Doctorate in Educational Psychology (DEdPsy)

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The Efficiency of the Educational Psychology Report: An explorative study, considering views of recipients, including Young People, Caregivers, Education and Health.

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I am grateful to all the people who have made this research possible, particularly the participants who took the time to share their views. To my friends and family for convincing me I could do this, and for sticking with me – this is a formal apology for all the events I've missed, texts I haven't replied to and just being generally pre-occupied. Normality will now resume!

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Summary

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

Part I, the literature review, provides amplification of the title and a rationale for the research study. Key theoretical and research literature is presented and critically reviewed, leading to the identification of a research gap regarding the perceived usefulness of the Educational Psychologist's (EP) report. A rationale for the empirical study and research questions are provided.

Part II, the empirical study, provides a brief overview of the literature discussed in Part 1 in order to provide a succinct background to the research study. It goes on to describe the methodology of the research study in investigating the views of a sample of EPs and recipients of the report (i.e. Parents, Education and Health). Qualitative and quantitative data was gathered via an online questionnaire. 140 EPs and 40 common recipients of the report were recruited. Quantitative data was collated and illustrated within the study. Qualitative data was analysed through a process of thematic analysis; key themes, sub-themes, and supporting quotes are provided. Key findings are summarised and discussed in relation to existing literature. Strengths and limitations of the study, along with suggestions for further research are also provided.

Part III, the major reflective account provides critical reflections on a number of different elements of the research. Section two provides a critical account of the methodology, including research paradigm, data collection and data analysis. Reflections on the ethical issues are included. Section three focuses on the distinct contribution to knowledge, originality of the research and future research directions. Finally, section four provides a brief personal reflection on the research process and how this has impacted on the professional development of the researcher.

Abstract

The role of the Educational Psychologist (EP) is multifaceted and offers a distinctive contribution to those in receipt of their services (Fallon et al.2010). A comprehensive written psychological report is acknowledged to a major role for the EP (Castillo, Curtis, & Gelley, 2012) but there is very little research available to support an EP in producing an effective and interpretive account of the work they have carried out. Very generally, the psychological report aims to (a) increase others' understanding of children and young people (C/YP), (b) communicate intervention, hypotheses, and advice in such a way that they are understood, appreciated, and implemented, and (c) ultimately support service users in facilitating change.

Unfortunately, research indicates that reports are often difficult to read, particularly for non-psychologists. They are likely to include jargon and poorly defined terms, to make vague or inappropriate recommendations, to emphasize numbers rather than explanations, and to be of an inappropriate length (Kamphaus, 1993; Ownby, 1997; Sattler, 2001; Tallent, 1993). They are also likely to be written at a high level of reading difficulty, which is problematic in that they are read by multiple audiences with varied levels of educational background (Harvey, 1997; Weddig, 1984; Whitaker, 1994).

This thesis aimed to offer a current and UK based perspective of how EPs and common recipients of the EP report perceive its usefulness. Results showed a much more positive outlook on the report as a whole, in comparison to similar studies carried out in America, Canada and Malta. However, findings demonstrated common frustrations felt by recipients with regard to complex language and content within the reports. Implications for educational psychologists are considered within the thesis alongside future direction for further study.

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Part I: Major Literature Review

Word Count: 9,887

PART I: LITERATURE REVIEW

The Efficiency of the Educational Psychology Report: An explorative study, considering views of recipients, including Young People, Caregivers, Education and Health

Word Count (9709)

1.0 Introduction

One of the major undertakings of Educational Psychologists (EPs) is the writing of reports. Often, all involvement, assessment and intervention culminate in the production of a report. In a study carried out by Agresta in 2004, it was found that EPs attributed over 15% of their professional timetable to report writing. This supports a national study carried out in America where is was elicited that school psychologists spend approximately 50% of their time conducting assessments, and compiling associated reports each school year (Bramlett, Murphy, Johnson, Wallingsford, & Hall, 2002). In a profession where time allocation in schools has been cited as a potential barrier to effective work (Every Child Matters, 2003) it would appear that time spent outside of these provisions should be used to its greatest efficiency.

In a study carried out by Harvey in 2006, it was suggested that psychological reports serve several functions: -

i. To increase the understanding of service users, their parents (in the case of young people), and other professionals (inclusive of teaching staff) about service users' strengths and adaptive skills; cognitive, academic, and social-emotional difficulties; and the environmental factors that impede and enhance learning and social-emotional adjustment.

ii. To provide viable recommendations for strategies and interventions that are tailored to the needs of the individual.

iii. To communicate the diagnostic information and recommendations in ways that they are understood, appreciated, and implemented with the ultimate result of improvements in service users' development.

iv. To provide a long-term record that can be referred to for support and review.

From the description offered by Harvey, that following on from hours of possible intervention, consultation and assessment with the service users and key adults, the EP must then translate this involvement into words in which his/her opinion is outlined, with reasons for such opinion, and recommendations that adults working with a child can follow. Consideration should also be given to ensure the report is balanced, non-judgemental and

has a breadth of readability. Given the multifaceted nature of the report, and its role in providing information, guidance and evidence to all key persons involved with the service user; it could be assumed that the report is a key document used by the EP, and that time spent compiling the psychology report is warranted.

At present, there appears to be no definitive structure or official set of guidelines to dictate what is included within the Educational Psychology Report in the UK. The British Psychological Society (BPS) have developed a "Guidance for Educational Psychologist (EPs) when preparing reports for children and young people following implementation of The Children and Families Act 2014" to assist with report writing. The publication of this document was requested by many EPs and by the Department for Education (DfE) in order to update and replace the "Guidance to Educational Psychologists (EPs) in preparing Statutory Advice to Children's Services Authorities". The BPS acknowledges within the guidance that the aforementioned statutory advice was used extensively within the EP profession and within the wider Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) field but needed to be updated to take into account the implementation of Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014 (including the SEND Code of Practice 2015 and associated regulations). Although the document has significant relevance to EPs employed by Local Authorities (LAs), the guidelines provide psychological advice more specifically for Education, Health and Care (EHC) needs assessments as opposed to the general psychological report. With a focus on the EHC needs assessment, it could also be argued that the guidance is neglectful of Welsh EPs, who do not use the EHC assessment/plan within their practice.

1.1 Structure of the Literature Review

This review will begin by considering the role of the EP in the context of report writing; elements will be explored such as; expectations placed on EPs, and time constraints that may be impactful upon their work.

This review will proceed to draw on historical perceptions of the EP report and highlight what recipients feel is important to include within the document and offer implementation strategies that could be used to improve the report.

The central focus of this review will be an exploration of the literature relating to the EP report. An array of subjects will be looked at such as; the challenges of report writing to meet the needs of a varied audience; what do recipients want in a report; what should be included within the content of a report; and findings of research. In addition to this, models of report writing will be considered as potential aides in overcoming difficulties with producing an effective and useful EP report.

1.2 Terminology

It should be noted when reading this text that school psychologist and educational psychologist (EP) are used interchangeably within the text, this is typically in line with the geographical location of the study and the title given to the practitioner in that region. Also, it is worth noting that the report may also be described as an EP report, school psychologist report or psychoeducational report – again all with the same meaning. What this literature review or study is not considering is specific reports such as statutory or court reports where there may be more guidelines offered due to them being legal documents. The reports referred to within the current study are generic in nature and may otherwise be deemed as 'records of involvement' of the EP.

Furthermore, the use of the term Children and Young People/Person (CYP) is deployed to incorporate all age ranges of babies/children/adolescents that the EP may work with.

1.3 Search Terms and Sources

The literature search was carried out between January 2018 and December 2018; literature was reviewed and compiled using various online search facilities including an initial scoping search done via Google Scholar, and then more specific searches entered into electronic databases such as: PsycINFO, ASSIA (Applied Social Science and Index Abstracts) and ERIC. The search terms used included 'Educational Psychologist report writing', 'Educational Psychologist OR School Psychologist AND report writing', 'psychological reports', 'report writing OR writing reports', 'perceptions of the Educational Psychologist OR School Psychologist', 'recipients of psychological reports', 'parents response to psychological report' and 'school OR parent response to psychological reports'. Although a large number of results were founded, they were largely unfit for the purposes of this study. The research articles deemed most pertinent to the current study were selected and further 'pearl growing' search methods were utilised to source relevant studies from references within the aforementioned articles. For a more detailed description of the literature review please see the template provided (Appendix F).

2.0 Report Writing and the role of the EP

Educational psychologists are faced with the very daunting task of having to summarise the needs of a child into a number of words and pages. It is likely that the psychologist will have spent a prolonged period consulting with the child or young person (CYP), parents, teachers and other relevant persons in an effort to learn about the CYP, the systems around them and their individual needs. Other methods of formal or informal information seeking may be utilised such as observation or assessment to support any hypotheses, this process then generally concludes with a report offering the EP's interpretation of work carried out, his/her psychological input and any agreed actions or recommendations that adults working with the CYP can follow.

Within this process, decisions must be made by the EP such as what information to include, how to interpret and present the child's capabilities and needs, what words to use, how to structure the report etc. The content included will undoubtedly affect the role the report plays in the child's life and is likely to have an influence on the child's future learning. Although it could be assumed that each EP would want the most positive outcomes for the child, Michaels (2006) writes about a report possibly having negative effects on the child's life, present and future and impacting both directly and indirectly on the child's welfare. Examples of negative outcomes may include being denied employment, or by affecting the way others act towards them.

In addition to the pressure of selecting the most relevant and appropriate content for a report, the EP must ensure that reports meet the needs of its recipients. Point 9.7 of the Health and Care Professions Council's (HCPC) Standards of Proficiency (SoP) states that EP's will be able to 'contribute effectively to work undertaken as part of a multi-disciplinary team' and in the most recent published Educational Psychology Workforce Survey (2013) it was reported that 31.6% of the 151 respondents were working in multi-disciplinary teams; with this in mind, the EP report must also be relevant and accessible to a range of individuals from varying backgrounds. Implications of disseminating information from various sources and constructing it for use in differing contexts and by a multitude of individuals, might include; dilemmas regarding how to integrate data, highlight pertinent information, and selecting the most fitting styles of writing. To date, there has been little empirical evidence regarding how the use of integrated, team-based report models impact perceptions of the reports (Rahill, 2018).

In a large study carried out by the Canadian Psychological Association in 2007, it was suggested that writing an effective report relied more so on a school psychologist's skills in the gathering of information, including; attaining rapport with service users and families; administering and scoring norm-referenced psychological and educational tests in a standardised manner; school and classroom observation; interviewing children, teachers, and parents; and using curriculum-based measurement. This study further highlighted the need for the school psychologist to have a sound knowledge base in ethical and professional practices, child and adolescent development, teaching exceptional learners, developmental psychopathology, culturally sensitive practice, case formulation, and school consultation. It could be said that following on from demonstrating these skills, the psychological report then gives a representation of the EP and his or her work, but purely through the medium of text, so eradicating the assistance of exchanged dialogue, body language and intonation – perhaps an arduous task for even experienced practitioners.

3.0 Historical findings

When researching the subject of report writing, specifically the EP report, there does not appear to be an abundance of published studies on the subject, however, of publications sourced there appears to be an array of views on how the psychological report should or shouldn't be written. In order to compile the most comprehensive review of literature on

the subject of 'EP report writing', studies that might typically be excluded due to date or geographical location have been incorporated within this study.

Implications for best practice in terms of the features of psychological reports have been informed by more than five decades of research (e.g., Harvey, 2006; Pelco et al., 2009; Rucker, 1967; Wiener, 1987). As far back as 1959, Tallent and Reiss studied psychological reports by sourcing psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers employed at the Veteran's Administration to give their response to one sentence; "the trouble with psychological reports is….". Qualitative analysis was carried out on the 1411 responses (606 psychiatrists, 421 social workers and 384 psychologists) and the outcomes ranged from concerns about an over emphasis on diagnosis, to an under representation of strengths and treatment possibilities within the report. Respondents also indicated concerns about the writing style (too technical, too vague, reports not written in a practical manner). It is perhaps concerning that almost 30 years later, when researchers again explored perceptions of psychological reports, they found that teachers (Wiener, 1985, 1987) and parents (Weddig, 1984) expressed similar concerns about reports being jargon-filled, complex, and difficult to understand in general.

4.0 Report Writing – what is important?

According to Groth-Marnat (2009), effective psychological reports are readable, connect to the person's context, have clear links between the referral questions and the answers to these questions, have integrated interpretations, and address client strengths as well as problem areas. Whilst other studies argue that to be useful, school psychology reports must address the reason for the referral and recommend appropriate intervention strategies that can be implemented within the resources of the school, community, or home (Gilman & Gabriel, 2004; Kvaal, Choca, & Groth-Marnat, 2003; Lichtenberger, Mather, Kaufman, & Kaufman, 2004; Overton, 2006).

Appelbaum (1970) characterised effective report writing as requiring a combination of science and art. That is, in addition to the psychologist's task of interpreting and integrating findings, report writers must engage in the art of persuasion, "in getting from one mind to the mind of another desired understandings and consequent inclinations to action" (p. 350). It is through this that reports achieve practical value. Effective reports should present assessment data in a clear and concise manner and include practical, understandable, and appropriate recommendations (Brenner, 2003; Harvey, 2006; Whitaker, 1995). Additionally, a child-centred writing style, which focuses on description of the client rather than test instruments or obtained scores, considers the reader and his or her comprehension of the information in the report (Schwean et al., 2006). Ultimately, the effectiveness of psychological reports may be determined by the extent to which they produce meaningful change in understanding and supporting the referred client (Ownby & Wallbrown, 1983).

4.1 Readability

Readability of psychological reports is perhaps one of the most discussed topics in this area of literature, with several researchers highlighting limiting factors in the way reports are written (e.g., Brenner, 2003; Groth-Marnat, 2009; Groth-Marnat & Horvath, 2006; Harvey, 1997, 2006). It has been argued extensively that reports of a high reading level are typically perceived as ineffective, this is largely attributed to readers becoming reluctant to read psychological reports as they are unable to comprehend the information provided. Several issues have been discussed with regard to readability of reports, for example; sentence length, frequent use of technical jargon and/or acronyms but a primary focus appears to be that of the target audience. As it has become increasingly evident that reports must be relatable to more than one primary audience (Ackerman, 2006; Brenner, 2003), it has been recommended that reports be written at no higher than a Grade 12 reading level (equivalent to that of someone who is 17 years of age) (Harvey, 1997), this may need to be further simplified in the UK in line with findings documented by The National Literacy Trust, which shows the average reading age to be descriptive and the equivalent of that of a 9 year old. However, despite this recommendation, Harvey (2006) noted that most psychological reports are typically written at a reading level equivalent to a senior undergraduate or graduate level. This reading level is substantially higher than the typical non-professional whose educational levels are generally lower (e.g., aged 17 – 18 years or less). In his 1997 study, Harvey found that approximately 72% of parents of evaluated children had less than 12 years of education, further accentuating the need for psychological reports to be accessible and readable. Indeed, Harvey's findings are of interest when giving consideration to readability of psychological reports, however, it cannot be assumed that levels of education given as part of an American study are directly relatable to those of British parents.

A related issue is the use of psychological jargon in reports. Although some argue that psychological jargon should be entirely avoided, for example, Rucker (1967); others note that simply providing explanations for jargon can be equally effective and at times, more helpful to the reader (Brenner, 2003; Donaldson, McDermott, Hollands, Copley & Davidson, 2004; Wiese, Bush, Newman, Benes, & Witt, 1986).

In Groth-Marnat's paper (2009), it is concluded that reports that consider readers' skills typically have short sentences, minimize the number of difficult words, reduce jargon, have very few acronyms, and have several subheadings. These findings were in accord with Wiener's findings in 1987.

It has been documented that psychologists appear to be largely unaware of the readability challenges within their reports, and as a result require explicit feedback (Harvey 1997, 2006). Suggestions to improve the readability of reports include: the use of word-processing readability checks (such as the Flesch reading index); reading the report from the perspective of the intended reader, for example the parent/caregiver/young person; explicating terms that may be not be commonly used by the recipient, for example, through the creation of a "word bank" of jargon terms and understandable definitions (Donaldson et al., 2004; Harvey, 1997, 2006). Attention to the readability of writing and attempts to take the perspective of potential readers of the report make it more likely that the report will be understood as intended and used to its fullest value.

4.2 Length

As previously mentioned, it has been reported that recipients can be reluctant to read reports if 'readability' factors have not been considered (Harvey, 1997), with this in mind it could be assumed that a lengthy report may deter some individuals. Conversely report readers have consistently indicated a preference for longer reports that include descriptions of what could be considered to be psychological terms (Donaldson et al., 2004). Supporting this notion, Wiener, (1985, 1987) and Wiener & Kohler (1986), found that both parents and teachers showed a distinct preference for descriptive (i.e. offers descriptions of psychological information) reports that amalgamate information and are easily understood – this was regardless of length; emphasis was placed upon the quality of content.

In terms of what is generally produced, Donders (1999, 2001) reported that the average psychological report is approximately five to seven single-spaced pages in length. Other researchers have found a wider range of report length, with Horvath, Logan, Walker, and Juhasz (2000) stating that standard reports range from a single page to 54 pages depending on their intended purpose. Although this information does not stipulate EP reports specifically, there appears to be no set "standard" for report length, it would seem that what is most important is to take the target audience and amount of required detail into consideration when composing reports (Groth-Marnat & Horvath, 2006).

An observation made when reading literature on the length of the psychological report, was that studies generally focused upon what is preferred by recipients – there was very limited information to draw on that offered a voice for EPs within the research; given that Agresta (2004), found that report writing accounts for a sizeable part of the EP and that Bramlett et al. (2006), suggest that daily requirements of school psychologists, including administrative tasks, may prevent psychologists from spending more time working with CYP and participating in interventions; it was felt that EPs views or current practice with regard to report length may be an interesting area for further research.

Adding to Bramlett et al's findings; Brown, Holcombe, Bolen and Thomson, investigated job satisfaction of school psychologists in Minnesota: results showed that school psychologists generally spent more of their time in assessment and testing than they did in consultation with teachers, staff and parents and direct activities with students (Brown et al, 2006). There was a discrepancy between the amount of time school psychologists spent doing those tasks and the amount of time they desire to spend in those activities (Brown et al, 2006), with the majority of respondents indicating that they would like to spend more of their time delivering and implementing interventions (Brown et al., 2006). It could be deduced from these findings that time taken away from working with CYP to complete administrative tasks could attribute to job dissatisfaction – therefore, it would be of interest to know how EPs feel towards report length.

4.3 Recording of assessment results

It may be understood that reports that are predominantly centred upon presenting assessment scores, reflect a way of practice that is not in line with modern day consultation

models of service delivery. Moreover, psychological reports with a heavy focus on scores along with the sometimes statistical language that this generates, takes away from content that could relay more of a holistic understanding the child's strengths and weaknesses. When giving thought to the outcomes that might come from an assessment orientated report, it is likely that within-child ideology becomes dominant which is unlikely to be conducive to the progress and development of the CYP. Instead, it is said that assessment results should be integrated where necessary to assist in determining the child's strengths and weaknesses, and with the intention to assist in determining the CYP's educational needs (Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2005).

Despite this research indicating the need for child-centred reports with low levels of psychological jargon and integration of results by the evaluator, psychological reports continue to predominantly be written in a test-by-test fashion in the field (Harvey & Groth-Marnat,2006). Without integration of data, reports are perceived by consumers to be difficult to understand and overly technical (Harvey&Groth-Marnat,2006).

4.4 A balanced report

It is documented that some reports have a tendency to focus on the deficits of individuals and emphasise the things that they cannot do well. This may be as a result of the initial referral questions highlighting areas of difficulty with a focus on behaviours and tasks that the individual is having difficulty with, and the tendency is for the practitioner to identify or confirm the areas of weakness of an individual (Snyder, Ritschel, Rand, & Berg, 2006). Given that C/YP have access to their reports, reading a deficit focused report can be discouraging for them and may promote feelings of frustration and de-motivation (Groth-Marnat & Horvath, 2006; Snyder et al., 2006).

Groth-Marnat (2009) has argued for several benefits of including strengths in EP reports. For instance, he suggests that a deficit-focused perspective presents an unbalanced and distorted view of the C/YP, which can overemphasise the extent of his or her challenges. In addition to this, deficit-focused reports can be demoralising for clients (or parents and teachers) and alienate them from the practitioner. Finally, identifying strengths can have substantial therapeutic benefits. Several additional benefits can be noted in relation to EP reports. First, research on resilience has highlighted the importance of considering strengths in predicting long term outcomes, as they can play a significant protective role (Rhee et al., 2001). Second, identifying strengths may be valuable in planning child-centred interventions and appropriate support for a child and promoting feelings of success (Jimerson et al., 2004). Snyder and colleagues (2006) have advocated for a balanced report that addresses strengths as well as weaknesses.

4.5 Content

A relatively recent study was carried out in Manitoba, by Mallin et al. (2012), giving consideration to what is commonly included within the school psychologist report. Content analysis was exercised to uncover significant patterns in reports with regard to organisation, readability, length and nature of recommendations. It was intended that this piece of

research would add to previous studies in promoting a report that contributes to 'real, beneficial and demonstrable change in circumstances for children and families**.**

The methodology used was a slight modification of the descriptive-qualitative approach as described by Gilgun (2005) and based in grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006). The qualitative approach taken in this study was designed to build upon and elucidate the content and structure of typical reports written by school psychologists in the Winnipeg, Manitoba area.

90 school psychologist reports were deconstructed using the content-analysis process, based on the work of Pope, Ziebald, and Mays, (2000). This particular study is of interest as it is based in Canada where the preponderance of literature on school psychologist report writing has been found. With the study being carried out in 2012, recommendations such as those mentioned in the previous sections of this literature review would have been available and pertinent to practitioners within the locality. However, the extent to which the findings of this study can be generalised is questionable given the relatively small sample size, use of grounded theory and consequent potential interpretive outcomes. Despite these potential shortcomings, the study found the following:

- With regard to organisation, all reports followed a similar format: reason for referral; sources of information; history; observations; results; recommendations. This would be in line with recommendations of previous studies, however, given the very narrow geographical sample it is also possible that practitioners were following a template that had been made available to them or had been trained to write reports in a prescriptive way.
- Report length varied from 3,493 to 6,574 words. In all reports the two procedural sections, observations and results, comprised more than 50% of the report. In all cases the recommendations section comprised 15% or less of the report.
- The average number of recommendations per report was six, with a maximum of 15 and minimum of zero. To further explore the efficiency of recommendations made, SMART criteria was used, this consisted of:

    Specific: indicating either persons and responsibilities, or program materials or processes involved.

    Measurable: provides a basis for student achievement to be described, assessed, or evaluated.

    Achievable: indicates a rationale for choosing realistic goals for the student.

    Relevant: meaningful or rewarding for the student.

    Time-bound: specific time period identified.

    The average number of SMART elements per recommendation was two, with a maximum of four and a minimum of zero. It was found that the general content of the recommendations provided some degree of specificity and relevance, but the elements of measurable, achievable and time-bound were found to exist at relatively

low levels. It was felt that a possible explanation for this observation is that measurable, achievable and time-bound elements allow for accountability of the practitioner or others named within the recommendations.

5.0 PROPOSED MODELS OF REPORT WRITING

5.1 The C.L.E.A.R Approach

It was not possible to find any current, evidence based models that are offered within the UK to support EPs with psychological report writing, however, as with much of the content provided within this literature review, it was possible to find a small sample of examples used in Canada. Two proposed approaches of report writing will be explored in more depth in the following section:

The C.L.E.A.R. Approach was developed by Sarah Mastoras and her colleagues at Calgary University in 2011. This approach intended to provide a structured and accessible framework for achieving more effective and recipient-focused psychological reports. The framework identifies five concepts as its base: -

Child-centered perspective;

Link referral questions, assessment results, and recommendations;

Enable the reader with concrete recommendations;

Address strengths as well as weaknesses;

Readability is intended to provide an organised and accessible framework for achieving more effective and consumer-focused psychological reports.

