP, as well as the needs and issues that are specific to this population. This finding has also been highlighted within the general post-16 literature. |
|---|---|
| | In order to develop an understanding of potential cultural differences surrounding the expectations of adulthood and the interdependence between young adults and their parents, Atkinson *et al.*, (2015) have suggested that there is a requirement for many EPs to extend their knowledge base when working with families and post-16 CYP. This would include developing: |
| |    – An understanding of theories of adolescence and the transition to adulthood (Esbrand, 2016; Dunsmuir & Hardy, 2016; Hayton, 2009). |
| |    – An understanding of FE curricula and existing support structures (Atkinson *et al.*, 2015). |
| | In addition, it is suggested that increasing all new partners' and key stakeholders' understanding of how EPs can support them during EHE |

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| | CYP post-16 transition is paramount in enabling work with this population and post-16 provisions. |
| **Person-centred practice** | EHE respondents noted how person-centred practice provides CYP with a sense of control over their learning and the opportunity to develop in line with their own specific needs. EPs might support the influence young people's views have on short term transition through:<br><br>– Utilising person-centred and solution-focused approaches to explore CYP's post-16 options and aspirations.<br><br>– Supporting young people who become disengaged post-16 options through enabling their individual needs, interests and goals whilst developing a sense of belonging in their communities.<br><br>– Ensuring post-16 options and decisions on future destinations reflect the aspirations of EHE CYP and families. This includes enabling the meaningful inclusion of CYP with specific and complex needs (Barrow, 2013; Franklin, 2013) in decisions about their transition. |
| **Enabling purposeful placement** | Making choices regarding their future careers featured prominently in EHE CYP's discourse. Understanding the function of their post-16 provision in relation to their futures provided EHE CYP with a sense of security and purpose. Findings in post-16 transition literature suggest that the extent to which FE pathways support young people's long-term aspirations is often unclear (Bason, 2012).  It is suggested therefore that EPs could help facilitate a coherent and purposeful post-16 transition for EHE and non-EHE CYP alike through:<br><br>– Helping to maintain an educational and employment focus within transition planning (Esbrand, 2016; Tyson, 2011). This might include supporting the development of life and employment skills and work experiences that facilitate access to chosen educational or employment pathways (Morris & Atkinson, 2018).<br><br>– Building links with post-16 settings, local employers and adult services in order to promote a broader inclusion agenda (Abbott & Carpenter, 2014; Bason, 2012; Knox, 2011).<br><br>– Support the development and evaluation of alternative curricula and vocational pathways (Haughey, 2009). |
| **Supporting Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs** | The emotional effects of transition have been highlighted in a number of post-16 studies (Esbrand, 2016; Knox, 2011; Tyson, 2011). In the current study, this was most evident for EHE CYP in AJ's discourse, as she reported her difficulties in assimilating to her chosen post-16 provision. As such, it is suggested that there is a potential role for EPs to work with EHE CYP on an individual level, who may be experiencing difficulties with assimilating to unfamiliar post-16 educational practices that closely align |

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| | with school practices (e.g. timetabled lessons, completing work to deadlines, etc.).<br><br>Surveying the wider post-16 transition literature, EPs might also have a role in supporting CYP in forming and managing new friendships, facilitating peer and parent support groups, and managing anxiety and building resilience (Bell, 2015; Esbrand, 2016; Knox, 2011). |
| **Assessment** | Respondents felt that by highlighting needs through assessment, EPs could help ensure transition was a bespoke process tailored to the individuals' needs.  In order to support transition and intervention planning, EPs assessment should work to:<br><br>– Identify EHE CYP who may be vulnerable at transition through the development of early screening tools. This could enable early planning with families and post-16 provisions.<br><br>– Identify the holistic needs of EHE CYP when providing statutory advice, including learning, social, emotional and physical needs. In addition, assessment should consider learning objectives, future aspirations and suitable provision.<br><br>– Supporting the identification of CYP at risk of becoming NEET (Arnold & Baker, 2012; Gabriel, 2015). |
| **Working with post-16 provisions** | EHE respondents noted potentially negative systemic factors EHECYP might experience following transition into post-16 education. While EHE facilitators' concerns focus on a lack of support, as well as the potential for non-EHE people to have preconceived ideas about EHE which work against EHE CYP.<br><br>EPs and TEPs reported that EPs were well-placed to contribute to a well-coordinated and coherent transition through enabling effective communication and working practices with key stakeholders working around the EHE CYP.<br><br>As such, EPs' work in Post-16 provision might include:<br><br>– Promoting awareness of EHE in Post-16 provisions, as well as supporting the development of positive peer relationships.<br><br>– Supporting post-16 provisions to increase their feelings of competency and responsibility in transition practice.  This might be achieved through promoting staff's understanding of organisational and developmental psychology (Bason, 2012; Knox, 2011) and emotional aspects of transition (Esbrand, 2016).<br><br>– Support the inclusion of EHE CYP with SEND by providing training and supervision to provision staff to develop SEND-specific knowledge. This will enable provisions to understand |

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| | needs more effectively and put adequate support in place. |
| **Developing LA practices** | EP and TEP respondents felt the beliefs, relationships, attitudes and assumptions held in LA services regarding EHE was one of the reasons they are currently not involved in work with EHE families. These included a reported breakdown in relationships with the EHE community, as well as a lack of clarity with regards to the community's needs. Additionally, respondents noted the incompatibility of standard service referral processes with the nature of EHE, with some EPs and TEPs alluding to the ongoing debate over the need for an EHE register. In order to support these difficulties, it is suggested that EPs position within the local authority would enable them to have a strategic role in helping to develop:<br><br>– Multi-agency collaboration during EHE CYP's post-16 transition.<br><br>– Local authority procedures and protocols, with identified roles and responsibilities for internal and external stakeholders.<br><br>– Streamlined information-sharing practices between EHE families, LAs and post-16 settings.<br><br>– Establishing and contributing to multi-agency transition teams.<br><br>In line with post-16 transition literature in general, EPs could also act as a professional link between EHE families and FE settings. This could involve liaising with stakeholders and signposting families to other services (Esbrand, 2016; Craig, 2009). |

## 8. Final Conclusions

EHE CYP were asked to consider what constitutes a suitable and efficient education in light of their post-16 transition experiences. These CYP's responses have helped to shed some insight into this perennial point of contention in relation to EHE.

It is hoped that the current research findings provide valuable and unique insight into the gap in the literature relating to EHE families' experiences of post-16 transition, as well as the potential role EPs might have in supporting this process.

It is also hoped these findings could encourage EPs and other relevant professionals to be more cognizant of the challenges and benefits these families experience during post-16 transition as a result of their decision to practice EHE. It is also hoped that the current study proves a valuable starting point in considering how EPs in Wales might develop the support they provide EHE CYP and families.

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# Part III - Major Critical Appraisal

# 1. Introduction

 The critical appraisal is seen as an opportunity to provide reflective and reflexive comments on the research process and the role of the research practitioner. The following sections aim to explore how the research has contributed to existing knowledge, before detailing the researcher's reflections on the impact of the research process on his role as a researcher and a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP).