Mastoras (2011), derived the five core principles of C.L.E.A.R from a review of existing empirical literature on report-writing (e.g., Appelbaum, 1970; Brenner, 2003; Groth-Marnat, 2009; Groth-Marnat & Horvath, 2006). Relevant literature was studied, and the principles devised based on best-practice and evidence-based recommendations for producing reports that are understandable, meaningful, relevant, and persuasive. In line with assertions that reports are often received by more than one reader (Ackerman, 2006; Brenner, 2003), the C.L.E.A.R model claims to offer a practical and simplistic guideline to school psychologists and trainees, to forge reader friendly and usable reports that are transferable between audiences. This framework will now be explored further in line with other research in the area of report writing:

C – Mastoras et al. (2011), argue that reports written from a child-centered perspective inherently hold more meaning than those centred around test scores. It is not implied that test scores are not of value, but it champions recording test/assessment outcomes by depicting the strengths and weaknesses in relation to scores. Readers are reminded that the

purpose of including this principle within the C.L.E.A.R. approach is to remind psychologists of the importance of holding the child central to all reports written.

L - Several authors have emphasised the importance of making explicit links between the referral question (s), results, conclusions, and recommendations in the psychological report (e.g., Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2005; Groth-Marnat, 2009; Ownby, 1990; Sattler, 2008; Schwean et al., 2006). Linking the referral question directly to results and conclusions ensures that the reason for seeking assessment services has been addressed and solutions to the initial concern are provided (Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2005). Consequentially, conclusions are likely to be more credible and persuasive (Andrews & Gutkin, 1994; Ownby, 1990) and consumer satisfaction with psychological services increased (Brenner, 2003).

Suggestions offered within the article to promote linking the referral question(s) to the report content include:

- 'Making use of the summary section. The summary is an important section of the report and in some cases, is heavily relied on by readers as the major source of information (Sattler, 2008).'
- To ensure that the referral question is directly answered, a method proposed by Groth-Marnat (2009) involves numbering the referral questions and conclusions so that they are explicitly linked.

Although these suggestions hold value and are supported by substantial evidence, this principle makes the assumption that a referral question is always offered to the psychologist or has been by the referrer – it may also be the case that there may not be a consistent reason for referral, in that the CYP, parent and/or education provision would have varying constructs of what they want from the EP.

E – Some researchers argue that the recommendations section is the most important component of a psychological report (Brenner, 2003; Harvey, 2006). Mastoras et al. (2011), support the notion of 'concrete recommendations' being an integral part of the report by adopting the practice into its core principles. It is stressed within this principle outline that 'recommendations are a central component of a psychologists' contribution to a child's well-being', and the best use of this opportunity would be actioned by providing understandable and easily implementable recommendations to enhance the overall value of the report; in turn, this would make the report more meaningful and relevant to its readers.

In keeping with the study by Malin et al. (2012), Mastoras et al. (2011), endorse the S.M.A.R.T. principles as a useful framework for ensuring that recommendations are concrete and useable (Montgomery, Dyke, & Schwean, 2008).

A - A strengths-based perspective is about "understanding the client in an integrated way so that strengths can be marshalled to undo troubles" (Rashid & Ostermann, 2009, p. 490). This standpoint is emergent in psychology literature, with an increasing number of authors documenting the advantages of strengths-based assessments (e.g., Duckworth, Steen, & Seligman, 2005; Jimerson, Sharkey, Nybork & Furlong, 2004; Rashid & Ostermann, 2009;

Rhee, Furlong, Turner, & Harari, 2001). To support the inclusion of this principle, Mastoras et al. give an overview of findings from Groth-Marnat's (2009) study this includes, the suggestion that a deficit-focused report presents an unbalanced and distorted view of the CYP, which can exaggerate the extent of his or her challenges. In addition to this, deficit-focused reports may prove to be difficult and demoralising for CYP and significant others reading the report. Finally, identifying strengths can have substantial benefits such as promoting resilience which has been found to play a significant protective role in long term outcomes for CYP (Rhee et al., 2001). A second supporting factor of this core principle is the use of emphasising strengths when planning child-centred interventions, and/or when suggesting appropriate support strategies; in doing this it allows for more opportunities for a CYP to experience success (Jimerson et al., 2004).

The evidence offered to support the rationale for a strengths based perspective comes from a strong evidence base, however, it could be argued that Groth-Mornat's assertion of a deficit-focused report being unbalanced, similarly applies to a wholly strengths based report. The application of a balanced report that addresses strengths as well as weaknesses (Snyder et al., 2006) would provide a more balanced synopsis and give freedom to the psychologist to incorporate all of the positive material whilst also recognising the needs of the CYP. Snyder et al. (2006) further suggest that psychologists may wish to include a specific "strengths" section of the report to ensure that these areas are accentuated.

R – The final core principle of the C.L.E.A.R approach endorses the concept of offering teachers and parents the opportunity to review and discuss recommendations prior to the psychologist finalising the report. This recommendation is made in line with findings published by Harvey in 2006. Harvey stresses that in reviewing and discussing recommendations, it offers those involved an important avenue to ensure that all concerns have been appropriately addressed. It would seem that the most important factor that Mastoras et al. (2011) communicate for this principle, is that recommendations are directly applicable to the CYP and are not "canned" or given routinely, irrespective of the individual's abilities and circumstances.

In summary, the C.L.E.A.R Approach to report writing was formulated in response to decades of literature highlighting unyielding issues within the school psychologist report. The C.L.E.A.R. Approach addresses these difficulties by specifying and outlining five core principles that the writers claim can improve the quality and efficacy of school psychological reports if utilised effectively. It is asserted that by following the C.L.E.A.R. Approach to report writing, school psychologists can improve their report writing skills so that the knowledge gained through psychological assessment can be better understood by others, in turn resulting in an improved professional service to clients, their families, teachers, and others (Mastoras el al,. 2011).

Mastoras et al. (2011) have gone to great lengths to consider a wide range of literature and provide evidence from previous studies to support their framework. It could be said that the framework offered is simplistic in the sense that it would be easy for practitioners to make sense of and follow. In addition to providing evidence and an explanation for their suggestions, they also offer practical strategies that can be utilised by the reader. The

framework takes into account the recipients of the psychological report and strives to promote a document that is both accessible and useful to a varied audience.

Unfortunately, this article does not offer a review of how this model has been used in practice, so it is not possible to comment on the functionality or success of the C.L.E.A.R Approach. It also focuses on an assessment/test report, making it quite specific – of course, the concepts could be generalised to various forms of report, but this is not signified within the text. Finally, this framework was constructed to support school psychologists in training before they developed their own way of writing. It provokes the question of whether EP trainees in the UK are currently offered comparable frameworks, and if not, should it be something that is taught as part of their training? When further investigating these questions, there was a distinct lack of literature to offer an answer, so in all likelihood drawing attention to a gap for future research.

5.2 A process focused model

In line with the framework proposed by Mastoras et al. (2011), the next model of report writing is aimed at trainees of educational/school psychology and was developed out of Canada but on this occasion from Toronto University. It is deemed relevant both to this literature review and the over-arching study as it explores common issues raised with regard to the school psychologist report and depicts efforts made to overcome these difficulties.

Wiener and Costaris (2012) use a cognitive process theory of writing as the conceptual framework on which they base their teaching of report writing (Hayes and Flower's.,1987 and Flower and Hayes., 1981). This theory is highly regarded in offering an understanding of writing as a process which is not linear but instead, is goal directed and requires the writer to engage in planning, sentence generation, and revision. The model is perhaps best illustrated as a visual diagram: -
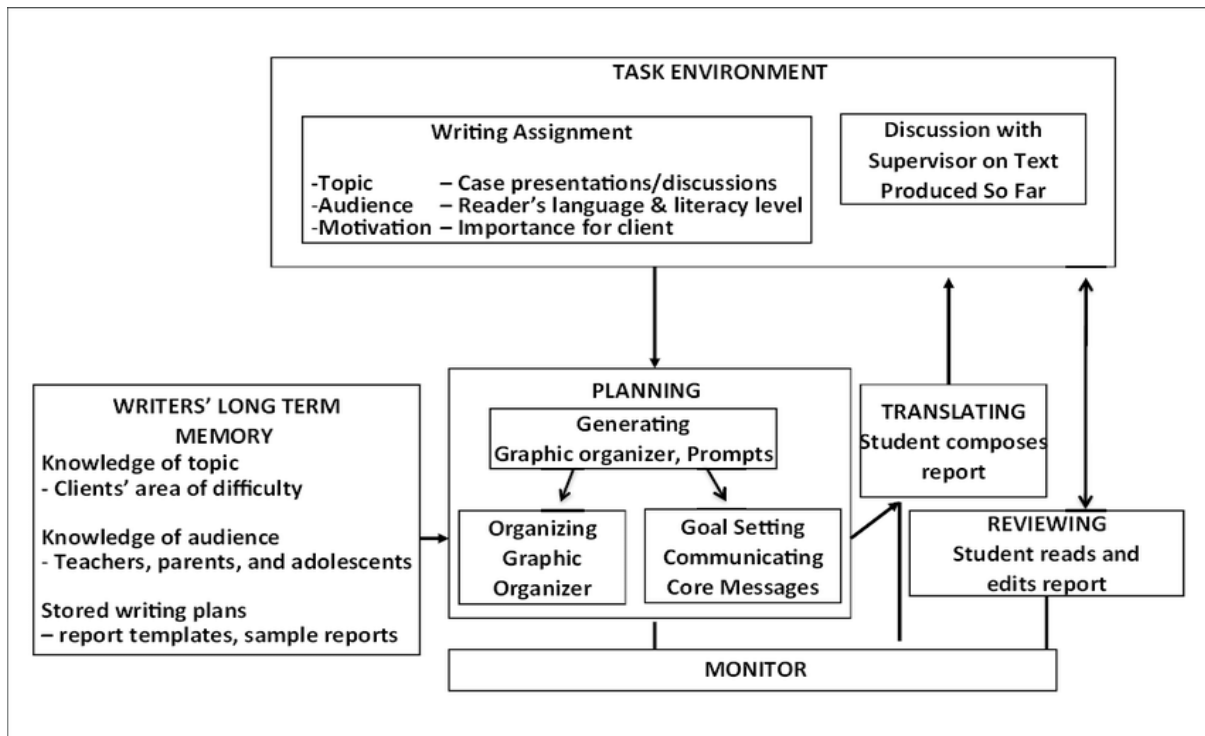
Figure 1: Hayes and Flower's model of Cognitive Process Theory

A summary of the paper written by Wiener and Costaris (2012) will now be offered to explore an example of actions taken to resolve issues related to writing effective psychological reports:

- As common practice, students begin the course with a presentation of relevant research exemplifying the features of reports that are comprehensible and helpful to parents and teachers.
- Prior to writing the report, students create a graphic organiser (Brown 2005) that displays their construction of the case they are working on. This supports them to recognise links between the varying domains that they may have assessed, for example; intellectual ability, academic functioning, cognitive processes, social and emotional skills and how they relate to any hypotheses made. On the periphery of the graphic organiser, they write the stressors such as; environmental factors that impede learning and social–emotional adjustment, and personal and environmental strengths, including; personal and environmental factors that enhance learning and social– emotional adjustment that affect the CYP.
- Students complete a uniform document that summarises the central message they want to convey to recipients of the report. Within this stage consideration is given to content, as in what they want to communicate, and process, with regard to how they intend to impart the content. The finalised document is then discussed within the student's class as part of a reflective process.
- Students are given the opportunity to examine examples of excellent reports written in previous years in their courses.
- In the initial course, students are given a very structured and comprehensive report template and in later courses they are given explicit guidelines.

- Students have access to ReportWriter, a website that is designed to facilitate writing reports that have the features shown by research to be informative for parents and teachers. Students are also encouraged to 'calculate the readability level of the reports they produce using standard readability formulae such as the Flesch-Kincaid grade level readability score'.
- As standard practice, students are encouraged to use class discussion and supervision with tutors as tools to review and improve their writing skills.

Weiner and Costaris offer a detailed model and a vigorous approach to training prospective Educational/School Psychologists in report writing. It could also be said that the structure of teaching offered by Weiner and Costaris could easily be adopted into other professions. With that said, there are potential limitations with such a structured and inflexible approach. The teaching of the model is didactic in nature which could perhaps take away from the natural writing style of the student. It could also be said that having a template model of writing may not be amenable to varying casework, circumstances or time constraints in practice. Additionally, acts such as offering students examples of 'excellent reports', are subjective to what the tutors deem an excellent report to be. It would be interesting to learn how students who graduate having been taught via this method, find using this model in practice.

5.3 A contrasting stance

As discussed in previous sections, research into school psychologist report writing has argued for reports that: connect with the client's context; have clear links to referral questions; have integrated interpretations of assessment results; address CYP's strengths and needs; have specific and realistic recommendations; and are adapted to the language and literacy level of the recipient. However, Attard et al. (2016) argue that in looking for a prescriptive model of report writing, the experience of aporia is lost. In this paper aporia is referred to as described by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida, which is, "to indicate a point of undecidability, which locates the site at which the text most obviously undermines its own rhetorical structure, dismantles, or deconstructs itself" (pg. 64). A quote offered by Burbules (2000) and also used by Attard et al. (2016), in their paper, captures this tension in potentially more contextual and simplistic terms, stating:

> "Aporia is an experience that affects us on many levels at once: we feel discomfort, we doubt ourselves. We may ask, 'What do I do?', 'What do I say?', 'What's wrong with me?' An aporia is a crisis of choice, of action and identity, and not only of belief. When I have too many choices, or no choices, I don't have a choice; I'm stuck. I don't know how to go on." (Attard et al., 2016).

Attard et el. (2016), specifically references the work of both Wiener and Costaris (2012) and Mastoras et al (2011) and credits their research for raising awareness of difficulties in report writing and suggesting models to support emergent school psychologists.

However, an alternative viewpoint is offered in the work of Attard et al. (2016) that argues that the feeling of uncertainty is useful and necessary in the process of report writing and when using a prescriptive model this is taken away.

The research by Attard et al is based on a small qualitative study of seven experienced school psychologists, working with children in Maltese schools. It differs from the two preceding articles (Weiner and Costaris, 2012 and Mastoras, 2011) in that it originates in Malta, and psychologists who were interviewed as part of the study had been practicing as school psychologists for many years. It was noted that this was deemed as advantageous as participants had a wide range of experience to reflect upon. Unfortunately, there is very limited information offered within this paper in terms of methodology. This paper argues for the acknowledgement of aporia both in report writing and in the training of school psychologists, however, in terms of reliability and validity it could be said that the non-inclusion of the study's details somewhat dulls its legitimacy.

The research study by Attard et al. (2016) found that the interviews carried out with school psychologists unearthed the finding that participants generally look for a structure of writing or proforma when conveying the CYP and his/her strengths and support needs. Perplexity was then recognised when wanting to do justice to their experience with a child and also wanting to protect the professional nature of their work. Attard et al. describes this scenario by explaining that sitting with uncertainty can be disconcerting, and rather than acknowledging aporia and finding ways to live with this feeling, psychologists may try to do away with this uncertainty, and close down aporia in performative, measurable and accountable terms, i.e. a more prescriptive approach to writing.

The question of the 'best way' of how to write reports has arisen time and again and it is very tempting to subscribe to a process which in some way guarantees the writing of a good report. A more prescriptive and learned way of writing may be helpful in ensuring that all the possible options and outcomes are considered; this is cemented within several papers (e.g. Carrington et al. 2002; Franey 2002; Webster and Bond 2002). Attard et al. (2016) acknowledge that methods used by psychologists to find a template of the 'perfect report' are testimony to the working values of EPs as mentioned by Standish (2001), but they also stress a need to 'give witness to the uncertainty', as they feel it is 'a fundamental requirement within the profession'. They encourage trainees and practicing psychologists to engage with uncertainty rather than find ways of diminishing it; offering the rationale of professionals who work in schools and educational institutions in a way that allows them to 'think otherwise' and will invite others to do so as well.

Attard et al. (2016) make a vociferous case for psychologists welcoming the discomfort that is often associated with the complexity of report writing, however, it appears to be lacking a firm research base to support this. From interviews carried out within their study it was demonstrated that psychologists do find report writing a complex task at times, and battle with the significance of what they put into the report and how that information may impact the CYP – participants were clear in stating that a template or guide to assist them in report writing eases the feeling of discomfort and offers them security that what they are doing is correct and in line with professional boundaries. It is felt that this study is successful in

raising awareness of aporia and the possible downfalls of a wholly structured approach to report writing, but it is also very specific with its definitions of 'aporia' making it difficult to generalise. Perhaps a more in-depth account of the benefits that sitting with aporia can offer would make it more attractive to practitioners and/or tutors of trainee educational/school psychologists.

6.0 Recipients of the Educational Psychology Report

In this section, the perceptions of teachers and parents in relation to the psychological report will be explored – given that they are potentially the most common recipients of the EP report, this is an important area to investigate.

6.1 Teacher perceptions of educational psychology reports

Research carried out specifically on teacher perceptions of school psychological report writing has indicated that teachers show a preference for psychological reports that are both reader-and user-friendly with low levels of psychological jargon (Ownby, Wallborn, & Brown, 1982; Wiese et al., 1986). When looking at teacher preferences in more depth, Salvagno and Teglasi (1987) found that teachers seek an evaluator to provide the analysis and fusion of test results as opposed to reading assessment results presented in a test-by-test format. Additionally, they also expressed a preference for psychological reports that provide concrete recommendations for intervention. Complimenting these findings, Pelco, Ward, Coleman, and Young (2009) found that teachers prefer theme-based reports that gather all sources of information and integrate these into themes, as opposed to a test-based format that has focus on assessment rather than the child. (Salvagno & Teglasi, 1987 and Wiener,1987).

6.2 Parent perceptions of EP reports

In keeping with teacher views, Wiener and Kohler (1986) similarly found that parents expressed a preference for psychological reports that contained low levels of psychological jargon. A study by Cornwall (1990) found that parents rated reports as less understandable when compared to how school-based professionals rated reports. These findings were not dissimilar to those of Roger Weddig years earlier in 1984; Weddig manipulated readability levels and professional terminology in a report provided to parents and found that the modified report assisted parental interpretation of results much better than the traditional version of the same report. More recently, Miller and Watkins (2010) explored the use of graphs within reports to increase parental understanding of assessment results and found that parents who read reports with bar graphs were able to accurately recall significantly more information than parents who read a traditional report without graphs. The research denoted here presents a valid case for content and presentation being a key element when writing psychological reports that parents will read.

6.3.1 A related study

It has already been touched upon that adapting reports to suit the audience that will be in receipt of it is of great importance. The ability to create reports that are both useful and understandable to the readers of the report while also being efficient for the EP cannot be overstated.

In a recent study carried out by Stephanie Rahill (2018) at Georgian Court University, New Jersey, parent and teacher perceptions of psychoeducational reports were examined based on the quality, understandability, and usefulness of school-based psychological reports. It is explicitly stated within this study that 'the goal of project was to provide updated information from both parents and teachers about their view of psychological reports; the rationale offered was that teachers and parent are the most common 'consumers' of the psychoeducational report. This section is not intended to offer an exhaustive description of Rahill's study, instead the intention is to offer a summary of the method and relevant results in relation to the current piece of research.

6.3.2 Parent and teacher surveys

Rahill (2018) carried out two online surveys to investigate the extent to which parents and teachers find psychological reports to be easy to understand, useful, and of value for understanding the CYP. The survey included both Likert-scale items and open-ended questions.

Survey responses were analysed using a mixed-method design. The open-ended qualitative responses were coded into themes independently by two graduate students in school psychology and the author, using an inductive approach. Independent analyses of qualitative responses were completed and then compared using a grounded theory approach, based on intelligence of Glaser and Strauss (1967) and updated by Strauss and Corbin (1990).

The Grounded Theory (GT) approach used in the analysis of the data does leave room for error; Charmaz (1989) contended that novice researchers using GT may tend to blur methodological lines by selecting purposeful instead of theoretical sampling. She further suggested that it is acceptable to start with purposeful sampling, however, the researcher must revert to theoretical sampling where the "process of data collection is controlled by the emerging theory" (Glaser, 1978, p. 36). Failure to do so will result in a lack of conceptual depth (Benoliel, 1996). This is of course making the assumption that the students leading the analysis were not already highly skilled in using GT. Additionally, GT allows for limited generalisability as themes come from the data and the process is highly interpretive, mixed with the fact that participants are narrating on their own personal experience, it can mould the study to offer very specific outcomes.

6.3.3 Participants

Sixty eight teachers completed the teacher survey. The majority of the participants taught in the state of New Jersey (64% of respondents).

Twenty-two parents of children who receive special education services completed the parent survey. The mean number of psychoeducational reports that the parents reported reading about their child was 3.65 with a range from 1 to 20

6.3.4 - Key Findings: Teachers

- In several categories, teachers indicated dissatisfaction with psychological reports that they have read.
- When teachers were asked whether reports typically contain relevant information for assisting the child in the classroom, 88% of respondents indicated that they either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.
- Additionally, 55% of teacher respondents indicated that they disagreed with the statement that psychological reports were helpful in designing interventions for a child.
- Fifty-five percent of teacher respondents also indicated that they agreed with the statement that many school personnel do not read psychological reports because of their complexity
- Only 24.6% percent of teachers indicated that they either agreed or strongly agreed that psychological reports are written in a way that is easy for teachers to understand.
- Approximately 62% of teacher respondents agreed or strongly agreed that reports typically include a lot of psychological jargon and 54% of respondents indicated that it was necessary to listen to the results in a meeting to understand the information.
- Only approximately 28% of teacher respondents agreed or strongly agreed to the following statement, "I am satisfied overall with the psycho educational reports that I have read."

6.3.5 - Key Findings: Parents

- 23% of parent respondents felt that the report answered the referral question.
- Just 19% of parent respondents agreed that reports were written in a manner that is easy for parents to understand.
- Worryingly, 100% of parent respondents indicated that psychological reports contain a great deal of psychological jargon.
- 75% of respondents felt that the reports were focused more on tests and less about their child.
- Only twenty-two percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that the report provides useful recommendations for assisting the child, and 13% of respondents agreed that the report provides information for delivering interventions to the child.

- Notably, only 17% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed to the following statement, "I am satisfied overall with the psychoeducational reports that I have read about my child."

6.3.6 Summary of Rahill's study

Parallel to previous research, that has found that teacher and parents prefer psychological reports that are written with child-centred clear and simple language (Pelco et al., 2009; Wiener, 1985, 1987; Wiener & Kohler, 1986; Wiese et al., 1986), the results of Rahill's study suggest that similar concerns with regard to the psychoeducational reports still exist.

The results of the Rahill's study indicate that both teachers and parents perceive psychological reports to be written in a manner that contains a lot of psychological jargon with a focus on assessment and scores obtained, as opposed to information that assists in understanding the child holistically. Both parents and teachers specified a desire to be provided with results in a form that is simplistic and offers more of a focus on intervention development for the child. Parents also reported that the report often did not seem personalised to their child.

Rahill concludes her study with a perhaps startling statement which reads 'survey results from this study are aligned with results from similar studies from decades ago (i.e., Weddig, 1984; Wiener, 1985, 1987; Wiener & Kohler, 1986), suggesting that teachers and parents do not typically find psychological reports to be understandable or particularly useful'.

Rahill's study offers a current perspective on views of parents and teachers who have been in receipt of the EP report. A comprehensive description offered in terms of methodology used, the recruitment process and analysis gave the impression of a proficient piece of research.

Trustworthiness: Lincoln and Guba (1985) posit that trustworthiness of a research study is important to evaluating its worth. Trustworthiness involves establishing:

1. Credibility or truth value which questions if the researcher has established confidence in the truth of the findings based on the research design, participants, and context.

2. Transferability is defined as the degree to which the findings can apply to other contexts and settings or with other groups; it is the capacity to generalise from the findings to greater populations. It is done when the researcher gives adequate information about the research context, processes, individuals involved, and researcher-participant connections to make it possible for the reader to decide how the findings may transfer.