# 2. Contribution to Knowledge

*2.1 Origin of the research topic: A personal perspective*

Tashakkori & Teddlie (1998) state that pragmatists "decide what they want to research guided by their personal value systems; that is, they study what they think is important" (p. 27). The researcher acknowledges and to an extent can relate to this viewpoint. However, in line with Mertens (2009), throughout this process the researcher has attempted to remain sensitive and mindful of the values of clients, policymakers and others in positions of varying degrees of powers. The subject of EHE in the UK is a contentious issue, and one which the researcher has found to stimulate strong opinions from within EHE communities, and from individuals with no direct experience of EHE.

The researcher's interest in the topic takes root in casework completed with a CYP and his family during the researcher's second year as a TEP. This CYP had been home educated his entire life, however, changes within the family following the bereavement of a family member, as well as the CYP's social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs raised several issues regarding the nature of this education. This casework forced the researcher to explore a number of ethical and philosophical questions, as the SEMH needs of the CYP, his education, the ability of the family to provide an education and the CYP's talents and aspirations, forced the researcher to consider and reconsider the nature of his work with the family. The researcher's interest and initial research (where he first became aware of the terms "suitable" and "efficient" in relation to EHE (e.g. Education Act 1996; Badman, 2009)), led the researcher to the question which he considers to be at the heart of this research project: "What is the purpose of education?".

## 2.2 Conducting a Literature Review

The researcher conducted an unsystematic narrative review (Oxman, Cook & Guyatt, 1994), in an attempt to provide a comprehensive overview which places information into context (Day, 1998). This type of review is considered helpful in presenting a broad perspective on a topic, including descriptions of its history and development (Day, 1998; Slavin, 1995), as well as presenting philosophical perspectives in a balanced manner in order to stimulate scholarly dialogue (Green, Johnson & Adams, 2006)

### 2.2.1 Addressing an omission

The researcher felt that it was necessary for the literature review to not only address the scientific research that has been conducted in order to explore EHE, but also the social, political and legislative context in which it is practised. This helped to provide crucial contextual information and enabled an exploration of the terms "suitable" and "efficient", which appear in UK legislation. This contextual information also encouraged the researcher to carefully consider which scientific literature the review would focus on.

In taking the decision to place his research specifically in Wales, the researcher argues that he was acting in accordance with his ontological and epistemological beliefs, which are evident in his research. In particular, the researcher was mindful of the extent to which his research would be readily generalizable to wider populations. In light of the pragmatic belief that research explores truth and reality in relation to the extent to which findings are useful (e.g. Rorty, 1991), the researcher has aimed to be specific in terms of the area he is exploring. While the decision to largely omit US literature on homeschooling[3] (or home schooling) from the literature review may be questionable, especially considering the relative dearth of UK literature on EHE, the researcher contends that the vast social, political and legislative differences between US and UK contexts justifies this decision.

## 2.3 Contribution to the research literature

In essence, the researcher has set out to explore two aspects of EHE:

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[3] The researcher deliberately uses the term "homeschooling" (and a widely used variant) here in reference to practice in the US, as opposed to EHE, to draw further attention to the different ways and contexts in which these practices are conceived and undertaken.

1. The experiences of EHE families during post-16 transition,
2. The potential for EPs to support these families during this time.

Each of these questions takes root and were developed from the researcher's interest in the purpose of education. The researcher argues that EHE and post-16 transition are both related to this question. The researchers' position as a TEP who, in light of imminent changes to legislation in Wales, will potentially be working in this area, made these topics worthy of exploration in their own right.

### 2.3.1 Non-partisanship

The researcher found that while post-16 transition is a relatively well-researched area, this is not the case with regards to the transition of EHE CYP. This is not surprising, considering the general dearth of research on EHE in general in the UK, outside of well-established topics such as parental motivations and other descriptive characteristics (e.g. population numbers, family socioeconomic status, etc.). In addition, access to this population is noted in the literature to be particularly difficult for an 'outsider', due in part to the fact that home educators are not required to register with their LAs.

In light of this, the researcher hoped to make a unique contribution to this area of the research literature, in view of what he considered to be his non-partisan position. However, the researcher quickly encountered the difficulties with recruitment that is noted in the literature to be a challenge to this contribution (e.g. Nelson, 2013; Fensham-Smith, 2017). The researcher was met with general suspicion from EHE communities and gained first-hand experience of the heightened and polarised tensions that exist within the EHE community towards research conducted by an outsider. For example, one EHE group was particularly concerned about the researcher's affiliation with Cardiff University, due to their past experiences with a research group from the university.

In order to develop a relationship with the research environment (Brown, Monthoux &McCullough, 1976), the researcher was asked by one group to provide a statement regarding his position on EHE, which followed:

*"My position on HE is as follows - I am not an advocate, nor am I against home education. In principle, I acknowledge the rights of parents to educate their children as they see fit. I am aware of the ongoing child safeguarding debate in relation to HE, but this is not a focus of my research. My interest lies in the concept of education itself and the question, "What is the purpose of education?" From this, my research has developed and evolved to a point where I am interested in HE young people's post-16 transition, and, if at all suitable, how educational psychologists can help facilitate this process".*

While this position was deemed satisfactory, entry to this group did not translate to all groups, and the researcher learned that in this case, access was not a one-time event at the beginning of the research, but a continuing and evolving process (Duggan-Chawla, 2007).

Despite access difficulties, the researcher argues that one of the major strengths of this research is its objectivity; it has not been conducted by a member of the EHE community (e.g. Rothermel, 2003, 2011; Fortune-Wood, 2005) nor is it a piece of research commissioned by any institute with social or political interests (e.g. Forrester Maxwell, Slater, & Doughty, 2017). Instead, it is a piece of exploratory research aimed at enabling a better understanding of a growing practice and informing EPs and other services on how best to support EHE CYP during post-16 transition.

### 2.3.2 Enabling the voice of the CYP

The researcher also aimed to contribute to the research literature by enabling the voice of EHE CYP. Indeed, the majority of what is known about EHE in the public domain generally derives from EHE adults' views. While the current study fails to provide evidence-based knowledge and information on how EPs might support EHE families during post-16 transition, the study does build on the work of Nelson (2013) and Jones (2013) in enabling a clearer understanding of CYP's experiences and perceptions about post-16 transition. This has been achieved through eliciting first-hand CYP experiences using semi-structured interviews and Interpretative  phenomenological analysis (IPA).

*2.4 Contribution to Future Research*

As stated in the empirical study, with the imminent implementation of the ALN act 2018 in Wales (WG, 2018b), it would be constructive for further research to conduct action research in order to enrich our understanding of EHE in Wales, and how best to work with this population during post-16 transition and beyond. This would perhaps be most beneficially conducted at a systemic level in order to consider the challenges of broadening services from an LA and nationwide perspective.

*2.5 Findings*

*2.5.1 The views of Welsh EHE families on transition post-16*

The study has enabled a richer insight into the views of EHE families in Wales on post-16 transition. The study has shown that this is a process that EHE facilitators feel confident about and one which they actively plan for by tailoring their CYP's EHE in preparation for adulthood and their chosen post-16 route. The study also suggests that making choices regarding their future careers and understanding the function of their post-16 provision in relation to their futures, provide EHE CYP with a sense of security and purpose during the process.

The study was also helpful in highlighting some potential barriers to EHE post-16 transition, which included the potential for negative institutional factors (i.e. peer effects and lack of specialist support) and the misconceptions of non-EHE individuals regarding EHE to work against EHE CYP.