3. Dependability relates to the consistency of the data means whether the conclusions would be consistent if the study were repeated with the same subject matter or in a similar context.
The procedure by which results are produced must be explicit and repeatable whenever possible.

4. Confirmability can be defined as the degree to which the results are a function solely of the participants and conditions of the research and not of other biases, motivations, and views.

It was felt that Rahill's study meets some of the trustworthiness criteria such as credibility and transferability and it appeared to be a very thorough and detailed piece of research. However, the detail of participant information offered within Rahill's study would suggest that levels of participant confidentiality were limited; additionally, methods of recruitment also posed some ethical consideration as to whether some participants felt obliged to participate. Participants potentially being known to the researchers may have been influential on results obtained as respondents were not afforded the opportunity of giving responses that could not be traced back to them individually. With these factors in mind, it is debatable whether Rahill's study would meet the criteria of dependability and confirmability.

7.0 The current research study

The current study will aim to investigate how factors such as content, structure and length can be manipulated to ensure that the document produced is the most valuable version to those receiving it. The studies considered within this review would possibly not hold a great deal of robustness in their findings alone; this may be due to research design, the fact that they may now be outdated, that they focus on a very specific sample etc; however, when combined with other studies of a similar nature it is clear to see that there are general commonalities in the results, particularly in relation to issues with the EP report. It is of interest to the researcher whether the current study will support the notions raised within previous research, or whether it will offer a differing perspective.

Questions asked and topics addressed within the current study will be influenced by literature in this review as it seems as that even in the limited data available, there are apparent gaps that would be of interest and relevance to document. Furthermore, many studies are based upon the perceptions of solely school staff, or the views of EPs rather than both. There are limited publications on multi-agency working or how other professionals such as Health practitioners interpret the EP report. In addition to this, and perhaps most notably, the voice of the CYP seems to be lost in the literature. The current study aims to bridge this gap by involving young people and several relevant sectors who would have experience of the EP report.

Whilst exploring the subject of educational/school psychologist reports, there was no representation from the UK to offer a British perspective; this study will offer that and allow for comparisons to be drawn with studies carried out in the US, Canada and Malta. There is a general sparsity of literature on the subject of the EP report, and information presented by researchers such as Harvey (2006) and Groth-Marnat (2001) seems to focus on very similar weaknesses within the report. Although the value of findings from these studies is recognised, this study wants to gain a UK and current perspective on elements that they have focused on such as readability, but also build upon this and also consider uses of the report.

It was felt that the study carried out by Rahill, (2018) offered a current and in depth portrayal of how the EP report is perceived by arguably the most common recipients; parents and teachers. The mixed method research design was robust, and questions asked were more generalised than previous studies which allowed for an insightful set of results. The current piece of research will use Rahill's study as a scaffold to build upon, whilst overcoming potential drawbacks highlighted in the study such as confidentiality and methods of participant recruitment.

With gaps in the literature highlighted, the following research questions were developed:

RQ1. How useful have recipients of the EP Report found the report to be? Giving consideration to a variety of factors, including; feasibility; information sharing; practice development; impact on service user; impact on recipient; sign posting; accessing specialist provisions etc.

RQ2. What is useful or not useful in an EP report? Is there a difference in what recipients consider to be 'an ideal report'? I.e. variation in opinions of Education, Health, Social Care, Caregivers and Service Users.

RQ3. What do EPs and recipients feel the report is used for?

RQ4. Is there an ideal EP Report? If so, what does it look like? Considering factors such as content, structure, use of language and length of report.

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Part II: Empirical Research Study

Word Count: 7200

PART II: EMPIRICAL STUDY

The Efficiency of the Educational Psychology Report: An explorative study, considering views of recipients, including; Young People, Caregivers, Education and Health

1:0 Abstract

Report writing continues to account for large blocks of Educational Psychologists' (EP) time. Given the large amount of time spent on psychological report writing, EPs often are looking for ways to increase efficiency with report writing. Issues are raised regarding how to write efficiently and incorporating best practices in the report, whilst also providing a comprehensive overview of a child's strengths and weaknesses. A question also exists regarding how to cater for the wide audience who are in receipt of educational psychological reports. Within the field of school psychology, there are likely differing opinions on this topic, yet, it is important that the audience for the report should offer a view of how the report is written.

Research on psychological report writing in school based settings has tended to focus on similar factors and had indicated that teachers express a preference for a report style in which the EP analyses, synthesizes and provides implications for assessment results (Salvagno & Teglasi, 1987) as opposed to simply providing assessment results in a test-by-test format. Teachers also express a preference for reports in which results were organized by themes as opposed to a test-by-test format (Pelco, Ward, Coleman, and Young, 2009) and with lower readability levels and practical recommendations (Wiener, 1987). Despite this research indicating the need for child-centered reports with low levels of psychological jargon and integration by the evaluator, psychological reports continue to predominantly be written in a test-by-test fashion in the field (Harvey, 1997). Without integration of data, reports are perceived by consumers to be difficult to understand and overly technical (Harvey, 2006).

The current study recruited 140 EPs and 40 recipients of the report to consider the perceived usefulness of the educational psychology report, with a view to understand how the report can be written most efficiently and helpfully for both the EP and the recipient. Consideration was given to the content, structure, language and length of the report, along with seeking common uses of the report and what is deemed most and useful within the report.

Key findings included:

On the whole, EP reports are valued in the UK; both by recipients and by EPs themselves. Notably there were statements of dissatisfaction, but these were in the minority and there was far more content presented on what is positive within the report than what is negative.

Recipients found strategies and advice within the report to be most useful, this view was also shared by the EP group, however, there was a clear emphasis within the EP results of strategies only being of value when co-constructed. This view was not shared by recipients, in fact, there appeared to be a desire for the EP to take a higher professional role that dictated direction using their expertise.

All parties shared the view that complex language and psychological jargon are unhelpful in the EP report, building upon this, there was a common theme amongst parents and educationalists that valued assessment results but only if offered a simplistic overview or interpretation of scores.

Finally, it was apparent within the results that EPs feel that dictatorial reports endorse the role of a gatekeeper. EPs recognised that reports are often used to access funding, specialist provisions or resources and this notion was supported by results gathered from the recipient group. EPs were clearly resistant of this role and felt that it narrowed their skill set in terms of being able to facilitate change using a consultation approach underpinned by psychological theory.

2:0 Introduction

One of the major undertakings of Educational Psychologists (EPs) is the writing of reports. Often, all involvement, assessment and intervention culminate in the production of a report. In a study carried out by Agresta in 2004, it was found that EPs attributed over 15% of their professional timetable to report writing. This supports a national study carried out in America where it was elicited that school psychologists spend approximately 50% of their time conducting assessments, and compiling associated reports each school year (Bramlett, Murphy, Johnson, Wallingsford, & Hall, 2002). In a profession where time allocation in schools has been cited as a potential barrier to effective work (Every Child Matters, 2003) it would appear that any time spent outside of these establishments should be used to its greatest efficiency.

In a study carried out by Harvey in 2006, it was suggested that psychological reports serve several functions:-

- To increase the understanding of service users, their parents (in the case of young people), and other professionals (including teaching staff) about service users' strengths and adaptive skills; cognitive, academic, and social-emotional difficulties; and the environmental factors that impede and enhance learning and social-emotional adjustment.
- To provide viable recommendations for strategies and interventions that are tailored to the needs of the individual.
- To communicate the diagnostic information and recommendations in ways that they are understood, appreciated, and implemented with the ultimate result of improvements in service users' development.

- The final function of psychological reports is to provide a long-term record that can be referred to for support and review.

From the description offered by Harvey, it would seem that following on from hours of possible intervention, consultation and assessment with the service users and key adults, the EP must then translate this involvement into words in which his/her opinion is outlined, with reasons for such opinion, and recommendations that adults working with a child can follow. Consideration should also be given to ensure that the report is balanced, non-judgemental and has an accessible level of readability. Given the multifaceted nature of the report, and its role in providing information, guidance and evidence to all key persons involved with the service user; it could be assumed that the report is a key document used by the EP, and that time spent compiling the psychology report is warranted. The current study will aim to explore perceptions of the EP report from recipient's perspective and that of the EP, with consideration given to the most useful and not so useful elements. In gathering this information and informing EP practice with results it is hoped that the document produced would be the most valuable version to those receiving it and the EP writing it.

At present, there appears to be no definitive structure or official set of guidelines to dictate what is included within the Educational Psychology Report. The British Psychological Society (BPS) have developed "Guidance for Educational Psychologist (EPs) when preparing reports for children and young people following implementation of The Children and Families Act 2014" to assist with report writing. The publication of this document was requested by many EPs and by the Department for Education (DfE) in order to update and replace the "Guidance to Educational Psychologists (EPs) in preparing Statutory Advice to Children's Services Authorities". The BPS acknowledges within the guidance that the aforementioned statutory advice was used extensively within the EP profession and within the wider Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) field but needed to be updated to take into account the implementation of Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014 (including the SEND Code of Practice 2015 and associated regulations). Although the document has significant relevance to EPs employed by Local Authorities (LAs), the guidelines provide psychological advice more specifically for Education, Health and Care (EHC) needs assessments as opposed to the general psychological report. With a focus on the EHC needs assessment, it could also be argued that the guidance is neglectful of Welsh counterparts, who do not use the EHC assessment/plan within their practice.

When researching the subject of report writing, specifically the EP report, there does not appear to be an abundance of published studies on the subject, however, of publications sourced there appears to be a plethora of views on how the psychological report should be written. According to Groth-Marnat (2009), effective psychological reports are readable, connect to the person's context, have clear links between the referral questions and the answers to these questions, have integrated interpretations, and address client strengths as well as problem areas. Whilst other studies argue that to be useful, school psychology reports must address the reason for the referral and recommend appropriate intervention strategies that can be implemented within the resources of the school, community, or home

(Gilman & Gabriel, 2004; Kvaal, Choca, & Groth-Marnat, 2003; Lichtenberger, Mather, Kaufman, & Kaufman, 2004; Overton, 2006).

In a large study carried out by the Canadian Psychological Association in 2007, it was recommended that writing an effective report relied more so on a school psychologist's skills in: the gathering of information, including building a rapport with service users and families; administering and scoring norm-referenced psychological and educational tests in a standardised manner; school and classroom observation; interviewing children, teachers, and parents; and using curriculum-based measurement. It was also highlighted that the school psychologist needs a sound knowledge base in ethical and professional practices, child and adolescent development, teaching exceptional learners, developmental psychopathology, culturally sensitive practice, case formulation, and school consultation. It could be said that following on from demonstrating these skills, the psychological report then tenders a representation of the EP and his or her work, but purely through the medium of text, so eradicating the assistance of exchanged dialogue, body language and intonation – perhaps an arduous task for even experienced practitioners.

It would seem that from published articles, that writing an effective report requires a broad skill set, and what should be included within the report is negotiable. Furthermore, the majority of studies are based upon the perceptions of school staff and/or the views of EPs. The current study aspires to offer a voice to other common recipients of the report, including health practitioners and the young person, who seems to be lost within the literature. Additionally, this piece of research aims to build upon previous papers and consider the most efficient way of report writing; that is, with regard to time spent and usefulness of content. Additionally, in an effort to bridge a gap within published articles, research will explore the efficiency of EP reports from the perspective of a range of recipients and EPs.

Whilst exploring the subject of educational/school psychologist reports, there was minimal input from UK based researchers. The current study is based within the UK and it is of interest if findings within this investigation supports or contrasts the findings of those that predominantly come out of Canada or the USA.

3.0 Research Questions

RQ1. How useful have recipients of the EP Report found the report to be? Giving consideration to a variety of factors, including feasibility; information sharing; practice development; impact on service user; impact on recipient; sign posting; accessing specialist provisions etc.

RQ2. What is useful or not useful in an EP report? Is there a difference in what recipients consider to be 'an ideal report'? I.e. variation in opinions of Education, Health, Social Care, Caregivers and Service Users.

RQ3. What do EPs and recipients feel the report is used for?

RQ4. Is there an ideal EP Report? If so, what does it look like? Considering factors such as content, structure, use of language and length of report.

4.0 Methods and Measurements

4.1 Research paradigm

The research paradigm for this study is framed in a post-positivist epistemology and ontology as it acknowledges that a reality does exist with regard to the experience of participants and their personal perceptions of those experiences, however, these things can only be explored within a certain realm of probability, (Mertens, 2009; Ponterotto, 2005). It is understood that "no matter how faithfully the researcher adheres to scientific method, research outcomes are neither totally objective, nor unquestionably certain" (Crotty, 1998, p. 40) due to human participation; therefore, although this study offers an objective and consistent measure, with the participation of persons, individual interpretation of questions and scores will need to be accounted for. A limitation of taking a post-positivist stance is that results obtained are not wholly objective; it could therefore be argued that the validity of results is questionable.

4.2 Research Design

A mixed-methods methodology was applied when conducting the research to enable the inclusion of both quantitative and qualitative data. Mixed methods research has been practiced since the 1950s but formally began in the late 1980s and is increasingly used by a growing number of researchers (Creswell, 2003). It is important to understand the perceived value of combining two distinct methodologies, especially given the added resources, time, and expertise required to conduct a mixed methods study. Mixed methods research requires additional time due to the need to collect and analyse two different types of data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Hurmerinta-Peltomaki and Nummela (2006) looked at the value of mixed methods, they found mixed methods added value by increasing validity in the findings, informing the collection of the second data source, and assisting with knowledge creation. The authors argue studies that use a mixed methods approach gain a deeper, broader understanding of the phenomenon than studies that do not utilise both a quantitative and qualitative approach.

An electronic questionnaire was developed using the online Qualtrics application. The questionnaire consisted of 20 Likert style response questions, and 2 open-ended questions to allow participants to expand on their thoughts and highlight both the most and least helpful parts of the EP report from their perspective. It is noted that questionnaires are appropriate where there are larger numbers of participants and where reliability is sought and findings are to be generalised in some way (Cohen et al., 2007) ;larger numbers of participants were required for this study to allow for a vast range of opinions and to gain views from a variety of sectors.

Likert style responses were offered to give a quantitative and more objective angle within the study, it was also felt that this would require less time from respondents and therefore make the questionnaire more attractive to complete to potential participants.

4.3 Participants (number, age, gender, inclusion and exclusion criteria)

Participants were sourced from Welsh education and health services, and from UK based forums: for example, EPNET (a forum accessed by Educational Psychologist) and Spectropolis (a forum for parents/carers with children who may have a diagnosis of Autism).

A purposive sample was recruited for this study, meaning that participants were recruited due to their direct involvement in the report process, i.e. the EP writing the report and the recipients in receiving and interpreting the report. More specifically, individuals recruited consisted of:

- Educational Psychologists (EP)
- Parents of young people who have received an EP report
- Young people (over the age of 16 years) who have received an EP report
- Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinators (ALNCo)
- Health Practitioners (Speech and Language Therapists and Occupational Therapists)

Participants were initially recruited via email after gaining permission of the Gatekeeper in each case. The researcher contacted Educational Psychology Services, Schools, Health Teams, Caregivers and Service Users with an Information Letter (see Appendices 1-2) requesting that an electronic link to the questionnaire was forwarded on to individuals who have experience of receiving an Educational Psychology report. The link was later made available on relevant forums and social media pages; as there were no exclusion criteria other than age, and no restriction of sample number: participants over the age of 16 were invited to participate and the study was open to all individuals wanting to take part.

With regards to consent, participants were requested to give their consent electronically prior to completing the questionnaire and the only personal details that were asked of them was which category/sector they associated with, i.e. Health, Education etc. The lack of personal information was deliberately manipulated in an effort to offer the respondent complete confidentiality – it was felt that in doing this it would negate any research bias and encourage wholly honest responses. Please see Appendix 3 for a copy of the electronic consent form.

RESPONDENTS - 245 survey responses were submitted, however, only 180 responses were used for analysis due to levels of completion, i.e. some questionnaires were started and not finished. All the 180 surveys which held narrative content (i.e. responses to the two open-ended questions) were used for the further depth of information.

Table 1: Participant numbers representative of each sector

Numbers of participants represented in each sector	
Educational Psychologists (EP)	140
Heads and/or Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinators (ALNCo)	21
Parents of young people who have received an EP report	16
Health Practitioners (SALT and OT)	3
Young people (over the age of 16 years) who have received an EP report	0

4.4 Measures

A questionnaire was developed by the researcher using the Qualtrics application via the Cardiff University website. The development of the questionnaire, in terms of style and questions asked, was influenced by previous research and relevant questions that had been explored as part of the study's literature review (Mastoras et al., 2011 and Rahill, 2018). Although it was intended that participants would represent a variety of sectors, it was decided to use a generalised questionnaire that all participants were able to understand – this may not have been the most seamless approach, but it did allow for comparison of responses between participants.

As previously reported, the majority of questions took the form of a Likert Scale to gain an insight into attitudes/perceptions in relation to the psychological report, whilst also being time effective and ensuring ease of use for the participant. Likert (1932) developed the principle of measuring attitudes by asking people to respond to a series of statements about a topic, in terms of the extent to which they agree with them, and so tapping into the cognitive and affective components of attitudes. Likert-type or frequency scales use fixed choice response formats and are designed to measure attitudes or opinions (Bowling, 1997; Burns, & Grove, 1997). These ordinal scales measure levels of agreement/disagreement. In its final form, the Likert Scale is a five (or seven) point scale which is used to allow the individual to express how much they agree or disagree with a particular statement.

The questionnaire designed for the current study required participants to choose one of five options on each scale which was typically labelled in reference to importance, relevance, how helpful an element of the report is or how useful it is. An example of options is; 'Very Important/Important/Moderately Important/Of Little Importance/Unimportant' for each question. The final 2 questions required a narrative response, consisting of:

Q1. What would you say you most commonly use the EP report for?

Q2. What do you feel are the most useful and least useful parts of the educational psychology report? You can give reasons for your choices if you wish or state anything you feel is missing.

Responses to the 2 open-ended questions were analysed using thematic analysis, involving six stages: familiarisation with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

4.5 Procedure

Questionnaires were used to gain an overview of participant constructions of the Educational Psychology Report and its usefulness/value in their personal experience. This was achieved by contacting Gatekeepers (Principal Educational Psychologists and Head teachers for Education and Service Users, Team Managers for Health representatives (see Appendix A) and asking that they disseminate a questionnaire, via an electronic link within an email or letter, to relevant persons within their sector.

The researcher then submitted the electronic link to recognised EP, Health and parenting forums for both carers and young people to access. The researcher explored the nature of the forums prior to posting to ensure that the correct population was being targeted. The overview of the study was offered with a link to the Qualtrics application which provided more detailed information in the format of an Information Letter (Appendix B).

With regard to Service Users (i.e. young people over the age of 16), Gatekeeper (i.e. the Principal Educational Psychologist) consent was sought to include an Information Letter and a link to the Qualtrics survey, within documentation sent out with the EP report. It was then entirely the choice of the young person whether he/she decided to participate or not.

5.0 Consent, participant information arrangements & debriefing

To ensure that the research study was conducted ethically and offered protection to participants, several measures were put in place as described in the table below.

Table 2 – Ethical considerations

Informed Consent	Gatekeepers were contacted by either letter or email to gain consent for research to take place within their teams/departments (see Appendix). When consent was given, the gatekeeper was then asked to distribute an email to relevant parties, containing an information sheet (see Appendix) and an electronic link that took them to a scaled questionnaire, developed by the researcher using Qualtrics. The information letter (Appendix) included contact details of the researcher, the researcher's university supervisor and the Cardiff University School of Ethics Committee Secretary, should any participant have required further information or clarification. Prior to beginning the questionnaire, each participant was asked to submit their consent electronically. The only personal details that were required was the sector they chose to be associated with. If a participant had fitted into more than one category, for example, Health and Caregiver, it was left to their discretion to decide if they would like to choose to log one sector or both. Within two weeks of the information being sent out, the researcher made contact with the gatekeeper in each school to enquire whether her or she had provided consent for the research to take place and whether he or

	she had forwarded on the information letter and electronic link to relevant parties. The researcher also offered to visit each of the gatekeepers to provide an information session to answer any questions that he or she might have about the study.
Debrief	It was not envisaged that the topic of this study or the nature of questions would cause distress or negative emotions, however the contact details of the researcher were provided to all participants. The de-briefing form informed participants that the researcher will provide general feedback regarding the pooled data after the study but would not be able to comment on information provided by individuals.
Ethical Considerations	**Anonymity and Confidentiality** Anonymity and confidentiality measures were met as participants were not asked to provide any personal details on the questionnaires and were directed to submit completed forms electronically. Questionnaires will be kept securely and anonymously in a password protected electronic file for five years. **Right to withdraw** All participants had the right to withdraw at any point during completion of the questionnaire by independently choosing not to submit their answers. Participants were informed that if he or she decided that they would like to retract their information after submission, the researcher would make the utmost effort to locate the questionnaire – although it was highlighted that this may prove to be difficult given the anonymous nature of submission.

6.0 Data analysis

6.1 Descriptive Statistics - The information provided in the questionnaires was analysed using descriptive statistics, with percentages calculated and results reported in a tabular format.

6.2 A Thematic Analysis (TA) approach was selected to analyse the questionnaire's narrative data, as this allowed for themes within the data to be reported to create a rich picture of participants' views (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that a dataset can be analysed with specific research questions in mind, which was the approach selected within this research. This was deemed important to obtain a detailed account of perceptions of the respondents in relation to the EP report. Other advantages of using TA are provided in the table below.

Advantages of Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).
✓ Flexibility; it is a relatively easy and quick method to learn and to complete. ✓ TA is accessible to researchers with little or no experience of qualitative research. ✓ Results are generally accessible to a generally educated audience. ✓ TA is a useful method for working within participatory research, working with participants as collaborators. ✓ It can summarise key features of a large body of data, and/or offer a 'thick description' of the data set. ✓ TA can highlight similarities and differences across a data set. ✓ Unanticipated insights can be generated. ✓ It allows for social interpretations of data.

Figure 2: Advantages of Thematic Analysis

It is, however, recognised that there are also potential pitfalls in the use of TA through the production of an insufficient or weak analysis of themes, which may be confounded through researcher bias/subjectivity (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013).

The analysis process was in line with Braun and Clarke (2006) who describe the six stages of thematic analysis. These six steps are very broadly described below, and an illustration of coding carried out as part of the thesis research can be found in the Appendix section (Appendix G):

  i.   **Familiarisation with data**
 ii.   **Generating initial codes**
iii.   **Searching for themes based on initial coding**
 iv.   **Reviewing themes**
  v.   **Defining and naming themes**
 vi.   **Report writing**

A theoretical or deductive or "top down" method of thematic analysis was carried out (e.g., see Boyatzis, 1998). This was due to the researcher holding specific questions in mind when analysing data (see table 3 in the results section), as opposed to an inductive approach which would start with the data and allow themes to develop in a way similar to Grounded Theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). A deductive approach also provides "a less rich description of the data overall, and a more detailed analysis of some aspect of the data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 12), which worked well with the current study aims.

Subsequently, themes were identified at a semantic level with the aim being to reflect the reality of participants through viewing the explicit meaning of their words. With a semantic approach, the themes are identified within the explicit or surface meanings of the data and the analyst is not looking for anything beyond what a participant has said or what has been written (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

6.1 Validity and Reliability

As with many qualitative data analysis techniques, findings may be subject to issues of validity and reliability. Validity refers to the extent to which the research measures, explains or describes what it aims to measure, explain or describe (Leung, 2013). Reliability refers to exact replicability of the results and processes (Silverman, 1993). The extent to which qualitative research should be concerned with reliability is additionally somewhat debated given its interpretative nature and individual focus (Willig, 2008).

Throughout the research process there remains consideration of researcher influence or demand characteristics (with participants possibly reporting what they thought the researcher wanted to hear). In order to maintain a robust and rigorous study and to mitigate against such considerations, measures were put in place such as removing links to the identity of participants, offering reassurance of anonymity and providing non-leading and impartial questions.

7.0 Results

7.1 Quantitative Data

The following tables show a breakdown of quantitative results formulated from Likert scale responses. Participants have been split into sectors and response ratings calibrated as a percentage for each response; this was done to allow for comparison between groups. Majority percentages have been highlighted in each group for all questions and a short synopsis is offered to give an overview of responses. Following n from the tables will be a 'summary of quantitative results' which will give some consideration to findings and patterns within the data.