*2.5.2 The Purpose of Education*

The study highlighted what participants perceived to be a reciprocal relationship between the individual and society. For EHE CYP participants, this relationship characterised the purpose of education, as they described the balance between ensuring the needs of the individual are met, and ensuring the individual can assimilate and contribute to the society into which he/she is entering following his/her education. Still, the exact nature of requisite educational standards remained unclear and largely undefined, which are reflective of findings in the

EHE literature as a whole (e.g. Hopwood, O'Neill, Castro & Hodgson, 2007; Kendall & Atkinson, 2006; Monk, 2009).

### 2.5.3 EPs current experience of supporting EHE CYP's transition post-16

The study revealed EPs and TEPs in Wales currently hold little experience in supporting EHE families during post-16 transition to either post-16 education, employment or training. Furthermore, the vast majority of EP, TEP and EHE facilitators responses indicated that this lack of experience also extended to work with EHE families in general.

EP and TEP respondents suggested a number of reasons for this, including the potentially strained relationship between EHE communities and LAs, and practical barriers such as within-service capacity issues and incompatible service referral processes. In line with Atkinson, Dunsmuir, Lang & Wright's (2015) respondents also noted the need for EPs to increase their knowledge and awareness of the provisions available to transitioning CYP, as well as the needs and issues that are specific to the EHE CYP population.

Taken together, the study highlights the potential need for drastic changes in Wales given the new ALN Bill, which will require services to offer support to service users over a broader age range (0-25).

### 2.5.4 The potential role of EPs

What was perhaps most pleasing however, was the finding that, EP and TEP respondents felt there was great potential for them to become much more involved with EHE CYP during the post-16 transition in a way that supports the current literature (e.g. MacKay & Hellier, 2009; Harflett, Hayden and Jennings, 2017; WG, 2018a). This included enabling CYP's voice and highlighting needs through assessment to ensure transition was a bespoke process tailored to the individuals' needs.

### 2.6 Implications for EP practice

The current research has shed some light on the extent to which EPs are currently involved in supporting EHE families in Wales. Both EHE facilitators' and EPs' and TEPs' have noted the

challenges of providing EHE families with the same support as children attending schools. This was interpreted from data as being soft systems challenges and practical barriers that make EHE and access to services seem incompatible. However, the current study has begun to consider the ways in which EP services may be provided for EHE families (services to which they should be entitled). Furthermore, by collating both EHE families' and professionals' views, the researcher has taken the first step in enabling an understanding which is less likely to rely on solely using heuristics and biases. In this sense, it is hoped that it is seen as a useful starting point in developing ways of offering support to EHE families in Wales, as well as offering some future avenues for exploration.

*2.7 Strength & Limitations*

### *2.7.1    Methods*

While the researcher is satisfied with the methods employed in the current study, the researcher has reflected upon some of the potential limitations of this study. The interpretations and findings of EHE CYP in this study are limited to a small, homogeneous group (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). In addition, it is suggested that the current study might have been improved by enabling participants to be active during the analysis process. Indeed, it is arguable that checking with participants that the researcher's interpretations reflected what they wanted to say and what they intended to say may have ensured higher internal validity. Although, it is also possible that participants, if consulted, may confirm findings they do not agree with due to a perceived position of "expert" bestowed upon the researcher.

With regards to the use of questionnaires, the researcher acknowledges the relatively low number of participating EHE facilitators. Furthermore, the use of self-report measures does have the potential for participants to provide socially desirable responses in an effort to please the researcher, or view themselves positively (Duckworth & Yeager, 2015). It should be noted that all respondents in the current study were self-selecting, thus leaving the data gathered prone to bias.

### 2.7.2    Pragmatism

Given the pragmatic stance of the research, it is felt that one change the researcher would have made would be to explicitly ask EHE families questions about the kind of help or support they would like during the transition. While the researcher has endeavoured to understand the challenges of post-16 transition for this population, as well as the strengths EHE has potentially cultivated in these CYP, it is felt that it would have been appropriate and useful to directly ask this question to the families. This would be in line with person-centred practice, which practitioners should always endeavour to promote.

### 2.7.3 Triangulation

The mixed methods employed are considered a strength of the research project. Indeed, to the researcher's knowledge, the study is the first to triangulate EHE CYP views and experiences of EHE and post-16 transition with data gathered from EHE facilitators and EPs. This has enabled the researcher to present a number of perspectives on this topic in a way that has hopefully enriched our understanding (Guion, 2002). In doing so, the study has enabled an understanding of the ways in which EPs support EHE families during post-16 transition and the challenges in moving the situation forward from the status quo to a more optimal way of working together. It is argued that, in light of the growing number of EHE CYP in Wales, and the imminent ALN Bill which will require services to broaden their remit to post-16 work and beyond, this study is particularly relevant to contemporary educational developments and changes in Wales.

## 3. A critical account of the research practitioner

### 3.1 Research Paradigm

### 3.1.1 Ontological considerations

The researcher's aim in this study was to explore the practice of EHE, which is suggested throughout research literature to incorporate numerous methods and practices, and is practised by a heterogeneous population. As such, in the UK the label EHE is seen as a social construction applied to capture, generalize and categorise a set of practices.  The challenge

for the researcher was to acknowledge the complexity that often characterizes real-world situations in which practitioner-scientists might find themselves, but to also make sense of this topic and seek out actionable guidance.

Understanding the philosophical underpinnings of research enables the researcher to make better decisions throughout the research process (Darlaston-Jones, 2007). Therefore, the researcher considered the implications of employing positivist or subjectivist ontological positions.

A positivistic approach would result in the employment of quantitative methods to explore the social phenomenon in question. In practice, it is likely this would have involved employing causal thinking and a reduction of the topics under question to predefined variables (Creswell, 2003). The researcher concluded that, to an extent, this means of exploration would enable a macro understanding of the current working practices of EPs in relation to EHE and post-16 populations. The potential for simple data sets and a large representative sample of participants to be generalised to wider populations was particularly appealing to the researcher. However, the "how" and "why" of individual human experience is largely reduced using quantitative approaches, potentially resulting in a limited understanding of the social phenomenon (Ansari, Panhwar & Mahesar, 2016).

In its most extreme form, relativism aims to eschew the "naive and simple-minded rules" methodologists take as "their guide for accounting for such a 'maze of interactions'" (Feyerabend, 1993, p. 8), in favour of the principle that "anything goes" in order to achieve scientific progress (Feyerabend, 1993, p. 5). Employing a relativistic approach in order to understand and explore the areas of interest in the current study would lead the researcher to use primarily (or wholly) qualitative approaches. This would include the generation of rich verbal data, rather than numeric data, through human participation and interpretation (Collis & Hussey, 2003; Dörnyei, 2007). While this approach initially presented as optimal to the researcher, the small sample sizes associated with this approach may have created an issue regarding the generalisation of the research findings to a larger population (Arghode, 2012; Dörnyei, 2007).  Questions pertaining to the validity of the researcher's interpretations of the data, without means of triangulation, also deterred the researcher from employing this single ontology.

The researcher determined that each of these approaches have certain weaknesses when used in isolation. These issues ranged from concerns around generalisability on the one end, to an inability to provide a data set rich enough to offer depth and clarity in exploring the complex social world. While the researcher finds Feyerabend's argument against a universal method appealing, he does not entirely accept his extreme relativism. Indeed, "universal method and no method at all do not exhaust the range of possibilities" (Chalmers, 2013, p.150).

Critical Realism represents an integration of positivism and relativism (Kelly, 2008), thereby eschewing the "false dichotomy of empiricism/Hermeneutics" (Maton, 2001, p. 56). While the researcher believes the approach would be useful in the current study as it acknowledges "the role of subjective experience, mediated by perception and cognition" (Morris, 2008, p. 10), the researcher was deterred by its adherence to accessing "the real essences of things" (Bhaskar, 1978, p. 211). As a researcher currently training to become an EP practitioner, the researcher is ethically bound to frameworks which above all promote and protect the interests of the service user (e.g. Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), 2018). As such, while the researcher acknowledges the usefulness of a critical realist approach, he instead opted to employ an approach concerned with enabling solutions (Patton, 2002; Creswell, 2003), rather than working towards discovering a mind-independent objective reality.

### 3.1.2 Pragmatism

During the design and implementation of this study, the researcher was influenced by two concepts:

1.  That there are "incommensurable ways of seeing the world and of practising science in it" (Kuhn, 1970, p. 4).

2.  That the methods and standards in psychological research should enable "a critical, pragmatic and above all *real* approach" (Kennedy, Cameron & Monsen, 2009, p. 620).

Pragmatism also largely eschews the epistemological objectivity/subjectivity duality (Biesta, 2010). It is an approach based on the belief that research is a means of gaining the knowledge required to reach a desired outcome (Morgan, 2007; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2006), and

emphasises communication and shared meaning-making in order to create practical solutions to social problems (Shannon-Baker, 2016).

While critics of pragmatism have suggested it is a haphazard, anything goes approach to research, pragmatic theorists have suggested that rather than pertaining to meet research ideologies, pragmatic research is deemed to be effective if it provides solutions for the targeted problems (Denscombe, 2008; Maxcy, 2003) and to "relieve and benefit the condition of man" (Rorty, 1991, p. 27). As such, in accordance with pragmatic theory, the researcher has aimed to reflect on the current study's usefulness to EP practice in order to determine its validity and value.

*3.2 Methodology*

### *3.2.1 Mixed Methods*

Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) provide the following rationale for mixed methods research: "the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone" (p. 5). Indeed, mixed methods have been highlighted to enable the researcher to examine questions from multiple angles (Dornyie, 2007), allowing the triangulation of information and a collection of richer data (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011).

Considering this, as well as a pragmatic approach that encourages different stances to be used as appropriate, the researcher adopted the use of different epistemological and ontological standpoints for different aspects of the research (Cohen *et al.*, 2011; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

In attempting to answer confirmatory and exploratory questions simultaneously, the researcher necessarily employed a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods (Morse, 2010). In addition, to ensure that the study addresses and provides useful answers to its research questions, the researcher has endeavoured to employ methods according to whether they meet the needs of the research (Creswell, 2009; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Patton, 2002).

### 3.2.2 Quantitative Element

Broadly speaking, a critical realist ontology and positivistic epistemology were adopted for the quantitative data. This approach states that methods used in natural sciences can be applied in social contexts (Bryman, 2008; Guba & Lincoln, 1994) to quantify certain characteristics of a structure or object (Zachariadis, Scott, & Barrett, 2013). In this sense, quantitative methods are not used to measure events based on patterns and degrees of correlation, but to provide helpful simplifications that should be seen as statistical descriptive summaries rather than predictive tools (Fleetwood 1999; Sayer 1992).

### 3.2.3 Qualitative Element

Constructionist ontology and an interpretivist epistemology were adopted for the qualitative data. The philosophical underpinnings posit that there are multiple, socially constructed realities which are influenced by social interactions and the context in which the research is conducted (Bryman, 2008; Schwandt, 2003). Additionally, the active role of the researcher throughout the research is acknowledged.

The researcher considered both social constructionist and social constructivist approaches. These approaches share similar philosophical underpinnings (Robson and McCartan, 2016), and the researcher felt that both would enable a useful exploration of how EHE families experience post-16 transition. However, while the focus of a social constructivist is on the individual's constructions and sense-making, the researcher felt it was important to acknowledge his own role in the research study, and how it influences results. Consequently, a social constructionist approach was employed, with research participants viewed as helping to construct reality with the researcher.

### 3.2.4 Data Analysis

During the researcher's current role as a TEP, as well as his previous post-graduate (MSc) degree, he has developed some experience of using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Having employed this approach as part of the doctorate course's requirement to complete a collaborative and small-scale piece of research, the researcher felt confident that he could appropriately employ this method. However, given the researcher's interest in

gaining first-hand accounts of post-16 transition experiences of CYP, as well as other relevant groups' experiences of the same process, it seemed paramount to consider the discrete differences and advantages afforded by numerous methodologies.

Given their lack of direct experience of EHE post-16 transition, the researcher concluded that inductive thematic analysis using a bottom-up approach (i.e. analysis outside of existing theory) (Braun & Clarke, 2013) was optimal for exploring EHE facilitators' and EPs and TEPs' experiences. Still the researcher remained mindful during this analysis of the likelihood that to some extent, the analysis would be shaped by his epistemology and disciplinary knowledge (Braun & Clarke, 2013).  This point remained relevant throughout the entire qualitative analysis process. Indeed, considering the researcher's relative experience of working with an EHE family, the researcher felt that it would be important to fully recognise the influence of his interpretation within the research, particularly in circumstances where the researcher was in active dialogue with participants (i.e. structured interviews).

As Robson (2011) notes, the use of two (or more) methods of collecting qualitative data in a study is "commonly done and non-controversial" (p.162). An exploration of qualitative research led the researcher to conclude that Grounded Theory offered a clear, sequential guide towards qualitative analysis for the exploration of individual accounts of a phenomenon, in particular where little is known about a topic. However, the researcher was mindful that although the current study was explorative in nature, it did not meet the theoretical groundings of Grounded Theory (e.g. the researcher was unsure of the limitations of the participant pool and subsequently whether saturation of information (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) could be effectively achieved). In addition, by this point, the researcher had made prior engagement with the literature.

Similar to Grounded Theory, the researcher felt that IPA (Smith,1996; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009) provided a stance and protocol for the analysis of experiential qualitative data (Reid, Flowers, & Larkin, 2005; Smith & Osborne, 2008; Smith *et al.*, 2009), as well as iteratively related analysis processes which strengthen the rigor of qualitative analysis (Carter & Little, 2007).

While mono-method studies using IPA are vulnerable to concerns around replication and generalisation due to the need to reduce sample sizes to ensure the depth of analysis (Pringle,

Drummond, McLafferty and Hendry, 2011; Smith &Osborne, 2008), the researcher was mindful of the potential for IPA to provide contextual insight and important detail to triangulate other data gathered in the current study (Lander & Sheldrake, 2010). In addition, IPA's theoretical underpinnings deriving from phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography offered a sound approach for addressing a newly developing area of research (Smith *et al.*, 2009; Robson and McCartan, 2016), as well as providing results that can cautiously be applied to professional practice (Reid, Flowers & Larkin, 2005; Smith *et al.*, 2009). Consequently, having recruited a small number of EHE CYP to participate in semi-structured interviews, its focus on interpreting the meaning for a person in a particular context (Smith *et al.*, 2009) made IPA a logical method for the researcher to employ.