Q2. How useful would you rate the EP report?				
	EPs (n=140)	**Parent (n =16)**	**Education (n=21)**	**Health (n=3)**
Extremely useful	13.6%	6.3%	23.8%	0%
Very useful	45%	37.5%	52.4%	33.3%
Moderately useful	36.4%	50%	23.8%	66.7%
Slightly useful	5%	6.3%	0%	0%
Not at all useful	0%	0%	0%	0%

Results show that overall the majority of participants within the EP and Education sectors rated the report as 'very useful', whereas the majority of Parents and Health felt it is 'moderately useful'. The majority of all participant responses were spread between 'very useful' and 'moderately useful'. No participants felt that the EP report is 'not at all useful'.

Q3. How do you rate the strategies offered by EPs within reports?				
	EPs (n =140)	Parent (n=16)	Education (n=21)	Health (n=3)
Extremely effective	7.9%	6.3%	14.3%	0%
Very effective	55.7%	12.5%	33.3%	33.3%
Moderately effective	34.3%	56.3%	52.4%	66.7%
Slightly effective	2.1%	18.8%	0%	0%
Not effective at all	0%	6.3%	0%	0%

The majority of participants in each sector felt that strategies offered within reports are 'moderately effective' with the exception of the EP sector with the majority rating strategies as 'very effective'. Just one participant felt that strategies are 'not at all effective', that participant represented the Parent category.

Q4. How important do you rate the inclusion of background information in EP reports? For example; details of health, previous EP involvement, diagnoses, family history, details of key persons etc.				
	EPs (n = 140)	Parent (n = 16)	Education (n=21)	Health (n = 3)
Extremely important	25.7%	50%	52.4%	66.7%
Very important	32.9%	50%	33.3%	0%
Moderately important	35%	0%	14.3%	33.3%
Slightly important	5.7%	0%	0%	0%
Not at all important	0.7%	0%	0%	0%

Results show that all recipients of the report (i.e. not the EP) felt that inclusion of background information is extremely important in reports. All parent respondents scored either extremely or not very important. The EPs were the only sector to rate the inclusion of background information as less than moderately important, although this was a minority percentage.

Q5. How would you rate the importance of using jargon free, simple language in EP reports?				
	EPs (n = 140)	Parent (n = 16)	Education (n=21)	Health (n=3)
Extremely important	47.9%	68.8%	66.7%	33.3%
Very important	38.6%	25%	28.6%	66.7%
Moderately important	12.9%	6.3%	4.8%	0%
Slightly important	0.7%	0%	0%	0%
Not at all important	0%	0%	0%	0%

The importance of using jargon free, simple language in EP reports was rated as 'extremely important' by the majority of participants within the EP, parent and Education groups along with one third of the Health respondents. No participants felt that using jargon free language in reports is 'not at all important', and just 0.7% that it was only slightly important – this small percentage was represented by the EP sector.

Q9. How would you rate the importance of being warm and personable in EP reports?				
	EPs (n=139)	Parent (n=16)	Education (n=21)	Health (n=3)
Extremely important	28.8%	43.6%	23.8%	33.3%
Very important	37.4%	18.8%	42.9%	0%
Moderately important	23%	37.5%	28.6%	33.3%
Slightly important	9.3%	0%	4.8%	33.3%
Not at all important	1.4%	0%	0%	0%

Results for this question were largely evenly distributed between extremely, very and moderately important in each of the sectors. 33.3% of Health participants rated it 'slightly important' which appears to be a large proportion; however, this only equates to one person.

Q10. How would you rate the importance of being professional and factual in EP reports?				
	EPs (n = 140)	Parent (n = 16)	Education (n=21)	Health (n = 3)
Extremely important	60%	56.3%	61.9%	66.7%
Very important	33.6%	25%	38.1%	33.3%
Moderately important	5.7%	18.7%	0%	0%
Slightly important	0.7%	0%	0%	0%
Not at all important	0%	0%	0%	0%

Results show that the majority of participants in all sectors felt that it is extremely important for reports to be professional and factual. The second most populated response was 'very important' and a small percentage of EPs and parents opting for 'moderately important'. No participants rated this question as 'not at all important'.

Q11. How useful do you a feel a predominantly positive (solution focused) EP report is?				
	EPs (n = 140)	Parent (n = 16)	Education (n=21)	Health (n = 3)
Extremely useful	26.4%	37.5%	33.3%	33.3%
Very useful	37.1%	37.5%	42.9%	66.7%
Moderately useful	32.9%	25%	23.8%	0%
Slightly useful	3.6%	0%	0%	0%
Not at all useful	0%	0%	0%	0%

Results showed that most respondents felt that a predominantly positive (solution focused) report is 'very important'. Responses were spread relatively evenly over three responses, with almost all participants rating this question as extremely, very or moderately useful with only the EP sector populating the 'slightly useful' category. No respondents felt that a positive approach was 'not at all useful'.

Q12. How useful would you rate an EP report that focused predominantly on challenges and concerns?				
	EPs (n=139)	**Parent (n = 16)**	**Education (n=21)**	**Health (n=3)**
Extremely useful	0.7%	25%	9.5%	33.3%
Very useful	9.4%	18.8%	28.6%	0%
Moderately useful	38.9%	18.8%	42.9%	33.3%
Slightly useful	35.3%	31.3%	0%	33.3%
Not at all useful	15.8%	6.3%	19.1%	0%

Results for this question were much more evenly spread, with most recipients (inclusive of all sectors) rating an EP report that predominantly focuses on challenges and concerns as 'moderately important'. Within the EP category there was a higher percentage of participants that felt that a report of this nature was less useful, whereas the Education respondents felt that a report that has a focus on needs was more useful.

Q13. How important do you feel it is to keep EP reports succinct (3 pages or less)?				
	EPs (n = 140)	**Parent (n = 16)**	**Education (n=21)**	**Health (n=3)**
Extremely important	9.3%	6.3%	14.3%	0%
Very important	24.3%	25%	33.3%	33.3%
Moderately important	41.4%	25%	38.1%	0%
Slightly important	12.9%	6.3%	4.8%	66.7%
Not at all important	12.1%	37.5%	9.5%	0%

There was some disparity shown in the results for how important participants feel it is for EP reports to be succinct. Responses varied within each sector and between sectors. Results from the EP group showed a large percentage of responses (41.4%) indicating that it is moderately important that reports are three pages or less in length. Most parents felt that it was 'not at all important' for reports to be succinct. Within the Education sector, there were a similar number of responses for 'moderately important' (38.1%) and 'very important' (33.3%). Two of the three participants representing health felt that it is 'slightly important'

that reports are three pages or less, this was in contrast to the third participant in that group who felt that it is 'very important'.

Q14. How important do you feel it is to have an in-depth EP report (4 pages or more)?				
	EPs (n = 140)	Parent (n = 16)	Education (n=21)	Health (n=3)
Extremely important	2.9%	31.3%	9.5%	33.3%
Very important	15%	37.5%	19.1%	33.3%
Moderately important	49.3%	18.8%	52.4%	0%
Slightly important	20%	12.5%	19.1%	33.3%
Not at all important	12.9%	0%	0%	0%

Around half of all EP and Education sector respondents felt that it is 'moderately important' that the EP report is in-depth (four pages or more). The majority of parents felt that it is either very, or extremely important that reports are more in depth. Health representatives varied with their responses with equal proportions shared between extremely, very, and slightly important.

Q15. How useful do you feel the inclusion of health orientated strategies are within EP reports? Examples may be linked to Speech and Language or Occupational Therapy.				
	EPs (n -= 140)	Parent (n = 16)	Education (n=21)	Health (n=3)
Extremely useful	5.7%	50%	28.6%	66.7%
Very useful	30.7%	37.5%	52.4%	0%
Moderately useful	33.6%	12.5%	14.3%	33.3%
Slightly useful	24.3%	0%	4.8%	0%
Not at all useful	5.7%	0%	0%	0%

Results show that when taking all respondents into consideration, the vast majority of participants rated the inclusion of health strategies within the EP report as 'extremely', 'very' or 'moderately' useful. The EP sector differed slightly with almost a quarter (24.3%) of participants rating the inclusion of health strategies as only 'slightly useful'.

Q16. How important do you feel the use of psychological theory is within the EP report?				
	EPs (n = 140)	Parent (n = 16)	Education (n=21)	Health (n=3)
Extremely important	32.1%	18.8%	14.3%	33.3%
Very important	38.6%	18.8%	23.8%	0%
Moderately important	14.3%	50%	42.9%	33.3%
Slightly important	13.6%	6.3%	19.1%	33.3%
Not at all important	1.4%	6.3%	0%	0%

Overall, the EP sector gave higher ratings for the importance of psychological theory ('extremely important' = 32.1%; 'very important' = 38.6%) than the other sectors. Half of all Parent respondents rated the inclusion of psychological theory as 'moderately important', this was in line with almost half (42.9%) of the Education participants. Health responses were evenly split between 'very', 'moderately', and 'slightly' important.

Q17. How useful do you feel it is to include/receive explanations or further reading links on psychological elements/terms used in an EP report?				
	EPs (n =139)	Parent (n=16)	Education (n=21)	Health (n=3)
Extremely useful	10.1%	12.5%	4.8%	33.3%
Very useful	28.8%	56.3%	33.3%	33.3%
Moderately useful	33.1%	18.8%	42.9%	33.3%
Slightly useful	20.1%	12.5%	19.1%	0%
Not at all useful	7.9%	0%	0%	0%

Parents rated most highly for this question with almost 70% of participants stating that they felt that it was either 'extremely' or 'very useful' to receive links or explanations with regard to psychological terms. A large percentage (42.9%) of Education respondents felt that it is 'moderately important', along with 33.1% of EPs and 33.3% of Health professionals. EP responses were spread across all five rating options and the only sector to populate the 'not at all useful' option.

Q18. How helpful do you feel signposting is within the EP report? Inclusive of signposting to information, services, resources etc.				
	EPs (n = 139)	Parent (n = 16)	Education (n=21)	Health (n=3)
Extremely helpful	21.6%	37.5%	14.3%	0%
Very helpful	45.3%	43.8%	66.7%	100%
Moderately helpful	25.2%	18.8%	19.5%	0%
Slightly helpful	7.2%	0%	0%	0%
Not at all helpful	0.7%	0%	0%	0%

Results show that a large percentage (66.7%) of the Education group, along with 100% of the Health group felt that the inclusion of signposting to information within the EP report is 'very helpful'. Parents and EPs also showed majority percentages for the 'very helpful' rating. 'Extremely helpful' and 'moderately helpful' were relatively evenly populated by the EP, Parent and Education groups. A small combined percentage of EPs (7.9%) rated the report as either 'slightly' or 'not at all helpful', in contrast to all other sectors with results of 0% for both options.

Q19 - How effective do you feel the EP report is in promoting change?				
	EPs (n =140)	Parent (n=15)	Education (n=21)	Health (n=3)
Extremely effective	5%	6.7%	14.3%	0%
Very effective	29.3%	20%	38.1%	0%
Moderately effective	47.9%	53.3%	42.3%	33.3%
Slightly effective	15%	13.3%	4.8%	66.7%
Not effective at all	2.9%	6.7%	0%	0%

The majority of participants within the EP, Parent and Education groups deem the EP report as 'moderately effective' in promoting change, in all these sectors there was a higher combined percentage of responses for 'extremely' and 'very effective' than combined responses for 'slightly effective and 'not effective at all'. Health professionals differed with 66.7% rating the EP report as 'slightly effective' and 33.3% opting for 'moderately effective.

Q20 - How important do you feel the inclusion of assessment results are in an EP report?				
	EPs (n = 140)	Parent (n=16)	Education (n=21)	Health (n=3)
Extremely important	20%	31.2%	33.3%	33.3%
Very important	36.4%	43.8%	52.1%	66.7%
Moderately important	33.6%	25%	9.5%	0%
Slightly important	9.3%	0%	0%	0%
Not at all important	0.7%	0%	0%	0%

Results show that the majority of participants within each group felt that the inclusion of assessment results is 'very important' in the EP report. Education professionals rated most favourably for this question with a 52.1% rating inclusion of assessment results as 'very important' and a further 33.3% indicating that it is 'extremely important. The Parent group results also show a perceived value of the inclusion of assessment results, with a combined 75% of participants rating it as either 'extremely' or 'very' important, similarly, all Health participants responded in the same way. EPs were the only group to rate the inclusion of assessment results as 'slightly important' (9.3%) or 'not at all important' (0.7%).

Q21 - How appropriate do you feel the inclusion of work carried out by the young person is within the EP report? This may include photos of work completed or quotes from the young person.				
	EPs (n = 140)	Parent (n=16)	Education (n=21)	Health (n=3)
Extremely appropriate	60%	37.5%	33.3%	0%
Somewhat appropriate	28.6%	31.3%	47.6%	33.3%
Neither appropriate nor inappropriate	11.4%	31.3%	14.3%	0%
Somewhat inappropriate	0%	0%	4.8%	66.7%
Extremely inappropriate	0%	0%	0%	0%

Results show that there were no responses to say that the inclusion of work carried out by the C/YP in the EP report is 'extremely inappropriate', although 66.7% of Health respondents rated it as 'somewhat inappropriate' – this was in stark contrast to the EP group with 60% of participants indicating that it is 'extremely appropriate' to include a

C/YP's work. Education as a group were more in tone with the EPs with a combined 80% of the group being represented within 'extremely' and 'somewhat appropriate' ratings. Parents were relatively evenly spread within 'extremely appropriate' (37.5%), 'somewhat appropriate' (31.3%) and 'neither appropriate nor inappropriate' (31.3%).

Q22 - How important do you feel EP reports are in removing barriers for young people to access specialist services/provisions/panels?				
	EPs (n = 140)	Parent (n=16)	Education (n=21)	Health (n=3)
Extremely important	29.3%	43.8%	42.9%	0%
Very important	41.4%	25%	38.1%	66.7%
Moderately important	24.3%	31.3%	14.2%	33.3%
Slightly important	4.3%	0%	4.8%	0%
Not at all important	0.7%	0%	0%	0%

In terms of how important EP reports are in assisting C/YP to access specialist provisions, the majority of respondents in both the Parent (43.8%) and Education (42.9%) groups felt that it is 'extremely important', with a further 25% of Parents and 38.1% of Education representatives indicating that it is 'very important'. Results for Health showed that two thirds (66.7%) of respondents felt that the report is 'very important' for accessing services/provisions/panels, and 33.3% rating it as 'moderately important'. The majority of EP participants (41.4%) rated the report as being 'very important', in addition to 29.3% opting for 'extremely important' and 24.3% for 'moderately important. EPs (4.3%) and Education (4.8%) were the only group to indicate that the report is only 'slightly important' in removing barriers for C/YP to access specialist provisions, and EPs were the only group to populate the 'not at all important' option with a small 0.7%.

Q23 - How effective do you find EP reports in offering clarity of discussions held in consultation/meetings?				
	EPs (n =139)	Parent (n=16)	Education (n=21)	Health (n=3)
Extremely effective	13.7%	12.5%	14.3%	0%
Very effective	43.9%	18.8%	61.9%	0%
Moderately effective	37.4%	50%	23.8%	66.7%
Slightly effective	3.6%	12.5%	0%	33.3%
Not effective at all	1.4%	6.3%	0%	0%

Results show that the majority of the EP (43.9%) and Education (61.9%) groups rated the EP report as 'very effective' in offering clarity of discussions held in consultations/meetings. All education respondents felt that the report is either 'extremely' (14.3%), 'very' (61.9%) or 'moderately effective' (23.8%) in offering clarity. Parent group responses varied between all ratings, with a majority figure of 50% indicating that the report is 'moderately effective' in offering clarity of discussion of consultations/meetings; this was in line with Health responses whereby 66.7% of participants were represented under the 'moderately effective' option. EPs (3.6%), Parents (12.5%) and Health (33.3%) all had respondents who felt that the report is only 'slightly effective' in offering clarity of discussions, and a further 1.4% of EPs and 6.3% of Parents felt that it is 'not effective at all'.

Q24 - How helpful do you find EP reports in assisting you with formulating a plan of next steps?				
	EPs (n = 139)	Parent (n=16)	Education (n=21)	Health (n=3)
Extremely helpful	16.6%	12.5%	28.6%	0%
Very helpful	53.2%	25%	52.4%	33.3%
Moderately helpful	25.2%	37.5%	9.5%	66.7%
Slightly helpful	2.9%	18.8%	9.5%	0%
Not at all helpful	2.2%	6.3%	0%	0%

Over half of all respondents within the EP (53.2%) and Education (52.4%) groups rated the EP report as 'very helpful' as an aid to formulate a plan of next steps. The majority of Parents (37.5%) and Health (66.7%) participants rated it slightly lower at 'moderately helpful'. Parent responses were most evenly spread over all rating options and the Education rated most highly for this question with a combined 81% rating the report as 'extremely' or 'very' helpful in formulating a plan of next steps.

7.2 Summary of Quantitative Results

Questions developed as part of the questionnaire were established with the thesis research questions in mind. More specifically, it was intended that results would offer answers to:

- (RQ1) How useful have recipients of the EP Report found them to be? Giving consideration to a variety of factors, including; feasibility; information sharing; practice development; impact on service user; impact on recipient; sign posting; accessing specialist provisions etc.
- (RQ4) Is there an ideal EP Report? If so, what does it look like? Considering factors such as content, structure, use of language and length of report.

RQ1 was asked explicitly in question number 2 of the questionnaire. Results showed that the majority of participants as a whole rate the EP report as 'moderately' or 'very useful'. EPs and Education had a higher representation in the 'very useful' category and Parents and Health participants gave their highest percentage of responses to 'moderately useful'. There were no participants who felt the report is 'not at all useful.

Results from the Likert scale questions will now be used to offer consideration to RQ4 in the narrative below:

Content:

- **Length**; Results from questions that linked directly to the length of the report (Q13 & Q14) were generally quite varied, with most sectors populating all rating options. However, when looking at the results as a whole, it would seem that recipients feel that a more in-depth report is beneficial, whereas EPs deviated more towards a preference of a more succinct report. It could be assumed that this is linked directly to time-management and as authors of the report, the EP may find it more helpful to use their time in other areas of practice. In contrast, an in depth report may offer recipients more information that is of value to them.
- **Language**; It is clear within the results (Q5) that the use of jargon free, simple language was deemed to be extremely important for most participants. This supports previous research as discussed within the literature review. Health respondents showed a majority rating for 'very important' as opposed to 'extremely important'; this may be due to interpretation of the language used for responses, or that within the health sector they may typically need to use more clinical language within their own reports.
- **Links;** Q17 & Q18 specifically adhered to the usefulness of links to other sources of information/resources, and links/explanations to support psychology used within the report. Results show that the use of signposting to specific services/resources/information was deemed as very helpful by most participants in each category. Although it was also recognised within the figures that respondents also find the inclusion of links or explanations to psychological concepts within the report to be very useful, there was also a fair percentage of participants who rated these links/explanations as only 'slightly useful'; perhaps indicating that there is a preference for non-psychological orientated links.

- **Psychology**; Results for Q16 which specifically questioned the importance of psychological theory within the EP report were varied. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the EP group as a whole responded more favourably to the inclusion of psychology which recipients of the report (i.e. Parents, Education and Health) not placing as much value on this concept.
- **Health strategies** (Q15)**;** Results show that the inclusion of health orientated strategies was deemed as useful by most participants. There was a noted difference between overall responses offered by recipients of the report in comparison to EPs, with EPs showing a higher percentage of participants rating inclusion of health strategies as only 'slightly useful' or 'not at all useful'.
- **Background** (Q4); As with the health strategies, a disparity was noted between results gained from the EP group and the recipient groups. Although a good percentage of responses from EPs shared the same view as the vast majority of recipients (i.e. that inclusion of background information is very or extremely useful), the largest proportion of EPs rated inclusion of background as moderately important and some felt that background was just slightly important or not important at all.
- **YP work**; (Q21) EPs, Parents and Education group responded similarly with regard to the appropriateness of including work completed by C/YP within the report – the vast majority of all respondents in these groups opted for moderately, somewhat or extremely appropriate. Only 4.8% of Educationalists rated the level of appropriateness lower and opting for 'slightly inappropriate'; this was in conjunction with 66.7% of Health professionals who did not respond in-line with other sectors for this question.
- **Assessment results;** (Q20) Results in response to questioning of the importance of including assessment results in reports were largely positive, with the majority of respondents in each group rating it 'very important'. Although EPs responses demonstrated a shared recognition of the value of including assessment results in the report, they were the only group to opt for less endorsing responses 'slightly important' (9.3%) and 'not at all important' (0.7%).
- **Strategies;** (Q3) The general consensus from the results considering the effectiveness of strategies offered within the EP report, is that they are 'moderately effective'. The majority of respondents within each recipient sector were in agreement with this. EPs placed more value on strategies, with the majority in the group opting for 'very effective'; in contrast to this, a small percentage of the EP group (2.1%) rated strategies as only 'slightly effective'. Results for the Parent group presented as least favourable for this question with 18.8% electing 'slightly useful' and 6.3% choosing the option 'not at all useful'.

Approach: (Q9, Q10, Q11 & Q12) In terms of the way in which the report is written or how it comes across, results indicate that a report that is warm and personable is generally deemed to be important, this was particularly important to the parent group with 43.6% of participants stating that it is 'extremely important'. Being factual and professional was also deemed as 'extremely important' by the Parents group, along with all other sectors,

suggesting that on the whole, being factual and professional is more important that being warm and personable.

With regard to a report taking a solution focused approach or having a focus on challenges it is apparent from the data that there is a preference for a more positive and solution focused report. It is however acknowledged that results within many of the sectors were spread between positive and negative responses, it could be insinuated from this that a balanced report would be preferable.

Change: (Q19, Q24 & Q22) The question of how effective the EP report is in facilitating change resulted in an overarching message of 'it is moderately effective'. This was further explored in a question giving reference to how useful the report is in assisting the recipient with planning; as with the results for 'promoting change' a good percentage of respondents opted for 'moderately useful', although EPs and Education had representation for this option the majority of respondents within those groups felt that the report is 'very useful' in assisting with planning.

Interestingly, Q22 which also adhered to change but in the more practical sense of removing barriers to access specialist provisions, resources etc. yielded much more positive results from all sectors, particularly within Parent and Education groups.

7.3 Qualitative Analysis

A preliminary analysis of participants' responses to the open-ended questions was undertaken to examine these responses in relation to the research questions. Related responses to each question were then recorded in table 3 below. After which, a latent thematic analysis was conducted firstly with the EP responses and then the Education and Parent groups, respectively, in order to examine the underlying themes both in relation to the research questions and any other salient points raised by participants. A thematic map was then drawn for each group of participants followed by supporting statements to demonstrate how themes evolved.

Research Questions:

RQ2 What is useful or not useful in an EP report? Is there a difference in what recipients consider to be 'an ideal report'? I.e. variation in opinions of Education, Health, Social Care, Caregivers and Service Users.

RQ3 What do EPs and recipients feel the report is used for?