Hughes & Sharrock (1997) state that researchers need to choose their methods of inquiry keeping in view the research problem(s). The researcher contends that the chosen qualitative analyses are congruent with the methods employed in the study, and are evidence of the researcher's consideration of and attempts to understand the discrete experiences of participants.

### 3.2.5 Reflecting on Method

The researcher is mindful of the potential for his own subjectivity and bias to have influenced the interview process. This was perhaps most evident to the researcher during discussions surrounding the terms "suitable" and "efficient". The researcher acknowledges that EHE CYP responses to questions about these terms were initially less than fruitful. As such, the researcher provided prompt questions and asked participants to expand upon their responses in an effort to get them to elaborate. Whilst prompting is considered a suitable technique, in hindsight, the researcher questions the effect one of these prompts, in particular, might have had on participants' responses. Specifically, the prompt, "*What do you think it means to be a citizen?",* potentially goes beyond focusing participants' thinking on education's potential to influence a person's future, to perhaps implying an endpoint or goal for education to achieve.

Despite this concern, semi-structured interviews were regarded as the most effective approach to use with EHE CYP. This method allowed the researcher to develop a series of open-ended questions, without restricting participants to discuss only topics that had been previously discussed in the literature (Cohen & Crabtree, 2008). This is considered

particularly pertinent to the current study, given its exploratory nature and the politicised nature of EHE. Indeed, it has been suggested that this approach helps to ensure high validity, as participants freely converse with little direction from the interviewer and expand upon ideas in a way which clarifies participants' attitudes, norms, beliefs and preferences (Bryman, 2001; Cohen *et al.*, 2011). In this regard, the researcher argues that both semi-structured interviews and the designed interview schedule (Appendix E) were used in a way which is congruent with IPA. For example, the researcher conceived of the interview process as a space which could facilitate the discussion of relevant topics. As such, in accordance with Smith *et al.,(*2009), the interview schedule was used to help this process by preparing for the likely content of the interview (though this is by no means pre-detemrined), and facilitating a comfortable interaction with participants which, in turn, enabled them to provide a detailed account of the experience under investigation. For example, the researcher aimed to begin the interview with participants with a question which allowed them to recount a fairly descriptive experience (i.e. *Tell me a bit about your current situation*), making them feel comfortable with talking. This was then followed by invitations to be more analytical, using more open-ended questions and prompts, as participants began to ease into the interview process (Smith *et al.*, 2009).

## *3.3 Contribution to professional development*

Undertaking this project has enhanced the researcher's skills and understanding of carrying out research, which will aid his development as a scientific practitioner.  In particular, the researcher has developed a newfound understanding of the importance of the link between paradigm, ontology, epistemology and methodology, and the importance of ensuring cohesion throughout the decisions made. The researcher has also benefitted from undertaking two forms of qualitative analysis, as it has helped to make clear the discrete principles which underline and inform their applicability to different kinds of data and collection.

Undertaking this research project has also informed the researcher on several ethical issues that will inform his practice as a TEP moving forward. The researcher wrote the proposal for this thesis in line with the BPS' ethical guidelines (British Psychological Society Ethics Committee, 2009), as well as its acknowledgement that ethical practice involves on-going decision-making in changing contexts. This was particularly relevant to the current research,

as the onset of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (2018) required the researcher to include a number of amendments and additions to consent forms, information sheets and debrief sheets the researcher had initially intended to use. Furthermore, the importance of both informed consent and anonymity were not lost on the researcher during the construction of the research project and the writing of the thesis. Indeed, in working with a population for whom a proposed register is a contentious topic, the researcher was at all times mindful to elicit the informed consent of EHE families, and to ensure any details which might make the identity of participants known to others were omitted.

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## 10. Appendices

**Appendix A** – Link to the online questionnaire for EHE facilitators

https://cardiffunipsych.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3vZiNi4bbl9bZo9

# School of Psychology, Cardiff University

# Elective Home Education Questionnaire – EHE facilitators

Name: _____

## A. General information

1. Number of children currently or previously home educated: _____

2. Please fill in the following table regarding your child(ren)'s age and education to date:

| Child's age | Duration of home education between ages of 0-16 | Has your child ever attended school? | Duration of school attendance |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

3. On average, how many hours a week do you spend educating your child(ren)?

_____

4. Please list all the people involved in educating your child(ren):

_____

_____

_____

5. I have elected to home educate my child(ren) because:

_____

_____

_____


## B. Types of Home Education

1. I would broadly describe the structure of my child(ren)'s home education as:

    ○ Highly Structured (learning takes place in a set place at a set time)

    ○ Unstructured Learning (learning can take place anywhere at any time)

    ○ A combination of both structure and unstructured learning

    ○ Other (please describe)


_____

_____

_____


2. Who decides the content of your child(ren)'s education?

○ Myself

○ My child

○ A combination of both

○ Other (please specify) _____

3. How did you come to decide on this content?

_____

_____

_____

_____

## C. Transition Post-16

1. I have a child(ren) who have transitioned into future education Post-16:

☐ True               ☐ False

2. I have a child(ren) who have transitioned into future employment Post-16

☐ True               ☐ False

3. My child(ren)'s education is/has been *tailored* with a specific future education or employment in mind

☐ True (please describe)

_____

_____

☐ False

4. How do you think your child(ren)'s home education has *prepared them* for transition into future education or employment?

_____

_____

_____

5. Has your child(ren)'s home education been tailored to prepare them for this transition in any other way?

☐ Yes (please describe)

_____

_____

☐ No

6. How do you feel about your child(ren)'s options Post-16 (please tick one)?

| Very Concerned | Concerned | Somewhat Concerned | Neither Concerned nor Confident | Somewhat Confident | Confident | Very Confident |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

Please expand:

_____

_____

_____

7. Based on my current experience, I foresee my child(ren) pursuing the following Post-16 option:

○ Level 3 Qualifications (e.g. A, AS Level, NVQ, etc.) at home

○ Level 3 Qualifications (e.g. A, AS Level, NVQ, etc.) at school

○ Level 3 Qualifications (e.g. A, AS Level, NVQ, etc.) at an FE college

○ Training placement (possibly linked to an apprenticeship)

○ Employment with no specifically linked education or training

○ Other (please describe) _____

8. What do you think are the benefits surrounding transition Post-16 that are specific to home educated young people?

_____

_____

_____

9. What do you think are the difficulties surrounding transition Post-16 that are specific to home educated young people?

_____

_____

_____

10. How would you describe your relationship with the Local Education Authority?

| | Very Poor | Poor | Neither Poor nor Good | Good | Very Good |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The relationship is: | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

11. Does this relationship impact on your feelings about your child(ren)'s Post-16 transition?

□ Yes (please comment) _____

□ No

12. Do you or your home educated children have any experience of working with an Educational Psychologist?

□ Yes (please describe) _____

□ No

13. Please comment on any other aspects of your thoughts and experiences of home education and transition Post-16 not covered by this questionnaire:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

**Appendix C –** Link to the online questionnaire for EPs and TEPs


https://cardiffunipsych.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bgAsk4N4tZBp8Xj

**Appendix D -** Questionnaire for EPs and TEPs (Hard Copy)

School of Psychology, Cardiff University

EP Questionnaire

Name: _____ Number of years as an EP: _____

Current position:     Principle ☐     Senior ☐     EP ☐     Newly-Qualified ☐

Current place of work:

☐ Local authority

☐ Private EP

☐ Other (please specify) _____

1. On a scale of 1 – 10, how would you rate your current level of experience in supporting **EHE children and young people aged 5-16**?

*No experience >      limited experience      >    Experienced >      Very experienced*

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|

Please expand (including details of the nature of any involvement you have had with this population):

_____

_____

_____

2. On a scale of 1 – 10, how would you rate your current level of experience in supporting EHE families during EHE young people's transition into **future education** Post-16?

*No experience >        limited experience      >    Experienced >        Very experienced*

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|

Please expand (including details of the nature of any involvement you have had with this population):

_____

_____

_____

**3.** On a scale of 1 – 10, how would you rate your current level of experience in supporting EHE families during EHE young people's transition into **future employment** Post-16**:**

*No experience >        limited experience      >    Experienced >        Very experienced*

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|

Please expand (including details of the nature of any involvement you have had with this population):

_____

_____

_____


4. In my experience, EPs are currently involved in supporting EHE young people's transition into future education or employment Post-16 (please tick one).

True ☐          False ☐

Please expand:

_____

_____

_____


5. Drawing on your experience, please list the most relevant (max. 5) issues relating to young people's transition Post-16:

_____

_____

_____


6. In what circumstances do you envisage a role for EPs in supporting EHE young people's transition into future education or employment Post-16.

_____

_____

_____

7. Please list the five most effective ways you believe EPs could help support EHE young people's transition into future education or employment Post-16.

_____

_____

_____

8. Are there any issues relating to the role of the EP in supporting EHE CYP during transition Post-16 you feel have not been addressed in this questionnaire? Please comment:

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

Appendix E – Interview schedule for structured interviews with EHE CYP

**Semi-structured interview schedule**

**Tell me a bit about your current situation**

*Prompt: How did you come to decide this?*

**What are your thoughts on the Transition Post-16?**

*Prompts: What are your hopes for the future? Where do you see yourself in 5 & 10 years? How has home education prepared you for that?; Coming from HE, what did you find challenging about the transition?; How is your current education/employment different from your experience being home educated?; How did your home education prepare you for your current education/employment?*

**What makes an education "suitable" and /or "efficient"?**

1. What do you understand an "efficient education" to mean?

2. Given your current transition post-16, do you think your education has been "efficient"? How do you know?

3. What do you understand a "suitable education" to mean?

4. Given your current transition post-16, do you think your education has been "suitable"? How do you know?

*Prompts: What do you think is the purpose of education?; Is education more about a person's present or their future?; Do you ever think about your place or future place in society? How has home education prepared you for this?; What do you think it means to be a citizen?*

**Appendix F -** Thematic Analysis Procedure (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2013).

| Step | Description |
|---|---|
| Become familiar with the data | This step requires the researcher to be fully immersed and actively engaged in the data; firstly, by transcribing the interactions, and then reading (and re-reading) the transcripts and/or listening to the recordings. |
| Generate initial codes | The researcher starts to identify preliminary codes (features of the data that appear interesting and meaningful). These codes can provide an indication of the context of the conversation. (See Appendix G for example) |
| Search for themes | Relevant data extracts are sorted (combined or split) according to overarching themes. The researcher's thought process should allude to the relationship between codes, subthemes, and themes. |
| Review themes | The researcher reviews identified themes and questions whether to combine, refine, separate, or discard initial themes. Data within themes should cohere together meaningfully, while there should be clear and identifiable distinctions between themes. A thematic 'map' can be generated from this step. |
| Define themes | Ongoing analysis enhances the identified themes. The researcher then needs to provide theme names and clear working definitions that capture the essence of each theme in a concise manner. A unified story of the data emerges from the themes. |
| Producing the report | The researcher presents their analysis in an interpretable piece of writing by using vivid and compelling extract examples that relate to the themes, research question, and literature. |

**Appendix G** – Example of generating initial codes step from Thematic Analysis procedure (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2013).

Excerpt from EHE Facilitators' transcript:

*Q20 What do you think are the benefits surrounding transition post 16 that are specific to home educated young people?*

| Participant | Response |
|---|---|
| 1 | Primarily the fact that they are used to natural social exposure, rather than being with the same people of he same age every day, this aids transition into employment, as the HE child is not trying to fit their experience of school environs into the work place. |
| 2 | Tailored education, independent learning skills not spoon-fed what they need to know, greater understanding of subjects |
| 3 | They will have a much better idea about what their passions are and so probably will choose a pathway that meets their needs not just what society expects them to do. Also they are Self Directed learners and will therefore find independent study, planning, life skills and relating to different types of people much easier than young people who have only known a school system |
| 4 | Two have them have started working outside the home and have done really well. They were both confident and easily instructed. Our eldest son has been working at his job since January full-time and has already received three pay raises. I think them being at home and having the discipline to work on their own (since they have been older) really helps with work ethic and determination. |
| 6 | I think it is very beneficial for post 16 learners to attend college for further education. Both of my older children enjoyed this time and I felt it was good preparation for uni or other follow on work |
| 7 | Home educated young people are often, tho not always and dependent on the home education environment, able often self-directed learners. They do not need to be spoon fed their education. |
| 9 | Young people from HE background have often benefitted from a good understanding of self-directed study and an enthusiasm for learning in areas of interest. These are valuable skills for A level and beyond. |
| 10 | Home educated children are not spoonfed and have more autonomy. They learn self-direction faster than their peers. They tend to be more independent on the whole. That means an employer does not need to babysit them as they do school leavers. As for further education, a school child waits for someone else to differentiate for them. They are spoonfed what to learn with little passion. Home Educated children will self-direct. They often learn and research things for pleasure. If they do not understand something, they will search for a learning method and material that they will aid their understanding. |
| 12 | They are self-starters, and there because they want to be, which is a massive benefit compared to many others! |
| 13 | I can only go on the confidence that my daughter has now, she is willing to try anything, she isn't worried about what the latest fad is or what others think. Her friends that go to school seem to like doing what others do & not what they want to do. |

**Appendix H -** Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) Procedure (Smith *et al.*, 2009).

| Steps* | Description |
|---|---|
| **Reading and re-reading** | Recordings were listened to and transcripts read through numerous times to increase familiarisation. |
| **Initial noting** | The first transcript was read through carefully and notes made of anything interesting or significant (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Smith *et al.* (2009) note that this is "the most detailed and time consuming" (p.83) stage of analysis and can be done at three levels: descriptive, linguistic and conceptual. An example is shown in Appendix I. |
| **Developing emergent themes** | Initial notes on the first transcript were explored at a higher level of abstraction, mindful of the initial notes that had been made on the entire transcript, and emergent themes were recorded. |
| **Searching for connections across emergent themes** | A list was made of emergent themes within the first transcript, together with key quotations. These were reordered to establish links, patterns and contrasts, and eventually grouped into superordinate themes at a further level of abstraction. |
| **Moving to the next case** | This process was repeated with each subsequent transcript whilst being mindful of the way in which on-going analysis of each transcript was changing the researcher's preconceptions. This and other reflections were recorded in a diary to enable them to be "bracketed off" (Smith *et al.* 2009). |
| **Looking for patterns across cases** | Themes were compared between participants, leading to a re-ordering of themes until a set of super- and sub-ordinate themes was developed to represent the entire transcripts (See Appendix N). |

*In practice, these steps were iterative and necessitated a repeated return to transcripts and recordings to keep interpretations grounded in the data.