Table 3 – Responses relevant to research questions

What is the report used for? EPs	What is the report used for? Recipients	What is most useful in the report? EPs
Strategies Evidence/proof	Strategies	Agreed actions/next steps (collaborative)

A record Planning next steps IEPs/EHC Assessments/statements Psychology Collaboration Monitoring and reviewing To offer support to schools Express child's views Promote strengths of the child Record consultation Review what has already been done. Feeding into further, more formal assessment i.e. statutory or EHC Resources/funding A summary of work undertaken. Holistic/bring together all information. Report on assessments/cognitive profile The child's needs Exam time extension Clarification of own thinking - reflection/reframing Signposting	Evidence/proof that there is a need Statement Resources Transition Reassurance To make changes to statement Recognition of a CYP needs and getting the support they need. Possibility of diagnosis Change of placement Cognitive scores Inform referrals to other agencies Professional overview (parent)	Strategies/advice Psychological formulation Pupil voice/views of CYP Balance – strengths and needs Summary Holistic insight Parent and school views. Targets/goals Headings Solution focused approach Flexibility/adaptability to suit the purpose of the report. Signposting What has previously been tried. Professional/alternative/psychological perspective. Background Hypotheses Reason for involvement. Observation detail Assessment detail Interpretation of involvement. Positive reframing.
What are the most useful parts of the report? Recipients Strategies/support needed/recommendations/advice – new, clear and realistic. Links to assist understanding of psychological terms. Assessment results with interpretation. Outline of child's individual needs. Cognitive profile. Strengths Summary Background of case Psychological input. Views of C/YP	**What are the least useful bits of the report? EP** Background Tables of assessment results Repeated information (taken from other reports) Recommendations which have not been collaboratively decided upon. Input specifically initiating a gatekeeper role. Lengthy and purely descriptive reports.	**What are the least useful bits of the report? Recipients** Jargon/academic language/unexplained terms. Inaccurate records Not tailored to the C/YP Irrelevant background information. Repeated information (taken from other reports) Theory

Difficulties/concerns/challenges faced or presented by C/YP. Signposting Hypotheses	Overwhelming number of actions. Complex language/psychological jargon Negative language Focus on concerns/difficulties Explanation of assessment tools	

8.0 Thematic Analysis

Using the Braun and Clarke (2006) framework, the following themes were emergent from the narrative offered by participants:

For EPs:

Theme: Consultation
Subs: Record of consultation NOT a report
Collaboration
Greater value in interaction

Theme: The role of the EP
Subs: Gatekeeper
Promoting change
Advocate for the C/YP

Theme: Function of the report
Subs: Access to services/resources/panels for C/YP
Not used by recipients
Strategies/Advice
Record/evidence
Personal reflection and reframing

Theme: Fit for purpose
Subs: Psychological formulation
Written to suit a varied audience
Holistic viewpoint

For Education

Theme: Application of Psychology
Subs: *Understanding the 'problem'*
        Strategies/Advice
        Psychological theory
Theme: The EP report as a change agent
Subs: *Next steps/planning*
         Placement change
         Access funding
Theme: Required function of the report
Subs: *EHC/ Statutory assessment*
        Evidence of need

For Parents

Theme: Substantiation of need
 Subs: *Acknowledgement of C/YP's challenges*
         Evidence of ALN
         Findings
Theme: Presentation/content of the report
Subs: *Language used*
        Explanation of psychological terms
        Accuracy of record
Theme: Story of C/YP
Subs: *Background and potential impact of life events*
        C/YP views
        Details of involvement with EP
Theme: Bridging a gap
Subs: *Access to services/support*
         Providing knowledge and answers
         Recommendations
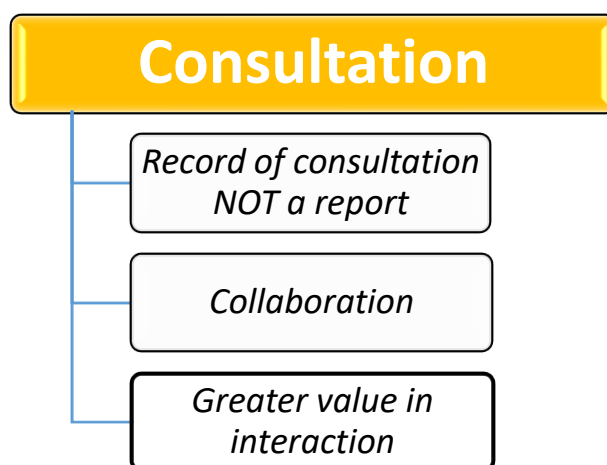
EP Group: Theme 1

Table 4 – Illustrative statements

Quote number - as detailed in transcripts of narrative responses to questionnaires (Appendix G)	Sub- theme	Excerpt
32	*Record of consultation NOT a report*	I write EP consultation records and not reports. I write them either for teachers, families or young people- they have different information, but all include psychological formulation and agreed actions.
47	*Collaboration*	Reports "are the product of collaborative work between the EP, young person, parents and staff. They are used to give a summary of the young person's background, strengths, interests and successes, educational difficulties and strategies and approaches to support their learning and development.
157	*Greater value in interaction*	As an Educational Psychologist I do not believe the reports I write are the measure to which I can judge my effectiveness. My

		effectiveness, noted here as supporting and enabling change and progress in a situation, happen more so during the interactions I have day to day in the job. Primarily changes occur through the process of consultations, rather than the product of consultations (I.e. a record of this).

Consultation was raised repeatedly within responses from EPs, there were several references to indicate that some individuals feel there is no longer a place for 'reports', instead there was preference to produce a 'record of consultation'. There was a clear message within responses that strategies or advice were only of use when formulated collaboratively, this was often reported to happen within a consultation framework. Additionally, there was a sense of negativity within some responses that indicated that the value of the report is held within interactions that occur between the EP and relevant parties, rather than the actual document; thus, suggesting that report writing may not be the best use of an EPs time.
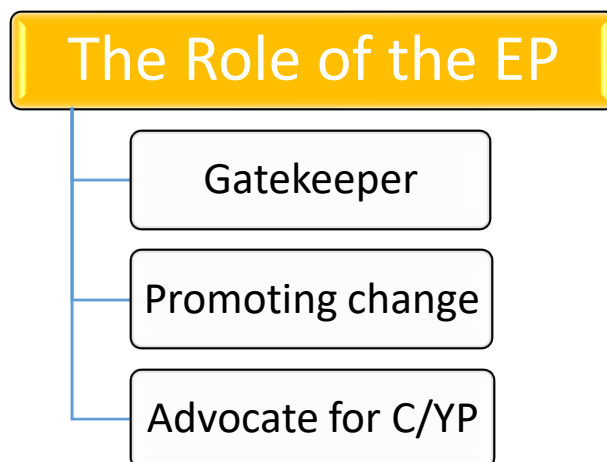
EP Group: Theme 2

The Role of the EP
Gatekeeper
Promoting change
Advocate for C/YP

Table 5 – Illustrative statements

Quote number - as detailed in transcripts of narrative responses to questionnaires (Appendix G)	Sub- theme	Excerpt
257	*Gatekeeper*	Commenting on least useful parts of the report: "Reports that relate to access of provision and potentially put EPs in a gatekeeper role."
112	*Promoting change*	Reports are most helpful in – "Supporting school/family in making changes to the environment or recommending evidence-based interventions"
27	*Advocate for C/YP*	Importance of report is: "Expressing the child's views, highlighting strengths, recording conversations that have helped to develop a shared understanding of the child's needs, confirming agreed actions and next steps."

EP responses repeatedly either made reference to, or explicitly stated that they feel they are obliged to take the role of a 'gatekeeper'; which was a function that they were reluctant to engage with. Many felt that reports were specifically used as a 'tick box' tool to access specialist provisions, resources or to apply for statutory/EHC assessment. It is apparent within the data that EPs are keen to be promoters of change, however, they wanted to do this through working psychologically with C/YP, schools, families and other professionals. Another role of the EP that emerged from the data was that of an advocate; there were numerous mentions of the importance the voice of the child holds, and some EP responses noted that this could be done using the report as an instrument of communication or information sharing.

EP Group: Theme 3

Function of the Report

- Access to services etc for the C/YP
- Not used by recipients
- Strategies/Advice
- Record/Evidence
- Personal reflection and reframing

Table 6 – Illustrative statements

Quote number - as detailed in transcripts of narrative responses to questionnaires (Appendix G)	Sub- theme	Excerpt
77	*Access to services etc for C/YP*	"In my LA schools need an ep report to access any kind of high needs funding. Schools also need an ep report to access statutory assessment for an ehcp. We have unwillingly become gate keepers to resources. The audience of my reports is more often than not a person in the LA who has never met the child."
184	*Not used by recipients*	"I feel that generally schools place a high emphasis on having reports written and receiving them as a matter of urgency, however, reports then generally sit in a folder or used as part of the Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment process."

116	*Strategies/Advice*	Most important parts of the report: "Support strategies and interventions, especially practical strategies."
124	*Record/Evidence*	"I use it [the report]as a record of my work with the school - a written reminder of what was formulated and what was agreed."
87 &164	*Personal reflection and reframing*	"I use the writing process to clarify my own thinking and formulation." "I think EP reports are important for reframing the child's needs. It is often useful to use psychology to help professionals or adults working with the child to understand what is influencing the child's behaviour and what we can do to promote positive change for the young person."

The function of the report is a theme that was prominent within the majority of responses offered by EPs, although within this theme there were various purposes discussed. In keeping with perceptions highlighted by EPs that they hold a gatekeeping role, it was apparent within the data that EPs feel that a central function of the report is to remove barriers and offer support for C/YP to access services, specialist provisions, resources or assessment. In terms of what other recipients gain from the report, EPs felt that the strategies and advice issued within the report were likely to be of greatest value; although, as pointed out in Theme 2, EPs themselves felt that strategies were of greatest value when co-constructed. With regard to the function of the report for EPs specifically, it was noted that it is used as a record or form of evidence to detail the work they have carried out which may be useful for future monitoring and review. Some EPs also attributed personal reflection and reframing as a function of the report as they offered accounts of how the writing process can allow time for processing of information and to look at the wider picture. Interestingly, although many EPs reported that there were several functions of the report, it was implied that these are of no use if not read by the intended recipient. There was an undertone of frustration in some of the responses indicating that they felt that reports simply weren't read.

EP Group: Theme 4

Fit for Purpose

- Psychological formulation
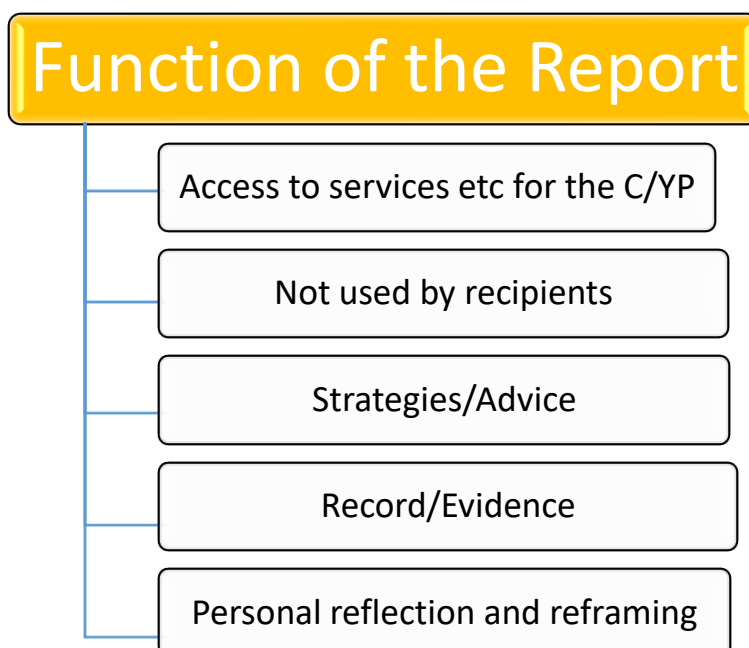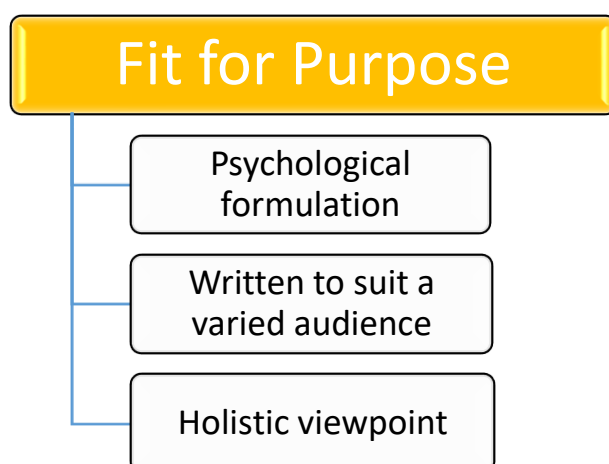- Written to suit a varied audience
- Holistic viewpoint

Table 7 – Illustrative statements

Quote number - as detailed in transcripts of narrative responses to questionnaires (Appendix G)	Sub- theme	Excerpt
154	*Psychological formulation*	"Most useful [parts of the report] - bringing together all the factors in a psychological formulation written in everyday language."
94	*Written to suit audience*	Uses of the report: "for making a written record of assessments and consultations that can be shared with families (including children where appropriate), schools and other professionals." "to contribute to EHCP assessment process - there is some tension here because the report is being written for a wide range of audiences - meeting the needs/expectations of all can be challenging."
111	*Holistic viewpoint*	The report assists with: "Bringing information from different

		sources together and providing an overview."

Analysis unearthed a common theme of what EPs feel the report should incorporate, and skills that it allows them to exhibit as professionals. Psychological formulation was a highly prominent feature within the text, with EPs stressing the importance of being able to showcase this within the report. It was also felt that the report should offer context to the current situation from a holistic perspective. In short, EPs stated that they wanted to be able to use psychology, promote understanding and draw on a systemic model of thinking in order to provide a valuable report. Barriers that they feel make this difficult, are having to write reports for a specific purpose (e.g. for ALN panel or and Early Years report) which led to a more prescriptive way of writing, and having to write a report that is suitable for a varied audience as it is likely to be received by recipients from a multitude of backgrounds, all wanting different things from the report.

Education Sector

Education Group: Theme 5

Table 8 – Illustrative statements

Quote number - as detailed in transcripts of narrative responses to questionnaires (Appendix G)	Sub- theme	Excerpt
145	*Understanding the 'problem'*	The report is useful in: "Helping provide an insight and understanding to the problem and

		allowing it to see the correct ways forward suited to the individuals."
142	*Strategies/Advice*	"Steps forward are most useful for teachers as this gives us strategies to use in the classroom to support the pupils and how to manage pupils needs."
245	*Psychological theory*	"Most useful [part of the report] is the school based strategies. Least useful is theory"

Analysis of qualitative responses showed that the psychology that an EP can offer within a report assists teachers/education staff in several ways, such as; Understanding the C/YP was deemed to be important for school staff and it was felt that this was something that an EP communicates within his/her report. It was felt that a professional opinion offering explanation for behaviours or delays in learning with C/YP allowed them to understand their needs more clearly. It was clear from responses submitted that strategies and advice are of great value to those working in schools, there were some references made that indicate that staff members value recommendations that have not been tried previously and are clearly explained. In terms of the use of explicit psychology, there was very little noted within responses; however, it was documented by one Educationalist that 'theory' is the least helpful part the report.

Education Group: Theme 6

The Report as a Change Agent

Next steps/planning
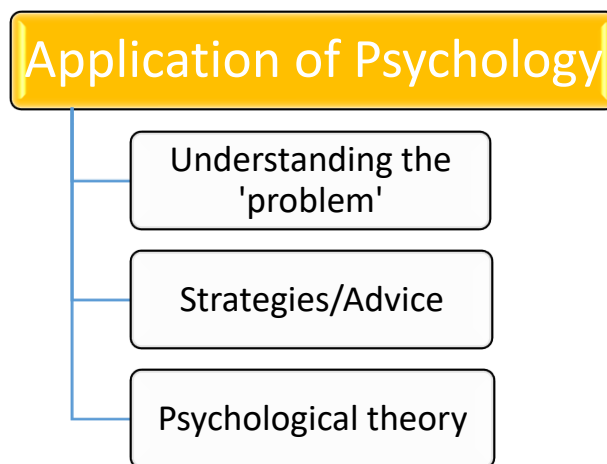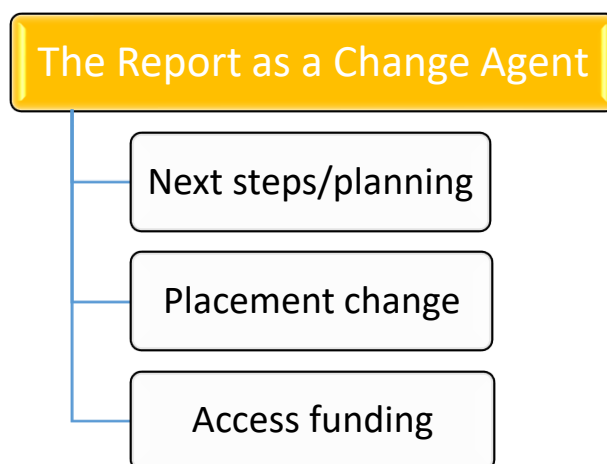
Placement change

Access funding

Table 9 – Illustrative statements

Quote number - as detailed in transcripts of narrative responses to questionnaires (Appendix G)	Sub- theme	Excerpt
17	*Next steps/planning*	The report is commonly used for: "Planning ahead; support for teacher/pupil/parent; reassurance for teacher/pupil/parent"
2	*Placement change*	The report is helpful: "To use in support of referral to panel for placement changes."
44	*Access funding*	The report is commonly used for: "Taking to panels to get funding"

Within narrative offered by the Education group was the ideology that the report can act as a change agent. Responses were not dissimilar to those previously discussed with regard to EPs feeling like gatekeepers, however, it was apparent that schools do not look at this negatively at all; in fact they value the report as a facilitator of change as it can assist them in planning next steps, applying for placement change for a C/YP and it may also support them in accessing services or resources for the C/YP that they might not otherwise be entitled to.
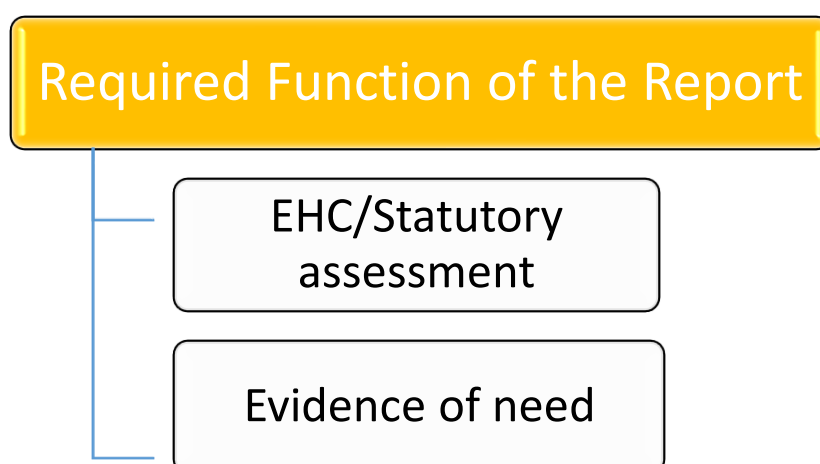
Education Group: Theme 7

Required Function of the Report

EHC/Statutory assessment

Evidence of need

Table 10 – Illustrative statements

Quote number - as detailed in transcripts of narrative responses to questionnaires (Appendix G)	Sub- theme	Excerpt
98	*EHC/Statutory assessment*	"Working in a SEN school the EP reports appear to be used to devise an Educational Statement for an individual, most Educationalists would then refer to the statement not the EP report."
15	*Evidence of need*	When asked what the report is used for: "Evidence"

EHCP and statutory assessment were items that came up frequently within the responses; some group members stated that the report assisted them in collating information, but many others indicated that the report acted as a contributory piece of evidence to assist in the EHCP or statementing process for a C/YP. Evidence was another noted word within the transcripts; some Education group members stated that the report is a document that evidences the needs of the child. In addition to this, there were suggestions that a report added supporting evidence for referrals made by school – this is likely to demonstrate involvement of an EP.

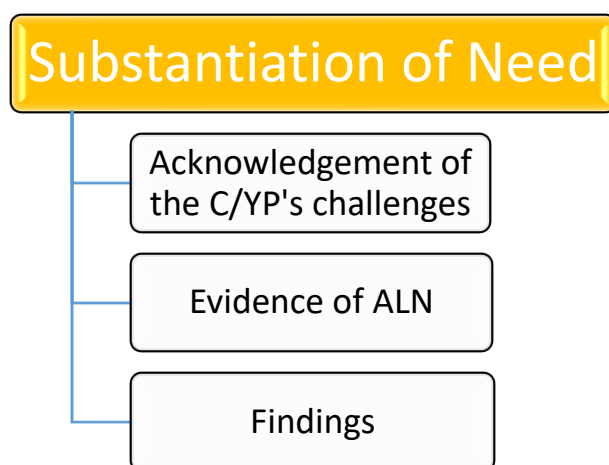## Parent Sector

Parent Group: Theme 8

Table 11 – Illustrative statements

Quote number - as detailed in transcripts of narrative responses to questionnaires (Appendix G)	Sub- theme	Excerpt
141	*Acknowledgement of the C/YP's challenges*	"Acknowledgement that there are issues that need addressing holds greatest importance for me and having that validation helped us access further support and intervention"
4	*Evidence of ALN*	"The reports I have amalgamate information from varied sources, I've used ep reports as evidence of my child's additional needs"
146	*Findings*	In response to what is most useful in the report: "As much information on findings and solutions/processes/signposting"

It was apparent within responses from individuals representing the parent group, that something that many of them wanted from the report was validation of their child's challenges and needs. For some there was a sense of having these things written into a document offered confirmation that what they had been saying (as parents, voicing concerns) was true, and for others it was evidencing a need for support or to be able to use in the future. Assessment results were also highlighted as being important for parents, again this supported a notion that it was factual validation that they are seeking for either acknowledgement or evidence.

Parent Group: Theme 9

Table 12 – Illustrative statements

Quote number - as detailed in transcripts of narrative responses to questionnaires (Appendix G)	Sub- theme	Excerpt
170	*Language used*	"The language used [in the report]is often too academic and theory based. Therefore, for the majority of parents it makes no sense."
239	*Explanation of psychological terms*	"Only ever had one [report] and it was not useful as it contained lots of terms which weren't explained. Links to explanations would have helped."
144	*Accuracy of record*	"Least useful - not accurately recorded parent views, half heard what was being said and made judgements without checking out first."

Some responses within the parent group centred on how the report is written. It was not uncommon for participants to draw on the unhelpful use of complex language or 'jargon', and there were also references made to inaccurate interpretations of the C/YP. Things that parents found to be helpful in assisting them with understanding the report was a simplistic

interpretation of psychological theory that may be adhered to in the report. In addition to these things there was a feeling of dissatisfaction in some of the responses; notably when parents did not feel that they had been listened to or that the report did not reflect what they felt was portrayed.
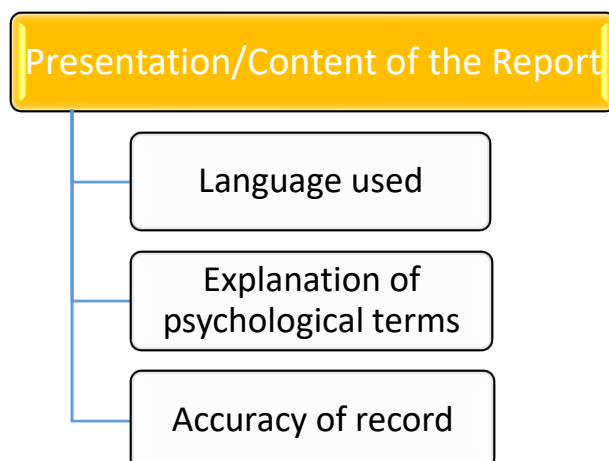
Parent Group: Theme 10

Table 13 – Illustrative statements

Quote number - as detailed in transcripts of narrative responses to questionnaires (Appendix G)	Sub- theme	Excerpt
148	*Background and potential impacts of life events*	"Greater emphasis should be given on the child's background and situation, with recognition being given to attachment disorder and the developmental trauma that can occur."
144	*C/YP views*	"Most useful - inclusion of my child's view."
146	*Details of involvement with EP*	Positives of report: "As much information on findings and solutions/processes/signposting"

A focal message within the data for parents specifically, was the importance of an accurate and resonant picture of their child. Background/history was raised as being important, along with how past events may be attributing to how the C/YP currently presents. A fair number of parents stated that the most important part of the report is the inclusion of the C/YP views. There were also references made to gaining knowledge of what the EP had done with the C/YP.
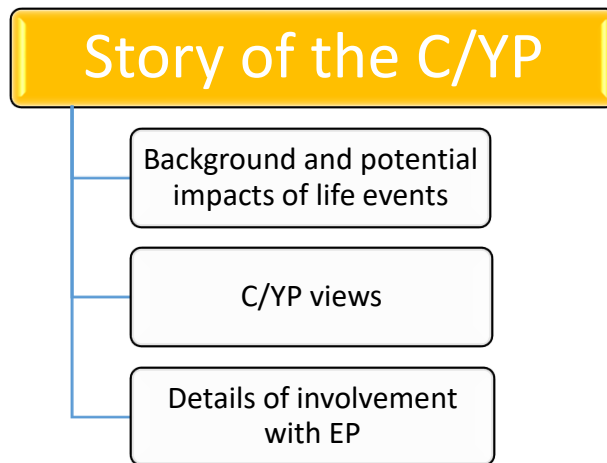
Parent Group: Theme 11
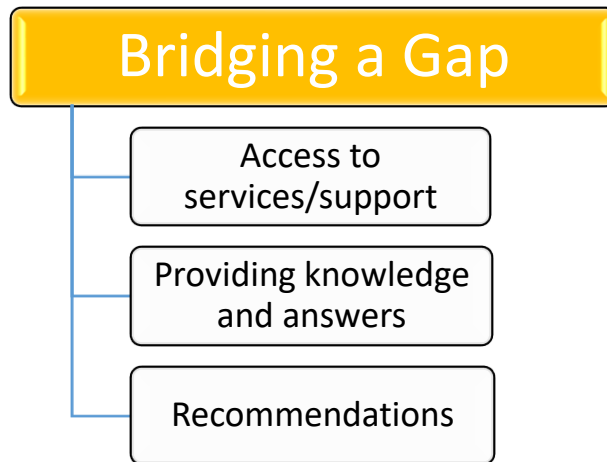
Table 14 – Illustrative statements

Quote number - as detailed in transcripts of narrative responses to questionnaires (Appendix G)	Sub- theme	Excerpt
82	*Access to services/support*	The report is good for: "Getting recognition of young person's needs and gaining appropriate support for them to access education, training and ultimately employment."
14	*Providing knowledge and answers*	The report is helpful in: "Giving a third party a professional overview of my child's strengths, challenges and recommended actions and strategies"
148 & 210	*Recommendations*	"Clear instructions for teachers to follow should be included."

		"List of recommendations for care most useful."

Results imply that the report can help to 'bridge a gap' or connect the dots so to speak. It can support parents in accessing further support or specialist services or offer answers from a professional perspective. Additionally, the strategies and advice offered within the report were deemed important for home but also for parents to feel assured that school had received advice on how best to support their child.

8.1 Amalgamation of sector results (qualitative)

Table 15 – Common and contrasting themes between sectors

Qualitative Data – Amalgamation of sector themes	
Commonalities	**Contrasts**
Strategies/Advice/Recommendations – All sectors made some reference to the benefit and importance of this **The voice of the C/YP** – C/YP views were also raised with high importance within all sectors. **Removing barriers** – All groups felt that a common use for the report was to access more specialist services, placements, resources or to initiate the statutory/EHC process. **Language** – An area of agreement was that language should be suited to the reader of the report and that complex language is not helpful. **Drawing together all information** – Telling a story, offering a holistic picture, offering background information all pointed to the notion that the EP report is able to communicate a 'full picture' of the C/YP, strengths/needs and ways to move forward. **Statutory Assessment/ECHP** – In terms of function of the report, providing statutory advice was raised by all groups when asked what the report is used for.	**Consultation** – this was something that was highly relevant to the EP group but not so much to recipients. Within EP responses there was a distinctive message that EPs wanted to work collaboratively, and consultation allows for this, however, when analysing data offered from recipients of the reports, the same thoughts were not apparent. **The role of the EP** – EPs were quite explicit in rejecting a gatekeeping role, but this was something that appeared to be very important for other group respondents. There was also a sense of the EPs wanting to work in a collaborative manner, whereas it was suggested within other groups that they valued the professional and unique contribution that the EP can offer. **Change** – Although there was a common theme of change running through all sector responses, it was noted that Education and Parents spoke of change in a more

	tangible sense, e.g. change of placement or accessing services; whereas, the EP spoke about change in terms of the process and how it was important to incorporate psychology and joint-working.
	* **Evidence –** Again, evidence was a common thread in all sectors but the reasons underlying a need for evidence varied. It seemed for parents it offered acknowledgement of their child's difficulties, for Education it was evidence of a need for additional resources, and for the EP is was more of a record of the work they had carried out.
	* **Benefits for the EP as a practitioner –**Reflection and reframing was deemed to be a relevant point within the text, perhaps unsurprisingly this element was unique to the EP sector.
	* **The recording of assessment results -** This appeared to be favoured by recipients (when accompanied by a simplistic explanation), however, the EP group often stated that for them, this was the least useful element of the report.

8.2 Summary of qualitative results

Data collected from the narrative questions included in the research questionnaire offered some obvious themes that were common to all sectors of respondents. The importance of strategies and advice was adhered to frequently by all parties, as was the facilitation of change, although the context of change did vary between recipients and EPs. There was a clear undertone of EPs feeling discouraged with the report promoting a gatekeeping role, but in contrast, recipients fed back that this was a beneficial function of the role, and perhaps the most significant element for them in eliciting change for the C/YP.

EPs stressed a desire for the report to simply provide a record of the collaborative work they value and engage in, such as consultation. There were references made that suggested that

their time would be better spent working directly with service users as it was insinuated that the value of EP work is within interactions. An undertone of negativity towards the report was sensed within the EP responses; this generally related to feeling that they were compelled to write reports to fit a purpose, which often resulted in a prescriptive narrative. Or alternatively, reports were not read by recipients. Interestingly, some positives that were highlighted by EPs from a personal perspective, was that the report promotes reflection and offers time for them to consider all elements and reframe where necessary.

There were only two responses from Health, one which highlighted the importance of the report in supporting the C/YP and the second drawing on it being unhelpful when a report is based on unreliable or inaccurate information – examples offered were 'somebody who doesn't know the young person too well, or a parent who may have mental health issues'. It did not feel appropriate to develop separate themes for these comments as due to the limited amount of information it did not seem viable to draw out themes. Also, the comments offered did draw comparison with other sector's sub-themes, therefore it was felt that they were not disregarded within the analysis.

9.0 Amalgamation of quantitative and qualitative results

Table 16 – Commonalities and contrasts between quantitative and qualitative data

Commonalities in Quantitative and Qualitative data	Contrasts or unsupported factors between Quantitative and Qualitative data
∗ Strategies are deemed to be important. ∗ Language should be jargon free and/or interpreted for ease of understanding. ∗ EPs place greater value on the use of psychology in reports than recipients. ∗ The report should accurately represent the child and his/her views. ∗ Assessment results (with interpretation) are valued by recipients of the report; this is acknowledged by EPs. ∗ The report can act as a facilitator of change; however, EPs see the value of change in ways of working with the C/YP whereas recipients, particularly parents and education staff value a more tangible change	∗ Approach – within the quantitative results it is portrayed that recipients value a report that has a focus on positives rather than negatives, this is in contrast to information gained in the qualitative data which insinuated that evidence of challenge and need were some of the most important factors within the report. ∗ Planning/next steps – these themes were apparent within the qualitative data as positives for all sectors, however, this was not reflected to the same degree within the quantitative results.

such as access to specialist provisions or funding.	

10.0 Discussion

10.1 Summary of findings

Results showed that on the whole, EP reports are valued in the UK; both by recipients and by EPs themselves. Notably there were statements of dissatisfaction, but these were in the minority and there was far more content presented on what is positive within the report than what is negative.

In terms of what recipients in particular find of most use within the report are the strategies and advice, this view was also shared by the EP group, however, there was a clear emphasis within the EP results of strategies only being of value when co-constructed. This view was not shared by recipients, in fact, there appeared to be a desire for the EP to take a higher professional role that dictated direction using their expertise.

All parties shared the view of previous research findings, in that complex language and psychological jargon are unhelpful in the EP report, building upon this, there was a common theme amongst parents and educationalists that valued assessment results but only if offered a simplistic overview or interpretation of scores.

With regard to assessment results, ratings for EPs from quantitative data highlighted a perceived value for their inclusion in reports. However, when able to expand or offer comments within the qualitative part of the questionnaire, it became apparent that the responses weren't necessarily personal to them as a professional, instead, they acknowledged the value of assessment results for recipients. There were several comments within the narrative provided by EPs that explicitly stated that they felt assessment results were of least value. It was felt that this may be influenced by a social model of thinking rather than a more medical 'within child' orientation.

Finally, it was apparent within the results that EPs feel that dictatorial reports endorse the role of a gatekeeper. EPs recognised that reports are often used to access funding, specialist provisions or resources and this notion was supported by results gathered from the recipient group. EPs were clearly resistant of this role and felt that it narrowed their skill set in terms of being able to facilitate change using a consultation approach underpinned by psychological theory.

10.2 How findings compare with previous research

The current study was heavily influenced by Rahill's recent study (2018) that was carried out in the US. Rahill's research centred on recipient perceptions of the EP report, used Likert scale questions and open ended questions as part of a mixed method design. The current

piece of research used Rahill's work as a scaffold and due to commonalities between the two it is possible to draw comparisons. Findings between the two exhibited some similarities such as finding complex language unhelpful and the focus of the report should be on the child, but, overall results were quite different. Rahill's findings offered a very bleak picture where there was a great deal of dissatisfaction with the EP report due to a multitude of reasons. The results garnered from the current UK based study, offered a contrasting picture with all participants largely in agreement that the EP is useful and assists in the process of change.

10.3 Strengths and Limitations of the current study

Table 17: Strengths and limitations of the current study

Strengths	Limitations
- It was felt that this study added depth to the limited research that is available on the subject. Previous studies have tended to focus purely upon content and presentation or have negated the importance of using a variety of recipient groups to offer valuable information. - This thesis has offered representation of UK based EPs and recipients, and this has proved to be relevant as results have differed when compared to the similar study carried out by Rahill (2018) in the US. - The study recruited a sizable sample, particularly within the EP sector; this allowed for more in depth analysis and greater reliability of findings. - It is felt that this research topic is very relevant to the current practice and role of the EP. Results offer interesting information that could help to inform practice or promote further areas of research.	- The most disappointing factor within this thesis is lack of participation from the Young Person group. Having the voice of the child recognised within a study of this nature would have offered a unique and valuable contribution. - The low response rate from the Health sector made it difficult to interpret results and lessened the validity of results for the group. As multi-agency working is heavily promoted within the current climate, a more reliable data set from health professional would have been valuable. - This study presented with a high level of subjectivity which may have been influential upon results. The design of the study was interpretive with regard to how participants received the questions asked within the questionnaire, and how they gauge the options of response (e.g. slightly/moderately/very…). In addition to this, the analysis carried out to inform results was also

	interpretive in the sense of how narrative responses were constructed by the researcher.
	• The use of questionnaire meant that the value of direct contact was lost, consequentially elements such as intonation and body language were also absent.
	• It was felt that the term 'EP report' could been explained in more detail when posing questions; there appeared to be some uncertainty from EPs as to what 'report' was being explored. This may have influenced the number of responses that were received with a focus on statutory advice.

10.4 How the study might have been improved

- During the recruitment process it was decided to source Heads and ALNCos as representatives of the Education sector. On completion of the study it is recognised that it may have been beneficial to promote participation of all school staff, given that class teachers and teaching assistants are often the individuals who will be drawing on the information within the report; this may have consequentially draw larger sample figures for the Education group.
- 245 individuals responded to the questionnaire but only 180 respondents completed it and were used as part of the data set. This is a significant loss of potential participants, on reflection maybe further consideration should have been given to the questions asked and/or length of questionnaire.
- Although all responses within this study were of value, it is accepted that findings from the Health sector should be taken extremely lightly given the very small sample recruited.

10.5 Future research directions

- The CYP's perception of the report
- Is a written 'report' necessary with consultation?
- SEN/ALN panel's views of EP report
- Potential impact of the proposed ALN reform

- EPs as recipients of the report – the use of the report in assisting practice.

10.6 Implications for educational psychologists

- The study offers a range of practical strategies that are evidence based that can be used by the EP in practice.
- Further research/training/influence of practice.
- The report as a functional tool – reframing, reflection, information sharing, time saving, record for monitoring

11.0 Conclusion

The overall outcome of this study in positive in recognising that both recipients and EPs feel that it is a useful document. Results from respondents offer a flavour of what is most valued in a report and elements that less beneficial. The research raises a flag for the UK and highlights that current practice in report writing is effective in meeting the needs of most recipients, unlike findings in other countries.

This study set out to consider the effectiveness of the EP report with an underlying wondering of whether writing reports is conducive to the day-to-day practice of the EP. Although there are clearly some frustrations held from both EPs and recipients, it would seem that on the whole, the answer is yes. In addition to this, I believe this study has highlighted to me the various uses of the report for an EP in practice that are often forgotten or missed, such as; a tool for reflection, a process that provokes thought and reframing, it is used as means of information sharing which subsequently saves time, and finally; it is a record, one of which can be used to review and monitor progress.

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Part III: Major Research Reflective Account

Word Count: 5958

PART III : LITERATURE REVIEW

The Efficiency of the Educational Psychology Report: An explorative study, considering views of recipients, including; Young People, Caregivers, Education and Health

1.0   Introduction

This critical appraisal provides some reflections on several elements of the research process. It will begin by offering an overview of the literature review and how the process influenced my final research questions.

A critical account of the methodology that was deployed including research paradigm, design and data analysis will be discussed along with reflections on any ethical issues raised.

Consideration with be given to implications of the study, any limitations and future research directions. Finally, a brief personal reflection on the research process and how this has impacted on my professional development will be offered.

The critical review will be written in the first person to ensure a reflective and reflexive account is provided.

2.0 Topic selection

During my time as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) there has been one duty and topic of conversation that has been prevalent in all Local Authorities that I have practised in or visited – the Educational Psychology Report. The report is adhered to in various ways, such as: 'EP Record of Involvement' or 'Record of Consultation'; however, the common theme is that following a form of intervention carried out by the Educational Psychologist (EP) or TEP, there is an expectation that they follow it up with a written account.

As a TEP I have eagerly searched for the 'correct' way to write reports. I have read reports written by experienced EPs, used supervision and used discussions with colleagues as guidance; however, there is no prescriptive or even recommended version of what makes a 'good' report. I have witnessed wonderful practitioners quickly write up a one page report whilst on-site at a school and then in vast contrast, I have also read 8 page reports that are full of information and recommendations written by practitioners who I equally respect.

As a TEP, any reports written are counter-signed before being distributed to recipients; I have welcomed this as it has allowed me to gain a wealth of feedback from multiple practitioners which in-turn has moulded and developed my practice. Contrary to this, is the fact that feedback that I have received with respect to my reports has varied and at times, views have been oppositional, and I have been unsure of which guidance to follow.

Report writing is topical and controversial as recently exhibited on EPNET (a forum for those in the field of educational psychology to share ideas and information) when an array of contrasting views were shared on how EPs write their reports or how they feel the content of the reports is used. Some felt that the report is a 'crafted work of art that captures the child', whereas others felt that they simply offered basic bullet-point information to serve a purpose of a gatekeeping role. What did seem to be of general consensus is that report writing takes up EP time which is taken away from other forms of direct work with the children and young people (CYP), schools and families. For me, this further fuelled my curiosity into what makes a 'good' report, as if composing this document is to take time away from service users, then I feel that the time should be used to its greatest capacity.

3.0 Literature search (narrative/systematic)

The aim of the literature review was to provide a theoretical background to the 'efficiency of the Educational Psychologist (EP) report'. It was initially planned that this would be a systematic process whereby there would be strict exclusion criteria; however, upon searching the topic it was found that there was a dearth of research to explore. Due to the limited number of studies available, literature included within Part 1 of my thesis has largely been published out of Canada. In addition to this, although not ideal, some sources cited within the review could be deemed outdated. However, when exploring these studies further it would seem that not a great deal had changed over three decades in terms of what was being researched and the research findings – therefore it could be argued that these earlier studies continued to hold significance.

An array of areas was looked at, such as: the challenges of report writing to meet the needs of a varied audience; what do recipients want in a report; what should be included within the content of a report; and the development of research findings over the years. In addition to this, models of report writing were considered as potential aides in overcoming difficulties with producing an effective and useful EP report.

3.1 Gaps in literature

Whitaker (1994) found that novice psychologists take 6 to 8 hours to write a report, while veteran psychologists average at 3 hours per report; given the significant role report writing holds within the practice of the EP, I was surprised at the dearth of research held on the subject. Of the studies that were published, most focused on readability and the skill set that should be held by the EP. Whilst I concur that these are important factors, I felt as though I was still left with questions regarding what should be included in the report.

Additionally, I was disappointed to find that there was no literature to be found on EP report writing that originated within the UK – although much can be learned from our counterparts in the US and Canada (where the preponderance of literature was published). I am conscious of the fact that there are likely to be differences in practice that would make results sourced from the US and Canada less valid to EPs and TEPs practicing in the UK.

Furthermore, those studies that did consider the views of recipients tended to be mainly teachers and occasionally parents too. With multi-agency working high on the modern day working agenda, I did not feel that this was recognised within the literature along with the views of CYP which were absent within the articles that were located.

Objectives of the current study were to:

i. bridge the gaps highlighted by seeking views of several sector recipients;
ii. build upon previous research by considering additional, more specific elements of the report;
iii. offer a UK perspective to research.

3.2 Research questions

The inception of the research questions was already in mind prior to beginning the literature review. As previously touched upon, the topic of this thesis was relevant to me as a practising TEP and I felt it was something that is pertinent to the EP profession. The final questions were influenced by studies explored within the literature review and aimed to capture what appeared to be deemed as prolific within research, whilst also provoking responses that may be useful to practitioners and subsequently the recipients of the EP report. The final research questions were:

- *RQ1. How useful have recipients of the EP Report found them to be? Giving consideration to a variety of factors, including - feasibility; information sharing; practice development; impact on service user; impact on recipient; sign posting; accessing specialist provisions etc.*

- *RQ2. What is useful or not useful in an EP report? Is there a difference in what recipients consider to be 'an ideal report'? I.e. variation in opinions of Education, Health, Social Care, Caregivers and Service Users.*

- *RQ3. What do EPs and recipients feel the report is used for?*

- *RQ4. Is there an ideal EP Report? If so, what does it look like? Considering factors such as content, structure, use of language and length of report.*

4.0 Research paradigm

A research paradigm is "the set of common beliefs and agreements shared between scientists about how problems should be understood and addressed" (Kuhn, 1962). According to Guba (1990), research paradigms can be characterised through their:

- **ontology** – **What is reality?**
- **epistemology** – **How do you know something?**
- **methodology** – **How do you go about finding it out?**

A research paradigm may be constructed through a researcher's ontological and epistemological beliefs, which in turn inform the methodology of a study (Scotland, 2012). Within the current study, a constructivist/interpretative ontology and a post-positivist epistemology were adopted, leading to a mixed-method methodology. Justification of these stances are explored in further detail below.

4.1 Ontological Assumptions

Ontology is the study of being (Crotty, 1998, p. 10) and ontological assumptions are concerned with what constitutes reality, in other words what is! In Scotland's (2012) article that explores philosophical underpinnings of research, he states that researchers need to take a position regarding their perceptions of how things really are and how things really work.

When considering my ontological stance, I took time to reflect upon my general beliefs of 'what is reality?' and what informs my practice as a TEP. As a trainee at Cardiff University the Constructionist Model of Informed and Reasoned Action (COMOIRA) framework (Gameson & Rhydderch, 2008) is embedded within my practice, I use it to guide me as a practitioner, within supervision and when writing reflective summaries. More specifically, social constructionism (Burr, 2003) which is at the core of the COMOIRA framework, is a concept that I feel has always been prominent in my 'making sense of the world' since beginning my studies in psychology nearly two decades ago.

Social constructionism is a theoretical model that views knowledge and truth as created, as opposed to discovered, by the mind (Schwandt, 2003). A social constructionist stance sits within a relativist paradigm: Relativism is the view that reality is subjective and differs from person to person (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 110), it highlights that views of the world are subjective, and as such, it is not possible to establish absolute truths. It is worth noting that constructionist approaches may also be referred to as interpretivist as they focus on how the social world is interpreted by those within it (Smith, 2015).

A critical realist stance was also considered when exploring my ontological assumption due to its roots in social constructionism. However, this ideology felt less fluid and individual in its origins as articulated by Guba & Lincoln (1994) who stated that 'realism is the view that reality has been shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender values; reality that was once deemed plastic has become crystallized'.

In taking a constructivist/interpretive stance within this study, it supports the notion that knowledge and meaningful reality are constructed in and out of interaction between humans and their world and are developed and transmitted in a social context (Crotty, 1998, p. 42). Therefore, the social world can only be understood from the standpoint of individuals who are participating in it (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 19). With this in mind, my research was steered towards recruiting participants who had direct experience of the EP report and implementing a form of narrative within the design to explore individual constructs.

4.2 Epistemological Stance

Epistemology is concerned with the nature and forms of knowledge (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 7). Epistemological assumptions are concerned with how knowledge can be created, acquired and communicated; put simply - what it means to know, Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 108).

As noted within the ontology summary, as a researcher and practitioner I hold a belief that knowledge is subjective and often down to interpretation of each individual. However, when considering how knowledge would be best sourced for the purpose of this study, I felt that my research paradigm shifted slightly. I felt that to offer a legitimate piece of research I needed something more objective to make the study more robust.

A pragmatic stance was considered given the recognised relevance to a mixed method methodology, however, due to the desire held by the researcher to incorporate an objective strand to the study, a post-positivist epistemological stance was held as it has a scientific base, acknowledging that a reality does exist with regard to the experience of participants and their personal perceptions of those experiences, however, these things can only be explored within a certain realm of probability, (Mertens, 2009; Ponterotto, 2005). It is understood that "no matter how faithfully the researcher adheres to scientific method, research outcomes are neither totally objective, nor unquestionably certain" (Crotty, 1998, p. 40) due to human participation; therefore, although this study offers an objective and consistent measure, with the participation of humans, individual interpretation of questions and scores will need to be accounted for.

5.0 Methodology (design, participants, questionnaire)

5.1 Design

A mixed-methods methodology was applied when conducting the research to enable the inclusion of both quantitative and qualitative data. It is recognised that there are limitations in qualitative and quantitative measures and therefore it was felt that triangulating methods would add to the robustness of the study.

An electronic questionnaire was developed using the online application, Qualtrics that was accessed via Cardiff University. I decided against using a standard measurement tool that was readily available or a duplicate of questionnaires used in previous studies, as I wanted responses to feed directly back to the research questions. Therefore, the questionnaire offered to participants was an amalgamation of prominent questions asked in relevant studies sourced via the literature review; questions that became apparent in discussions with colleagues or via EPNET posts; and finally, questions that I felt were relevant to my practice as a TEP.

The questionnaire consisted of 20 Likert style response questions, and 2 open-ended questions to allow participants to expand on their thoughts and highlight both the most and least helpful parts of the EP report from their perspective. There were several reasons for deciding on the style of questionnaire, such as:

Yielding large samples – It is noted that questionnaires are appropriate where there are larger numbers of participants and where reliability is sought and findings are to be generalised in some way (Cohen et al., 2007). Initially I had planned to carry out semi-structured interviews with one or two participants from each sector, although this would have potentially offered a more in-depth exploration of participant's constructs, sample numbers may not have been as large.

- o *Timescales* – I found myself restricted by timescales due to the fact that I changed my research design and had to re-submit my study proposal to the ethics committee. However, in developing an online questionnaire, it was very easy for me to disseminate an electronic link to relevant forums to attract participants.
- o *An objective element* – When first moving away from semi-structured interviews, my initial thought was to produce a questionnaire that consisted wholly of open-ended questions, but in keeping with my epistemological stance it felt that the study would hold more scientific weight with a quantitative element (i.e. Likert scaling) that could compare and contrast measurable responses as opposed to being completely subjective.
- o *Attracting participants* – An additional advantage of offering a largely Likert scaled questionnaire was that it reduced the amount of time required from participants. It was felt that when recruiting respondents, a 15 minute questionnaire may be more attractive than an hour long version.