**Appendix I** - Example of the initial noting step from IPA procedure (Smith *et al.*, 2009).

Luke:     A:

1                                              **AJ Interview**
2
3              OK, A, tell me, tell me, so I've got a record of it, what you're doing now that
4              you've turned 16?
5
6              Well, now, I'm doing A levels at Sixth Form.
7
8              **In a sixth form college?**
9
10             Yeah.
11
12             **And how did you come to decide to do this?**
13
14             Well I wanted to do criminology, pretty much.
15
16             **Yeah.**
17
18             And that was the only place that really did it, so... I was going to go to a normal
19             college but then like otherwise, if I did that I didn't get to do A levels which you
20             need like, cos if you want to do a certain thing, then if you need like A levels for it,
21             it's the best place.
22
23             **Yeah so what lead you to criminology?**
24
25             I want to go in for the police.
26

**Commented [LR1]:** Did she actually want to go here? Went here because they offered a specific subject, not offered elsewhere. Limited Options?

**Commented [LR2]:** Best option for career development. Sense that some career options are linked to mainstream educational pathways.

| 27 | **Oh right, how long have you wanted to do that?** |
|---|---|
| 28 | |
| 29 | Kind of a long time but at the same time kind of not. Like I used to want to be, go in |
| 30 | the police but then I decided not, and now I do again. |
| 31 | |
| 32 | **Alright is it set in...?** |
| 33 | |
| 34 | For about like two years, probably, now. Not since the beginning but, since I wanted |
| 35 | to be in the police again. |
| 36 | |
| 37 | **So your mother mentioned you're in the police cadets?** |
| 38 | |
| 39 | I'm not yet but in like...they've gone like through the checks and stuff. |
| 40 | |
| 41 | **Yeah.** |
| 42 | |
| 43 | So like they've offered, like a place, so I'm gonna do it in November I think. |
| 44 | |
| 45 | **Oh, I see. So what does that involve?** |
| 46 | |
| 47 | Involve...It's like...I kind of know but I kind of don't know how to explain. It's like |
| 48 | going to the like how you would like write, assess situations and like the forensics |
| 49 | and stuff like that. Training, I guess. It's like the thing that you do before you go |
| 50 | into the special constables. So it's like kind of like training for that, in a way. |
| 51 | |
| 52 | **Right I see. So how will criminology help you with that?** |

**Commented [LR3]:** Is her ambition set? Do you have to choose career aged 18? Hesitation.

**Commented [LR4]:** Lots of hesitation and uncertainty over what she wanted to do. Did this contribute to her initial choice of college to do business and dropping out?

**Commented [LR5]:** How committed is she to this process? Unsure of details. I wonder who has organised this? Hesitation.

**Commented [LR6]:** Uncertainty of process. What has been her involvement in it? Hesitation.

2

53
54 Help me to understand like laws and… yeah.  It's mostly focused on, it goes to like
55 psychology a bit as well.
56
57 **Yeah?**
58
59 And like, how criminals like think I guess. But I don't know, just looking at laws and
60 how crimes affect people and how different, how criminals are like, you know, what
61 kind of people are more likely to commit crimes and stuff like that.

**Commented [LR7]:** Unsure of relevance of subject to future career? Or a difficulty in articulating?

**Commented [LR8]:** Uncertainty of relevance of subject.

**Commented [LR9]:** The subject will provide a background or overview for police work.
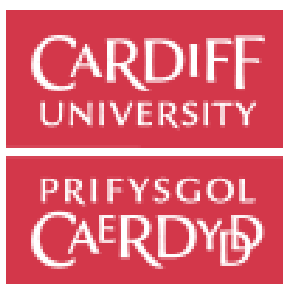
**School of Psychology, Cardiff University**

**Information Sheet**

School of Psychology
Cardiff University
70 Park Place
Cardiff
CF10 3AT

+44 (0)29 2087 5393

Dear ,

I would like to invite you to participate in a three-part study in order to explore your thoughts and feelings about Elective Home Education (EHE) in Wales, home-educated young people's transition post-16+ and the role of the educational psychologist in this transition. Participation is voluntary. Each participant is only eligible to take part in the part of the study that is relevant to them. As such, this information sheet details the specific participation of EHE facilitators, EHE young people (YP) and educational psychologists (EPs).

Before you decide whether you would like to take part, please read all of the following information about the study. If you are happy to take part, please complete the relevant consent form.

**What is the aim of the study?**

The study aims to explore Elective Home Education in Wales in relation to the transition of EHE CYP into future education or employment post-16+. Furthermore, the study is interested in the role EPs currently play in this transition, as well as the potential for them to provide further support to EHE families during this transition.

**Who is conducting this research?**

The research project will be conducted by educational psychologist in training (EPiT) Luke Ryan, who is currently studying the doctorate in Educational Psychology (DEdPsy) at Cardiff University.

This project has been reviewed and ethically approved by Cardiff University's ethics committee. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw at any time without giving a reason. The decision you make about participation will not affect your rights or access to services/benefits, or have a negative consequence regarding your employment. A risk assessment of the study has suggested there are minimal potential risks involved in participation

**What does participation involve?**

The researcher is recruiting EHE facilitators (parents/guardians), EHE CYP (who have been home-educated for either part or the entirety of their education), and EPs to take part in the study.

**Questionnaires -**

EHE facilitator and EP involvement consists of answering a questionnaire, either electronically or a hard copy.

- EHE facilitators will answer a questionnaire designed to gather their experiences, thoughts and opinions on EHE, as well as the transition of EHE CYP into further education or employment.

- EPs will answer a separate questionnaire designed to gather their experiences of working with EHE families and young people during transition into future education or employment. EPs will also be asked to share their views on any further support they feel they could provide to EHE families during this transition.

The questionnaire should take 10-15 minutes to complete.

The information you provide in the questionnaire will be held confidentially for the first seven days such that only the researcher can trace this information back to you. This is to provide you with the opportunity to withdraw your data up to 7 days after completing the questionnaire, should you change your mind about participation. After seven days, the data will be completely anonymised and no-one will be able to trace your information back to you. After this point, it will, therefore, be impossible to withdraw your data. The data provided will be retained indefinitely on a secure server at Cardiff University following the completion of the research.

**Semi-structured Interviews**

- EHE CYP involvement consists of participating in a semi-structured interview with the researcher.

Questions posed in the interview will offer participants the opportunity to discuss their experiences, thoughts and opinions on their EHE experiences to date, as well as their current transition into future education or employment. Each interview should take between 25 and 60 minutes and will take place during autumn 2018 at venues to be confirmed.

Notes and recordings of the information participants provide will be accessible only to the researcher. Any data gathered by the researcher during the interview session will be transcribed anonymously after 7 days of the interview taking place and will be retained on a secure server at Cardiff University after the completion of the research. At this time, audio recordings of the interviews will be deleted.

**Will I be informed of the research findings?**

At the end of the study, you will be provided with additional information and feedback about the research findings. A copy of the written report will be made available to you upon request.