5.2 Participants

Participants were sourced from Welsh education and health services, and from UK based forums: for example, EPNET (a forum accessed by Educational Psychologists) and Spectropolis (a forum for parents/carers with children who may have a diagnosis of Autism).

A purposive sample was recruited for this study; the purposive sampling technique, also called judgment sampling, is the deliberate choice of a recipient or recipient group(s) due to the qualities they possess. It is a non - random technique that does not need underlying theories or a set number of participants. Simply put, the researcher decides what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge or experience (Bernard 2002; Lewis & Sheppard 2006). Although it has been argued in several studies that random or probability sampling should be utilised as a means of participant selection, based on the notion that randomisation reduces biases and allows for the extension of results to the entire sampling population (Smith 1983), it felt necessary to only include individuals who had direct experience of the EP report in order to gain authentic feedback.

There were no exclusion criteria for the study other than participants had to be over 16 years of age (participation of CYP will be discussed in more depth later in this section), this was agreed in order to attract as many respondents as possible from an already narrowed sample pool.

245 survey responses were submitted, however, only 180 responses were used for analysis due to levels of completion, i.e. some questionnaires were started and not finished.

Respondents who completed the questionnaires consisted of:

Numbers of participants represented in each sector	
Educational Psychologists (EP)	140
Heads and/or Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinators (ALNCo)	21
Parents of young people who have received an EP report	16
Health Practitioners (SALT and OT)	3
Young people (over the age of 16 years) who have received an EP report	0

Although I was pleased with the relatively large sample recruited for this study, I did reflect upon the 65 incomplete and therefore discarded responses. I wondered if the questions were not relevant or easy to understand, or if the survey design was too long or complicated. In hindsight, it may have been helpful to offer a feedback response option with regard to the design of the survey or relevance of questions to aid further exploration.

As previously noted, I was happy with the number of respondents who had taken the time to participate in this study, however, when categorising respondents, it became clear that EPs were very heavily represented within the sample, Health had a very small representation, and perhaps the most disappointing factor was that I had no CYP voice to draw on. Reasons I attributed to levels of representation include:

➢ It could be assumed that every qualified EP would have experience of report writing, whereas within the forums targeted a smaller percentage of the other sectors may have been in receipt of a report.
➢ There was no distinct forum that I could find to target relevant health professionals such as Speech and Language Therapists or Occupational Therapists.
➢ I made an error in specifying Heads and Additional Learning Needs Co-Ordinators within the Education sector – I targeted these professionals as I felt that they would typically be the main recipients of the EP report in schools, however, teachers and teaching assistant views would have been just as valuable (if they had experience of reading an EP report) and allowed for greater levels of participation.

> ➢ I am not sure that the nature of this study would have attracted a great deal of attention from CYP and I wonder if targeting that age group needed to be approached in a different manner or within a study that has the voice of the child as its main or individual focus.

5.3 Questionnaire

As previously alluded to, the majority of questions within the survey took the form of a Likert Scale design to gain an insight into attitudes/perceptions with a numerical value. Likert (1932) developed the principle of measuring attitudes by asking people to respond to a series of statements about a topic, in terms of the extent to which they agree with them, and so tapping into the cognitive and affective components of attitudes. Scaled responses felt appropriate for this study as it was measurable thus lending itself well to my epistemological viewpoint and would offer seemingly effortless means of response from the respondent.

To add depth to the quantitative data and offer participants freedom of expression, two very broad questions were asked which were representative of the over-arching research questions outlined for the study. On reflection, consideration was given to how the Likert Scale questions may have influenced the responses offered in the narrative questions. Although efforts were made to ensure that responses were as authentic as possible, it cannot be ignored that factors raised within the initial section may have prompted thoughts and responses for stage two of the questionnaire.

I debated whether it would have been more beneficial to have separate questionnaires that were specific to each sector (i.e. EPs, CYP, education etc.) but it was felt that offering a single version would allow for better comparison within the results section. I stand by that decision; however, I do feel that when reading back through questions asked, that some questions did not lend themselves well to EPs who were participating. I also felt that some of the questions were ambiguous due to the language used. If I was repeating the study, I would consider offering a pilot version to a small sample of participants to gain feedback on the style of the questionnaire along with views on questions asked.

Another reflection that I have made in relation to the survey is the use of the Likert Scale. It was important for me to add some objectivity to the design of this study, but I wonder if that was satisfied with the use of a scale. It could be argued that scores given within the scale are interpretive to the individual; what constitutes as a '4' for one person may not mean the same thing as a '4' for another person. Despite verbal descriptors being offered to give some meaning to top and bottom ended scores; e.g. 5 = Extremely useful and 1 = Not useful at all, scoring was still subjective to a certain degree. In addition to these factors, it could also be questioned if a Likert Scale is a reliable quantitative measure, particularly with the addition of descriptive scores, it could be deemed to be qualitative in nature.

5.4 Data Analysis

Qualitative data was analysed and reported on using Thematic Analysis (TA) as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). I justified this decision as TA is a flexible approach that has no fixed

theoretical position, which in turn complimented my research paradigm and methodology. However, when looking back it is possible that my decision to use TA was heavily influenced by the fact that I had previous experience of this type of analysis, and that it offers a simplistic yet prescriptive set of guidelines, which in turn provided me with reassurance in an area that I generally lack confidence.

With that said, I did research other possibilities of analysis including Grounded Theory (GT). The GT approach is a widely cited and frequently used approach in a wide range of disciplines and subject areas, including the field of qualitative research in education (see Givon & Court, 2010). Grounded theory may often be used with an open-ended research design and research question, aiming to generate theory from data (Robson, 2011). With these statements in mind GT would appear to be a fitting approach to use within my study, however, within a classic GT approach, the researcher does not develop a prior set of research questions; rather the researcher seeks to approach the substantive area with a broader question that facilitates the participants to speak about their experiences (Glaser, 1998). It was important to me that findings reflected my research questions as this study aimed to look at specifics for practice and perceptions of those who have had experience of the EP report, as opposed to learning about a new phenomenon or to expand on knowledge so to speak.

In support of TA, the paper written by Braun and Clarke in 2006 offered a credible rationale for the use of TA in qualitative research which consolidated my decision. Some strengths offered for TA include:

- o Flexibility;
- o Relatively easy and quick method to learn and do;
- o Accessible to researchers with little or no experience of qualitative research;
- o Results are generally accessible to the educated general public;
- o Useful method for working within a participatory research paradigm, with participants as collaborators;
- o Can usefully summarise key features of a large body of data, and/or offer a thick description of the data set;
- o Can highlight similarities and differences across the data set;
- o Can generate unanticipated insights;
- o Allows for social as well as psychological interpretations of data;
- o Can be useful for producing qualitative analyses suited to informing policy development.

It is noted that TA does not come without limitations. I recognise that this method of analysis is open to interpretation and potential researcher bias. How I construed the narrative offered by participants, and further, how I established themes from the content is highly interpretive and arguably unreliable as I may have interpreted data contrarily on a different day. Themes were checked on several occasions to account for reliability, but unfortunately, due to time constraints I did not allocate a second researcher to check for consistency of themes – I am aware that this is a great limitation of the results.

6.0 Ethics

It was not envisaged that the topic of this study or the nature of questions would cause distress or negative emotions amongst participants; despite these assumptions' ethical procedures and protection of participants were not taken lightly. A robust ethics proposal was put forward to Cardiff University Ethics Panel detailing the current study and measures that would be put in place to ensure the study was ethical and safe. I was granted permission to go ahead with the study in May 2018, and then again after making some amendments in November 2018.

6.1 Anonymity and Confidentiality

Anonymity and confidentiality measures will be met as participants were not asked to provide any personal details on the questionnaires and were asked to give consent via a digital tick box before they were able to continue with the survey.

The lack of personal information requested was deliberate in an effort to offer the respondent complete confidentiality – it was felt that in doing this it would also negate any participant bias and encourage wholly honest responses. In hindsight it may have been useful to ask approximately how many reports participants had experience of; this would have made it clear whether perceptions were based on maybe one report, which could pose questions to the reliability of the participants responses. At the time of compiling questionnaires this was not factored in as priority was given to making the survey as concise as possible to make it more attractive to respondents and yield larger samples.

7.0 The voice of the child

I feel my biggest disappointment and regret within this study is the loss of the CYP's voice. Todd, Hobbs, and Taylor (2000) write that a central concern of every EP should be how to develop professional practice that genuinely enables the views of children and young people to be heard. I feel passionately as a TEP that CYP should be central to all that I do, and I did not want my research to be an exception. With that said, from the very beginning of this study I feel I moved away from my core beliefs in an effort to eradicate any potential barriers that might prevent my research being actioned. Somewhat ignorant to many of the facts around research ethics, I believed that attempting to source CYP for a study would be highly unlikely to be agreed by the Ethics Committee. As an alternative, it was decided that I could draw on post 16 YP so that the views of the young person could still be explored but with lesser ethical considerations.

Unfortunately, this decision did not work to my benefit, it proved difficult to recruit YP over the age of 16 and I subsequently ended my study with no representation for that sector. If I were to redesign my study, I feel that I would be somewhat bolder in my approach to research and ensure that recruitment of CYP was made a priority.

8.0 Value of the study

8.1 Contributions to EPs

I hope that this study offers EPs some form of guidance as to what recipients find helpful in reports and what could possibly be avoided. Information gained from EPs themselves reflects a passionate workforce who feel that reports are of use and value them as a means of promoting change.

In offering information and potential approaches with regard to report writing, it is hoped that EPs will value suggestions made to assist them in producing an efficient report that meets the needs of a varied audience.

It is recognised within this study that time spent on administration tasks can take away from time spent with children and schools, however, if this time is used to write effective and fit for purpose reports, then it is not used to the detriment of the service users.

Finally, I hope that this study gives a voice to UK based EPs the fact that recipients value the report is a credit to the level of practise offered in this country.

8.2 Contributions to recipients

First and foremost, it is hoped that this study has offered recipients that have not previously been considered within this field of research to feel included and valued. Seeking views of participants from various sectors demonstrates a desire to work collaboratively and highlights a need for service user input to improve services.

It is intended that EPs will take note of feedback offered within this study and produce reports that are purposeful, readable and individual to each child in line with both the literature review findings and of results of my study.

8.3 Limitations

A selection of limitations have been highlighted throughout this critical review; below I will discuss what I feel are the most apparent weaknesses of the current study:

- ❖ I don't believe I provided enough clarity around the type of report that was being researched. Within the narrative responses provided by the EPs on the open ended questions on the questionnaire it was noted that on several occasions' participants referred to writing in varying ways to accommodate the type of report; for example, an Early Years report or a report to contribute to statutory assessment. Responses may have altered had I made it clear the type of report I was researching.
- ❖ Some questions asked could have been interpreted by respondents in different ways, which would subsequently diminish the reliability of results; carrying out pilot trial of the questionnaire may have assisted with this.
- ❖ Uneven weighting of participant sectors made analysis more difficult. I did not envisage the large response from EPs and had hoped for greater participation from

other sectors. The recruitment process would most definitely need to be altered to attract a more evenly balanced study.

❖ Due to the qualitative nature of this study it is exposed to interpretive factors and research bias which arguably makes overall findings less valid. Measures such as triangulation were implemented to allow for a more robust study, but the fact that participants would hold individual interpretations of questions asked and scores offered, combined with my personal constructs of answers given and data patterns, cannot be ignored.

❖ The small sample sizes of sector groups limit the extent to which the findings could be generalised to those groups as a whole – that is not to take away from the value of responses that were received, but in terms of research reliability the sample sizes should be taken into account.

❖ I am aware that the longevity of this study may be restricted to the current context. With change imminent due to the introduction of the new ALN Code of Practice, the role of the EP is likely to change which may subsequently impact on methods of reporting. Additionally, during my time as a TEP and from reading responses gained from the narrative questions within this study, it is apparent that the use of Consultation is high on the agenda of UK based EPs – given the collaborative nature of the consultation it could be questioned whether a detailed report would be necessary.

8.4 Further research

In light of findings discussed both within Parts 1 & 2 of this study I feel that there is scope for several paths of research:

Within the studies explored in the literature review a topical subject was report writing as part of the EP training course. I was unable to find anything on the subject within the UK, but I feel that it would be of interest to learn how much information TEPs are given as part of their training; if that information is consistent within all universities and/or if it is deemed as effective by those who receive the training.

When considering recipients of the EP report, one very pertinent sector that was not included was Special Educational Needs/Additional Learning Needs (SEN/ALN) officers. It was consistently fed back within the current study that reports are often used to access resources or for a change of placement. Although I do not champion the use of reports for this purpose, it is evident that they are often used for this function and therefore it seems pertinent to gain perceptions of the EP report from those who sit on SEN/ALN panels.

Finally, in all of the literature sourced, it became apparent that the CYP was seldom referred to – I found this quite alarming, but on reflection I wondered if children were not included as it was assumed that CYP would not typically read the report. I would be interested to know whether children are shown their reports, and if so, what are their views on how it is written? Should the EP profession be moving towards a more child friendly version of the report, and if so, how can that be done whilst still meeting the needs of all other recipients?

9.0 Impact upon my personal development/ Contribution to knowledge as a researcher

I began this journey as a novice, and I feel that the whole process has been one of learning. Although I had previous experience of research from higher education degrees these were completed many years ago and it felt that my DEdPsy experience was at a much higher level, a level that I was unsure that I was able to meet.

In terms of my skills as a researcher I still don't feel confident, but I do now feel more informed; I feel that I have a greater understanding of the processes involved in the practice of investigation and I feel I have finally grasped the notion of ontology and epistemology and the influence that these assumptions have upon me as a practitioner and a researcher.

I have recognised errors and limitations in my approach to this study and feel that if I were to begin this study now with the knowledge that I have gained, the study would be much improved from recognising the limitations previously discussed. With that said, I am largely satisfied with the overall outcomes of my research and feel that the experience has assisted me in my professional development.

With regard to practice I have taken a great deal from this project. I approached this topic rather negatively, perhaps questioning the value of a document that was taking up a large percentage of my working week; I feel as though I wanted results to show that reports were not a good use of time to perhaps justify spending less time producing them. However, throughout the process of completing this thesis, I have become somewhat defensive of the report as I have come to realise the value it holds to me as a practitioner. The process of writing the report allows me to reflect upon my practice, consider my hypotheses, fit a jigsaw together so to speak. Additionally, in a more practical sense, I use reports written by EPs to inform me of work previously carried out with a C/YP, I use it as a reviewing tool and I also use it as a reminder of actions that I need to take. Prior to doing this study, I had failed to notice these things and I feel as though identifying the worth of the EP report I will give it the time and respect it deserves.

In terms of influence, from reading literature and exploring the content of narrative offered within my own study I am keen to learn more about writing reports for children as standard practice and will use skills developed as part of the literature search to help me identify relevant sources for this. I have also recently given consideration to carrying out a small scale piece of research within a school in an effort to reduce 'school refusal'; for me, this is something that I would never have considered previously as I would have felt ill-equipped and therefore shows evidence of growth.

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<u>Appendices</u>

APPENDIX A – Gatekeeper Information Letter

Address

Date

Dear (Insert Name),

My name is Amy James and I am a second year trainee enrolled on the Doctorate in Educational Psychology course in the School of Psychology, Cardiff University. My university research supervisor is Dr Kyla Honey. As part of my training, I am in the process of carrying out my thesis. The study I intend to carry out, I feel is pertinent within the field of educational psychology, but also within sectors that are often in receipt of psychological reports via multi-agency working.

The aim of the project is to consider the perceived usefulness of the educational psychology report, with a view to understanding how the report can be written most efficiently for both the Educational Psychologist (EP) and the recipient. Consideration will be given to the content, structure, language and length of the report, along with other relevant factors. The process will involve participants completing an anonymous, online questionnaire reflecting on their own experience of psychological reports. The questionnaire should take up to 30 minutes to complete.

I would be grateful if you could pass on the Information Letter (provided with this letter/email) along to staff within your team to offer them the opportunity to partake in this study by following the electronic link provided. With regard to post 16 service users, it would be greatly appreciated if the Information Letter could be enclosed with any relevant EP reports sent out. If you would like me to meet with you to offer further information, I will gladly do so.

Consent will be sought electronically prior to the participant completing the questionnaire, and questionnaires completed by participants will be stored with complete anonymity in a password protected device for five years and then destroyed. Findings or references to the study will be reported in a research paper available to all participants on completion. Information / results may also be used in a publication or presentation but will be entirely anonymised so that participants' views cannot be traced back to them. It is hoped that the

research will offer information on how the EP report can be written most efficiently to assist EPs in their practice and offer the most useful and informative content and format for the recipients of the report.

Many thanks in advance for your consideration of this project.   Please let me know if you require further information.

Kindest Regards,

Amy James

Amy James	Dr Kyla Honey
Trainee Educational Psychologist	Research Supervisor
School of Psychology	School of Psychology
Cardiff University	Cardiff University
Tower Building	Tower Building
Park Place	Park Place
Cardiff	Cardiff
CF10 3AT	CF10 3AT
	Tel: 029 20879003
Email: JamesAL@cardiff.ac.uk	Email: Honeyk1@cardiff.ac.uk

APPENDIX B – Information Sheet

Address

Date

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Amy James and I am a second year trainee enrolled on the Doctorate in Educational Psychology course in the School of Psychology, Cardiff University. My university research supervisor is Dr Kyla Honey.

As part of my training, I am currently carrying out my thesis. I am writing to invite you to take part in this research study. Please read this information sheet before you decide if you would like to take part.

What is the aim of the study?

The aim of the project is to consider the perceived usefulness of the educational psychology report, with a view to exploring how the report can be written most efficiently for both the Educational Psychologist and the recipient of the report.

Your involvement in this research may play a vital role in contributing to research held with regard to how Educational Psychologists can best relay information gained from interventions, consultations and assessments carried out with young people and their associated key adults. At present, there is limited research available from the perspective of the recipient.

Why have I been chosen?

It is felt that in order to gain a true understanding of the efficiency of the psychological report, feedback from those receiving the information is vital. The research study wishes to recruit as many participants as possible from Education and Health settings, along with Caregivers and Young Persons who have been in receipt of the EP report. The only stipulation attached to this study is that participants must be over the age of 16 years.

What does this study involve?

Taking part in this study would involve you completing an online questionnaire that should take no longer than 30 minutes to complete. The questionnaire will require no personal information other than to confirm which sector you identify with – i.e. Young Person, Caregiver, Health or Education.

What if I don't want to take part or if I change my mind?

Taking part in this study is entirely voluntary and if you decide not to participate, then this will not affect you in anyway.

You have the right to change your mind and withdraw from this study at any time and will not be asked to provide a reason for this. You will not be asked to do anything that may provoke unease or cause harm.

What will happen to the information?

All of the information collected within this study will be held anonymously on a password protected device – you will not be asked to give your name within this study; therefore, this information cannot be traced back to you. The information will be held for five years and then destroyed.

The results of the study will be written up anonymously within my thesis as part of assessment for my doctorate. Information / results may also be used in a publication or presentation but will be entirely anonymous. It is hoped that the research will offer information to inform the practice of the EP, which in turn will also benefit service users and associated professionals.

On completion of the study, you will have the opportunity to receive feedback on the outcomes of the research by contacting me the researcher.

Questions and further information:

If you have any questions you are more than welcome to contact me via the details provided below.

I am also hoping to arrange with the Team Leader/Manager a time to come into the school / your setting to provide an information session to staff about this research and will be available to answer any questions that you may have.

This research has received ethical approval by Cardiff University Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints these can be addressed to: psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and considering taking part in my research.

Amy James
Trainee Educational Psychologist
School of Psychology
Cardiff University
Tower Building
Park Place
Cardiff
CF10 3AT

Email: JamesAL@cardiff.ac.uk

Dr Kyla Honey
Research Supervisor
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APPENDIX C - Consent form

I agree to take part in this research and agree to the following:

- I understand that my participation in this project is entirely voluntary and will involve me completing an online, [click box] questionnaire that should take no longer than 30 minutes to complete. I am aware that I will be asked to offer my views on factors relating to the Educational Psychology Report.

- I understand that I am free to ask any questions at any time and may withdraw from this study at any point without giving a reason.

- I understand that I do not have to answer any questions that I do not wish to.

- I understand that the information provided by me will be held safely in a password protected device for five years and then destroyed.

- I understand that the information provided by me will be held totally anonymously, so that it is impossible to trace this information back to me individually.

- I understand that this research is being conducted through Cardiff University, and that it may be published.

- I also understand that at the end of the study I can contact the researcher if I would like to be provided with additional information and feedback about the purpose of the study.

I, _____ consent to participate in the study conducted by Amy James, School of Psychology, Cardiff University under the supervision of Dr Kyla Honey.

Signed:

Date:

APPENDIX D - Debrief Form

Thank you for participating in this study which is exploring the efficiency of the Educational Psychology (EP) Report from the views of recipients of the report. To do this, a large sample of EP report recipients were contacted and given the opportunity to complete an online questionnaire.

All participants are reminded that information offered to the researcher as part of the study is completely anonymous and will be stored securely for five years and then destroyed. It should be noted that the researcher may be able to provide general feedback regarding pooled data but will be not be able to comment on the information provided by individuals due to anonymity. Following submission of questionnaires, it will not be possible for those reading information, including the researchers and participants, to know who took part in the study.

What will happen now?

The information provided by participants will be used as part of a doctoral thesis project in educational psychology for Cardiff University. The research findings may be published wider than this, but they will always be in an anonymous form. It is hoped that the research will inform the practice of the EP in producing the most efficient reports for recipients. A summary of the findings from the research project will be available to all those involved in the research when it is completed.

If you would like to ask any more questions about this research, please feel free to contact me or my supervisor using the email addresses below. I will endeavour to answer any questions to the best of my ability. Thank you for taking the time to take part in this study.

Amy James
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Any complaints regarding this study can be directed to the School of Psychology Ethics Committee at the address below:

Secretary of the Ethics Committee
School of Psychology
Cardiff University
Tower Building
Park Place
Cardiff
CF10 3AT

Tel: 029 2087 0360

Email: psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk

APPENDIX E – Sample Questionnaire

For each question (with the exception of the final 2 questions), the participant will be asked to provide a scaled response from 5 options - Very Useful/Useful/Moderately Useful/Of Little Use/Not Useful at all)

1) How useful would you rate the EP report?
2) How do you rate the strategies offered by EPs within reports?
3) How do you rate the inclusion of background information in reports? For example, details of health, previous EP involvement, diagnoses, family history, details of key persons etc.
4) How useful do you feel it is to keep reports succinct (3 pages or less)?
5) How important do you feel it is to have an in-depth report (4 pages or more)?
6) How useful do you feel the use of psychological theory is within the EP report?
7) How useful to you feel it is to receive explanations or further reading on psychological elements?
8) How would you rate the importance of using jargon free, simple language in reports?
9) How would you rate the importance of being warm and personable in reports?
10) How would you rate the importance of being professional and factual in reports?
11) How useful do you a feel a predominantly positive (solution focused) report is?
12) How would you rate a report that focused predominantly on challenges and concerns?
13) How useful do you feel the inclusion health orientated strategies are within EP reports? Examples may be Speech and Language or Occupational Therapy.
14) How useful do you feel signposting is? Inclusive of signposting to information, services, resources etc.
15) How useful do you feel the EP report is in promoting change?
16) How useful do you feel the EP report is in promoting positive progression in young people?
17) How useful do you feel the inclusion of assessment results are in a report?
18) How useful do you feel the inclusion of work carried out by the young person is within the report? This may include photos or quotes from the young person.
19) How useful do you find a structured report? I.e. a report using headings, sub-headings, bullet points etc.
20) How useful do you find reports in allowing you or the young person to access specialist services/provisions?
21) How useful do you find reports in offering clarity of discussions held in consultation/meetings with the EP.
22) How useful do you find reports in assisting you with formulating a plan of next steps?
23) What do you feel is the most useful part of the educational psychology report?
24) What do you feel is the least useful part of the educational psychology report?