**Who can I contact if I would like more information or have any concerns?**

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please contact Luke Ryan at the email addresses below. If you have any concerns that you would prefer not to discuss with the researcher, you can contact the research supervisor, Dr Simon Claridge, at ClaridgeS@cardiff.ac.uk.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Luke Ryan

*Educational Psychologist in Training*

*School of Psychology*

*Cardiff University*

*RyanPL1@cardiff.ac.uk*

Cardiff University School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee
Email: *psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk*          *Tel: +44 (0)29 2087 0360*


The data controller is Cardiff University and the Data Protection Officer is Matt Cooper CooperM1@cardiff.ac.uk. The lawful basis for the processing of the data you provide is consent.

## School of Psychology, Cardiff University

## Consent form – Questionnaires

If you consent to take part in the study by completing a questionnaire regarding elective home education, please tick the boxes and sign below.

☐ I confirm that I have read the information sheet provided and understand that my participation in this project will involve completing a questionnaire about my thoughts and opinions on elective home education and home-educated young people's transition Post-16 into future education or employment.

☐ I understand that participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study within the first seven days following the completion of the questionnaire, without giving a reason.

☐ I understand that my data will be kept confidentially for 7 days in order to allow participants the opportunity to withdraw data during that time.

☐ I understand that, due to the anonymisation of my data, withdrawal from the study will not be possible from the eighth day onwards.

☐ I understand that I may ask any questions at any time. I am free to discuss my concerns with Luke Ryan, or with his supervisor Simon Claridge, at Cardiff University.

☐ I understand that my data will be held securely and confidentially, such that only the researcher can trace this information back to me individually, for the first seven days following questionnaire completion. From the eighth day onward, all data will be fully anonymised and my data will no longer be traceable by the researcher.

☐ I understand that my anonymised data will be stored on a secure server at Cardiff University. I understand that at the end of the study I will be provided with information about the research findings and may request a copy of the written report.

I, _____(NAME) consent to participate in this study conducted by School of Psychology, Cardiff University under the supervision of Simon Claridge.

Signed:                                        Date:



Cardiff University School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee

Email: *psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk*              *Tel: +44 (0)29 2087 0360*

The data controller is Cardiff University and the Data Protection Officer is Matt Cooper [CooperM1@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:CooperM1@cardiff.ac.uk). The lawful basis for the processing of the data you provide is consent.

# School of Psychology, Cardiff University

# Consent form – Structure Interviews

If you consent to taking part in this study by participating in a structured interviews discussion, please tick *all* of the boxes and sign below.

☐ I confirm that I have read the information sheet provided and understand that my participation in this project will involve my participation in a structured interview to investigate the thoughts and opinions of home-educated young people (age 16-18) on what constitutes an 'efficient' and 'suitable' education, and whether they feel they received one, in light of their transition experiences?

☐ I understand that participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I can withdraw from the structured interviews at any time without giving a reason.

☐ I understand that I may ask any questions at any time. I am free to discuss my concerns with Luke Ryan, or with his supervisor Simon Claridge, at Cardiff University.

☐ I understand that an audio recording will be made of the interview.

☐ I understand that the audio recording and all written notes taken during the structured interview will be stored securely and confidentially and will only be accessible to the researcher and his supervisor.

☐ I understand that the data will be transcribed and anonymised 14 days after the structured interviews take place, and that from then on the data will be entirely anonymised. Furthermore, the audio recording of the structured interviews will be deleted at that time.

☐ I understand that all data recorded during the structured interviews will be anonymised during transcription, and stored securely and confidentially by Cardiff University following the completion of the study.

☐ I also understand that at the end of the study I will be provided with information about the research findings and may request a copy of the written report.

I, _____(NAME) consent to participate in the study conducted by School of Psychology, Cardiff University under the supervision of *Simon Claridge*.

Signed:                                    Date:

Cardiff University School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee

Email: *psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk*                    *Tel: +44 (0)29 2087 0360*

The data controller is Cardiff University and the Data Protection Officer is Matt Cooper CooperM1@cardiff.ac.uk. The lawful basis for the processing of the data you provide is consent.

**Appendix M** – Participant debrief form



School of Psychology, Cardiff University

Debrief Form – Anonymous Data

Dear Participant,

I would like to thank you for your participation in a recent study exploring Elective Home Education in Wales, the transition post-16+ and the role of the educational psychologist. For further information on these issues, please find the following articles as suggested reading:

Forrester, D., Maxwell, N., Slater, T., & Doughty, J (2017). *An evidence based review of the risks to children and young people who are educated at home Final Report*. Welsh Government: Cardiff.

Jones, T. (2013). Through the lens of home-educated children: engagement in education, *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 29:2, 107-121.

Parsons, S. and Lewis, A. (2010). The home-education of children with special needs or disabilities in the UK: views of parents from an online survey, *International Journal of Inclusive Education,* 14 (1), 67-86.

The information provided in the structured interviews you participated in will be analysed alongside information collected from questionnaires completed by EHE facilitators (parents/guardians) and educational psychologists on EHE. Neither the information you have supplied, nor the research findings will be used to dictate future policy or practice.

Information gathered by the researcher during the structured interviews- including all notes and audio recordings- will be anonymised upon transcription and will be stored securely by Cardiff University.

If you would like to complain about any aspects of this research project, please find the contact details of the Secretary of the Ethics Committee below. If you would like to contact any of the researchers or their supervisor about this study, please also find their contact details below.

Once again, your participation in this study was much appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Luke Ryan

Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you have any further queries or comments about this research. Please find below, the full contact details of the researcher, his supervisor, and the Cardiff university ethics committee.

| Luke Ryan | Simon Claridge |
|---|---|
| Postgraduate Student | Tutor |
| School of Psychology | School of Psychology |
| Cardiff University | Cardiff University |
| Tower Building | Tower Building |
| Park Place | Park Place |
| Cardiff | Cardiff |
| CF10 3AT | CF10 3AT |
| Tel: +44 (0)29 2087 5393 | Tel: +44 (0)29 2087 5393 |
| Email: RyanPL1@cardiff.ac.uk | Email: simon.claridge@bristol.gov.uk |

Cardiff University School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee
Email: *psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk*          *Tel: +44 (0)29 2087 0360*

The data controller is Cardiff University and the Data Protection Officer is Matt Cooper [CooperM1@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:CooperM1@cardiff.ac.uk). The lawful basis for the processing of the data you provide is consent.

**Appendix N** – An overview of superordinate themes (with subordinate themes) for each EHE CYP participant.

| | **Superordinate and Subordinate Themes** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **AJ** | **Career-oriented** | **Transition Challenges** | **Adaptability** | **I'd rather be Home Educated** |
| | Provision Choice; Subject Choice; Career choice | Fluency in Schooling; Anxiety | Plan B; Ability to drop subjects | Characteristics; Person-centred learning |

| | **Process of Learning** | **Religion** | **Individual and Society** | **Home Education** | **The purpose of education** | **Transitioning** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **OA** | | | | | | |
| | Reflections on own learning; Learning with others; Insight into the learning process. | Identity; A sense of purpose; Choice and agency. | Societal expectations; Reciprocal relationship. | Validation; Judgement; Advantages. | Preparation for the future; Being who you need to be | Experience; Clear Targets. |

| | **Transition to Home Education** | **Home Education make up** | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **JB** | | | |
| | Potential for Home Education; Difficulties in school; Negotiation ; Comparisons with school. | Religious education; Preparation for Work; Becoming a Functional adult; Education does/should. | Education does/should |