APPENDIX F

Table of research terms used, and numbers generated from the literature search. Although large numbers were sourced there were very few pieces of research that were of specific relevance and it was felt that a 'pearl growing' method was much more substantive in this case.

Database searched	Search terms used	Number of results generated
PsychINFO	Educational Psychologist report writing	21798
	Psychologist Report Writing	6475
	Use of psychological reports	60876
	Report writing OR Writing reports	31234
	Perceptions of the Educational Psychologist OR School Psychologist	10897
	Recipients of psychological reports	7865
	Parents response to psychological report	25675
	School OR parent response to psychological report	180987
Applied Social Science and Index Abstracts (ASSIA)	Educational Psychologist report writing	70631
	Psychologist Report Writing	5517
	Use of psychological reports	40367
	Report writing OR Writing reports	20609
	Perceptions of the Educational Psychologist OR School Psychologist	11359
	Recipients of psychological reports	3241
	Parents response to psychological report	24271
	School OR parent response to psychological report	189818
	Educational Psychologist report writing	5759
	Psychologist Report Writing	90
	Use of psychological reports	66012

ERIC	Report writing OR Writing reports	323587
	Perceptions of the Educational Psychologist OR School Psychologist	687716
	Recipients of psychological reports	9801
	Parents response to psychological report	68620
	School OR parent response to psychological report	176133

Appendix G

Thematic Analysis – Coding of qualitative data

Code for participant group
EPs
Education
Parents/Carers
Health
Young Person

Response number	Q8 - What would you say you most commonly use the EP report for?	Code
1	Understanding child's needs and putting strategies in place.	Child's needs Strategies
2	To use in support of referral to panel for placement changes.	Placement change
3	Strategies and to check we as supporting the child	Strategies
4	The reports I have amalgamate information from varied sources, I've used ep reports as evidence of my child's additional needs	Evidence of additional needs.
5	For strategies to try in the classroom and for future referrals such as change in placement.	Strategies Change of placement
67	Proving there is a problem with the child when others don't see/believe it.	Evidence of additional needs.
8	Strategies to support children in school/class. To support referrals to other agencies and placement changes.	Strategies Placement change
9	Key transition times, from primary to secondary. Informing next steps in terms of appropriate provision.	Transition Change of placement
10	To put in place strategies to help the student	Strategies
11	Consultation	Consultation
12	School	
13	Statutory assessment process.	Statutory assessment
14	Giving a third party a professional overview of my child's strengths, challenges and recommended actions and strategies	Professional overview Strategies
15	Evidence	Evidence of ALN

16	Support writing referrals to other agencies, formal assessment. Reference when meeting with parents.	To gain additional support
17	Planning ahead; support for teacher/pupil/parent; reassurance for teacher/pupil/parent	Planning
18	We have used it as supporting evidence for a statement	Evidence ALN Statutory assessment
19	Support a young person's needs in therapy session, educational settings and residential settings	Supporting YP
20	To support schools in understanding how to best support CYP.	Support schools and CYP
21	To support teachers and teaching assistants with planning how to support a pupil.	School support
22	I write them	
23	As a record of a consultation discussion so all have a summary of the discussion and agreed actions.	Record
24	access to provision of support	Access provision
25	Assessment and suggest strategies	Strategies
26	To record key concerns and jointly agreed actions.	Collaboration Record
27	Expressing the child's views, highlighting strengths, recording conversations that have helped to develop a shared understanding of the child's needs, confirming agreed actions and next steps.	Identifying child's needs. Record. Collaboration Next steps
28	Consultation records, also used for review.	Record of consultation
29	Gaining a holistic understanding of the factors posing a challenge to learning. Looking at what has been agreed by school and the EP.	Challenges Collaboration
30	Often reports are used to justify or confirm a deficit model and access resources. In some cases reports are more helpfully used to formulate an intervention plan.	Evidence Next steps/plan
31	I am an EP, so cannot answer this question	
32	I write EP consultation records and not reports. I write them either for teachers, families or young people- they have different information but all include psychological formulation and agreed actions.	Consultation record. Collaborative planning.

33	From an EP perspective, to summarise my involvement However an important use for the report, both statutory and non-statutory, is to gain further resources to support the child. A key audience is therefore SEND Officers, will they be participating in this research?	Additional resources.
34	Individual work- consultations, assessments, annual reviews, EHC assessments	Record
35	Highlight what we know and identify what we need to know. Use as basis of a review	Review
36	As a record of assessment outcomes and actions agreed in consultation.	Record Collaboration Planning
37	The EP report should connect you to The relevant services but at present it does not.	Accessing services
38	reminding everyone what happened in the consultation and what the next steps are (to be used in the review)	Record of consultation. Next steps.
39	Providing a holistic understanding of the child/young person, providing a psychological understanding of the situation and offering next steps/actions.	Understanding of CYP Psychological understanding. Next steps/planning.
40	E.P reports would only be written for things that were out of the ordinary and are not done routinely.	Questions the purpose.
41	EHC Needs Assessment	Statutory assessment.
42	To summarise the work I have carried out with a child/young person/school staff and parents/carers and offer the conclusions and next steps from this.	Record Planning
43	As an EP I write reports for statutory assessment, summaries of consultations, individual assessment work, brief summaries of therapeutic work. I find a pressure from schools to produce a report. I also write letters for children so they also get some feedback in a written form.	Statutory assessment. Record. Evidence for schools.
44	Taking to panels to get funding	Funding
45	Identifying strengths from which to develop. An explanation of the child's presentation which takes into account cognitive perspectives, rather than just observable behaviour. It changes how front line professionals work with and interact with the child, and helps them	Identifying strengths. Psychological input. Supporting CYP

	to understand the child and how to help them beyond "sticky plaster" recommendations.	
46	Reporting back to the psychiatrist but I'm probably unique there! Then helping plan the next steps	Planning next steps.
47	We call them records of involvement rather than reports and they are the product of collaborative work between the EP, young person, parents and staff. They are used to give a summary of the young person's background, strengths, interests and successes, educational difficulties and strategies and approaches to support their learning and development.	Record of Involvement. Collaborative work. Summary Strategies
48	Access to resources or provision	Resources/provisions
49	Assessment of need and court reports	EHC assessment Supporting evidence
50	I feel that the main use of the reports I write are for presenting evidence to a local authority panel as part of the education, health and care needs assessment process, which can feel like more of an administrative role than the application of psychology. I always include references to psychological theories in my reports to try and avoid this feeling, however experience a great level of frustration at the mismatch between my perception of the EP role and the perspective of others within the education system.	Evidence EHC assessment Psychological input What the EP wants and expectations of others.
51	Statutory assessment and completion of involvement - essentially to bring together all information	Statutory assessment. Completion of work.
52	Supporting evidence for referrals, updated cognitive scores	Evidence Cognitive scores Review
53	Psychological advice Core and traded work	Psychological advice
54	Recording what has been discussed in a consultation. Applying for statutory assessment.	Record of consultation. Stat. assessment
55	Evidence of agreed outcomes and strategies and holding stakeholders accountable for reviewing processes and reviewing what has already been done/recommended and monitoring progress. I also use EP reports to explain assessments and results perhaps in	Evidence Collaboration Review Accountability Record Statutory assessments.

	greater depth than a consultation or meeting would allow given time constraints. Finally, I use them to provide evidence to the local authority of EP involvement and to formally record psychological advice to be submitted towards statutory assessments.	
56	a record of the pupil views, strengths, areas for support, hypotheses, outcomes and actions	Child voice Strengths Planning
57	To record notes from consultation, to formulate pupil needs and record agreed strategies with key stakeholders.	Record of consultation. Strategies. Pupil needs
58	Casework feedback record	Record
59	Writing of IEPs	IEP support
60	Applying for ehcp	EHCP – further access
61	Most schools request reports in order to provide information for EHC assessment requests. They are happy to receive other information in a less formal presentation e.g. a school visit summary	EHCP
62	As a record of consultation A way to record the most important and salient points about what the child needs. So nobody can say We didn't know. It's down there in black and white.	Record of consultation. Child's needs. Evidence/accountability.
63	Summary of involvement when closing case Applications for specialist services	Record Specialist services
64	Providing schools with an analysis of a situation & reminding them of the actions that we discussed.	Analysis for school Record/reminder
65	I write them.	
66	Previous findings and suggested recommendations.	Strategies
67	Practical support for child	Strategies
68	Detailing agreed actions and strategies for classroom use/access to intervention groups and strategies for parents. Supporting transition. Access to specialist provision.	Planning Collaboration Strategies Transition Specialist provision
69	Just to record a meeting held. Essentially as a more formal version of minutes to ensure that actions agreed are actually implemented.	Record Reminder
70	For support and guidance at school re learning / behaviour strategies,	Strategies Diagnosis Change of placement

	<mark>possibility of a diagnosis or change of placement for pupil.</mark>	
71	For schools to use as evidence that they have engaged in a LA service before pushing out a send child that is seen as a barrier to gaining good league table reports.	Evidence Change of placement
72	Summarising information gathered through consultation and recording the agreed actions so the impact of these can be reviewed at a later date.	Record of consultation. Record Collaboration.
73	Ehcp application	EHCP
74	A lot of EP involvement is due to the school anticipating that a child will go down the statutory route. So it is building a case towards that. EP work and reports are most helpful and useful when we are involved earlier and not at crisis point feeding into the statutory process.	Evidence Statutory assessment
75	Communication and summarising for all parties to a situation. Fulfilling a need to formalise a current position and present possible ways forward because those involved in a situation don't always have the expertise/time to so do. Fulfilling statutory need and expectations.	Record Summarising work Statutory
76	To reflect collaborative forward looking discussions and agreed actions around an identified issue, and to set an expectation that strategies and new ways of working will be reviewed and built upon.	Record Collaboration Strategies Review
77	In my LA schools need an ep report to access any kind of high needs funding. Schools also need an ep report to access statutory assessment for an ehcp. We have unwillingly become gate keepers to resources. The audience of my reports is more often than not a person in the LA who has never met the child.	Funding Statutory assessment/EHCP *Audience
78	Sharing with other professionals, sending off to assessment and exam centres and examination boards so they can make allowances when arranging and marking exams (home education) and sending to DIA.	Accessing resources/services Evidence/record Information sharing
79	Reporting on observations, direct work inc assessments	Record Consultation EHCP

	Consultations EHCP assessments and SEN updates	
80	They are used as evidence to apply for EHCPs	EHCP
81	Due to the way that my service operates I most commonly use the EP report to: - Record background information about the CYP - Maintain a record of Consultation - Record hypotheses - Record agreed actions from Consultation plus further 'recommendations' - Record assessment scores - Sign post to areas of need and provision (This is something that schools and LAs often want to see even though I think that it reverts the EP role back to a gatekeeper role.	Record Recommendations/strategies. Access to provisions
82	Getting recognition of young person's needs and gaining appropriate support for them to access education, training and ultimately employment.	Evidence Gaining support
83	Proving I was there. Providing a summary of thoughts - perhaps of use to future work. Providing information to other professionals that may or may not be used out of context.	Evidence Summary Review Information sharing
84	Plan Do Review cycles	Planning Actions Review
85	To record information gained during a school visit	Record
86	To provide and promote intervention.	Intervention
87	I use the writing process to clarify my own thinking and formulation. Hopefully by the time I send it out it's a document giving a flavour of the child that can be referred back to and actively used by parents, staff and other professionals .	*Reflective tool Record Overview of child/young person. Review
88	Feedback	Information sharing
89	clarification of cognitive levels new and additional strategies and interventions	Cognition levels Strategies/interventions
90	Making decisions about approaches to learning, adaptations in teaching methods and strategies, allocating resources. Providing advice to the Local Authority regarding statutory assessment.	Decision making Strategies Resources Statutory Assessment

91	To my knowledge, my reports are used as a record for setting out a path for support and intervention for a child as well as supporting evidence for application for EHCP.	Record Guidance EHCP
92	I would presume the EP report is most commonly used for the demonstration of evidence of need as part of something such as EHC needs assessment application. Most useful change I feel comes from the quality of the discussion and the report is the evidence to follow up.	Evidence EHCP
93	I write them and use them to inform my future work with young people and to inform my assessments	*Information future work and assessments (EP)
94	for making a written record of assessments and consultations that can be shared with families (including children where appropriate), schools and other professionals. to contribute to EHCP assessment process - there is some tension here because the report is being written for a wide range of audiences - meeting the needs/expectations of all can be challenging.	Record Information sharing EHCP
95	I use other EP reports to gain an understanding of background and progress to date e.g. contextual info and what has been tried and whether this has been successful or not.	*Understanding of child Review *What has previously been tried *Relevance of EP reports for EPs
96	In my day to day practice reports are compiled for a clear purpose. They provide a summary of a discussion for participants in a consultation, they provide feedback from assessments undertaken either as part of an LEA request or because it is considered helpful to the consultation or they may provide a summary of actions/progress to date. A report requested by the LA e.g. statutory advice is a very different document from a report produced as a result of a consultation. You mention strategies - these are not just recorded in a report, they are agreed with the service user and are summarised in a report. You mention psychology in reports - how	Summary of consultation Feedback from assessments. Psychology Strategies Statutory advice *Change

	could I call myself a psychologist if my work was not informed by psychology, my reports typically refer to a concept/theory/construct that helps us make sense of a change issue.	
97	Seeking advice and next steps around supporting a child in school. Accessing further specialist support (including referrals via GP who may require an initial EP report)	Specialist support
98	Working in a SEN school the EP reports appear to be used to devise an Educational Statement for an individual, most Educationalists would then refer to the statement not the EP report.	Statutory advice
99	to feedback to parents and schools and agree a way forward, to inform EHCP assessments and tribunals	Feedback Collaborative planning EHCPs Tribunals
100	The report sets out the current context to enable a shared understanding so that those working with the child have a more informed approach to supporting the child.	Information sharing Collaboration
101	Reminding myself of what I have done and using them as evidence of what has been recommended in order to review with the school if they say they have not put things in place.	Reminder for EP Evidence
102	Record of meetings. Statutory advice.	Record Statutory advice
103	To supplement the advice I had given within my consultations/assessments	Supplement verbal advice
104	I'm an EP, and am therefore the author, so I'm not a user of the report.	*Use of other EP reports?
105	statutory assessment	Statutory assessment
106	As an EP I commonly write reports for statutory work. If I am reading another EP's work (e.g. private EP), I find the background and summary useful, along with the recommendations made.	Statutory work Previous work carried out Context/history
107	Recording purposes. Reviewing progress and response to intervention using the TME (part of our EP reports)	Record Review
108	To make changes to my child's statement so he can access the necessary channels	Statement Access to resources/provisions
109	accessing additional resources for students	Access to resources Signposting

	signposting appropriate interventions and resources clarifying pupils strengths and weaknesses to make a case for referring on to external services	Pupil strengths and weaknesses Access external services
110	AS an EP I often use the report to re-frame thinking about the child into more positive solution focused thinking with research and applied psychological knowledge underpinning recommendations. My SENCO's tell me they use my reports for training and informing staff, they use them to support further involvement from other professionals e.g. OT and SALT, CAMHS Parents use my reports to encourage schools to provide support for their children and to access support from other professionals e.g. Paediatricians, OT, SALT, CAMHS	*Re-frame thinking Psychology Training for schools Involvement from other services/professionals
111	Bringing information from different sources together and providing a holistic overview.	Collaboration Holistic overview
112	Supporting school/family in making changes to the environment or recommending evidence-based interventions	Promoting change Support for school/family Recommendations/strategies/interventions.
113	Recording the discussion held in consultation, recording the child's views and assessment findings	Record – consultation, child's views & assessment findings.
114	Statementing process. 'Evidence' of child's needs, how to meet needs	Statutory process Evidence
115	Only used for the statement. Haven't had an updated report since.	Statement
116	Support strategies and interventions, especially practical strategies. Identifying strengths and changing the narrative from being problem saturated. Exploring psychological factors that can explain behaviours.	Strategies & interventions Strengths Solution focused Psychology
117	To encourage thinking and understanding of the yp and their strengths and challenges	Understanding of C/YP Strengths and challenges
118	It is a record of my involvement around a CYP. This is almost always a consultation record. (I am drawing a distinction here in answering with regard to reports as	Consultation record

	records of consultations, and the more 'traditional' reports I might write as part of statutory or funding work).	
119	Conclusions and recommendations.	Recommendations
120	To apply for an ehcp To further support the child in our setting To reinforce strategies with teaching staff To confirm needs or lack of need with parents/carers	EHCP Support for C/YP Strategies Evidence for parents/carers
121	Apply for funding	Funding
122	Supporting schools to bring about change	Promote change
123	child parent professional	Information
124	I use it as a record of my work with the school - a written reminder of what was formulated and what was agreed. My schools tend to be keen for a report so that they can use it as evidence for getting extra funding - I try really hard to get them round to the idea that this isn't the only purpose of my work, and that my involvement (and the actions we've agreed through it) is part of a graduated response, not a gatekeeping exercise.	Record Reminder for EP Evidence Funding *resistance of gatekeeping role
125	To document agreements and to describe and evidence need	Record Evidence
	Because of my situation the most common use of my report is for a request for special arrangements in examinations at GCSE, A level, degree or professional examinations.	Extra provision
126	To plan actions and interventions. To record some useful information for future reference.	Planning Record
127	As an EP I write this to identify SEN and help teachers to meet the needs of the CYP. The caseworkers who produce the EHCP tend to rely on the EP report as the primary source of information. It is important to be succinct in outcomes as teachers should use this as the beginning of further IEPs. I worry that the information is used by many to calculate hours/ specialist provision and not to inform further teaching.	Identify needs of C/YP Support for teachers EHCP Additional resources/specialist provisions.
128	To reflect the discussion held around supporting a CYP in school at a particular point in time. For holding others to	Current record Accountability Reviewing tool

	account for agreed actions and then to use as a benchmark for reflecting on what worked and what has gotten worse.	
129	As an EP I try to keep my report succinct. I work in an area with significant social issues and many of the families that I work with have difficulties with literacy skills. I think it is important to keep what I write as clear and simple as possible. Where possible I write up work in a format agreed with those involved, often summarising a sequence of work into one document to minimise the amount of written material needed. Person to person communication feels more beneficial, the written report acts as an aide memoir or provides a paper trail / evidence for SEN processes.	Collaboration Summary Record Evidence
130	Helping service users understand the child's needs and to highlight what has been agreed to support the child's needs. I use it as a working document and review actions to explore what has worked/not worked after a period of time.	Highlighting C/YP needs Record of agreed actions Review
131	Evidence of work undertaken	Evidence
132	What I would like to use a report for and what I do use a report for are different. I would like to maintain a consultation style, where my reports cement discussions had and clarify the agreed actions. I feel I am often writing reports for an end purpose e.g. panel for additional support. I also write reports for children and young people which I think brings them into the process but this is often an add on that I can do as a trainee rather than something done by all.	*Resistance of use for document Additional support Reports for C/YP
133	To enable access to LA resources (e.g. through Psychological Advice, Advice for annual reviews, etc)	Access to resources
	Summarising work done including assessment information and ways forward. Clear, lean, concise. Not just a "thinking aloud" narrative.	Summary Planning
134	To ascertain the views of learners To access additional support To promote inclusion	Views of C/YP Access support Promote inclusion & emotional wellbeing of C/YP

	To promote the emotional well-being of cyp	
135	EHC needs assessments	EHCP
136	We hope it is about supporting the child but more than not it is about accessing funding.	*Difference in expectations and reality
137	To have a view on CYP and what has been effective	Monitoring

	Q7. What do you feel are the most useful and least useful parts of the educational psychology report? You can give reasons for your choices if you wish or state anything you feel is missing.	
138	Assessment info, hypotheses and strategies	Assessment info. Hypotheses Strategies
139	Most important Assessment data and clarity around the barriers/difficulties Recommendations that school hasn't already tried and that are within the capabilities of the school. Signposts to other agencies/next steps What's Missing Recommendations regarding most appropriate learning environment or specific strategies that can be used by teachers in the classroom to develop learning	Assessment data Difficulties faced by C/YP Recommendations Signposting Recommendations Specific support to inform teachers in the classroom
140	The most useful is the strategies we have discussed to then be sent home and to school. It's a document that solidified the work the EP does	Strategies
141	Acknowledgement that there are issues that need addressing holds greatest importance for me and having that validation helped us access further support and intervention.	Difficulties faced by C/YP.
142	Steps forward are most useful for teachers as this gives us strategies to use in the classroom to support the pupils and how to manage pupils needs. I feel all information is needed and used in some way in the report if considering future referrals although at the time teachers feel they do not meet background information to support them in the classroom. However from an ALNCo point of view it is important for documentation.	Steps forward Strategies for classroom
143	Useful if strategies to help are included. Too many unexplained terms for Joe Bloggs to follow it.	Strategies

		Jargon
144	Least useful - not accurately recorded parent views, half heard what was being said and made judgements without checking out first. Most useful - inclusion of my child's view.	N - Inaccurate records Judgemental P - C/YP views
145	Helping provide an insight and understanding to the problem and allowing it to see the correct ways forward suited to the individuals.	P - Advice/problem solving Understanding
146	As much information on findings and solutions/processes/signposting However need the school staffs and LA to take positive action otherwise no use	P - Advice
147	Most: Agreed actions I can't think of any parts that are not useful; if they were of no use, I would not include them.	P - Agreed actions
148	Greater emphasis should be given on the child's background and situation, with recognition being given to attachment disorder and the developmental trauma that can occur.	P - More info needed regarding child's background and situation – psychological input with possible challenges as a result
148	Clear instructions for teachers to follow should be included.	P – Clear instructions for teachers
149	Most - strategies	P - Strategies
150	Recommendations are the most and least helpful. Most helpful as they generally support the schools or parents' wishes for further referrals for example iscan, formal assessment. Another helpful feature is they pull all information together and can really help writing a referral to another agency. Least helpful when the recommendations are clearly generic and list what staff have already demonstrated they use in school.	Child specific and new recommendations. Summary
151	Useful - strategies; understanding of specific needs/conditions; positive points	Strategies Understanding of needs Positives
152	The cognitive profile was most useful part to us in recognising what potential there was. The least useful part was comments on very short observations of our child which didn't accurately show difficulties experienced within a school setting.	P - Cognitive profile N – inaccuracy of interpretation
153	I feel the least useful bits are part of the reports which is concluded around non reliable information e.g. somebody who doesn't know the young person too well or a parent who may have mental health issues	N – Inaccuracy Evidently not knowing the C/YP of family
154	Most useful- bringing together all the factors in a psychological formulation written in everyday language. Least useful- woolly recommendations, especially those that have been tried before	P – Summary Psychological underpinning in a reader friendly context. N – Non-specific and already tried recommendations

155	Agreed next steps / plan of action Agreed hopes/outcomes noted, which would make evaluating the implemented strategies easier.	P - Collaborative planning. Desired outcomes.
156	Most useful - summary of strengths and difficulties and strategies that might support development	P - Summary of C/YP strengths and challenges.
	Strategies are useful - but with a joint discussion. Least useful - breakdown of assessment	P – collaboratively agreed strategies. N – assessment results
157	As an Educational Psychologist I do not believe the reports I write are the measure to which I can judge my effectiveness. My effectiveness, noted here as supporting and enabling change and progress in a situation, happen more so during the interactions I have day to day in the job. Primarily changes occur through the process of consultations, rather than the product of consultations (I.e. a record of this).	*Strength is in interactions not report writing.
158	Most useful - conclusion and recommendations Least useful - cognitive assessment results	P – Conclusion and recommendation N – Assessment results
159	Most: a bringing together of information and assessment to inform a positive plan for the future Least: repeating information already available/written by others	P - providing a summary. Positive plan N - repetition
160	Most useful to clarify and reiterate jointly agreed actions that have been identified collaboratively through consultation. Least useful to give didactic advice that has not been discussed, explained or explored.	P – Agreed actions N – Didactic advice
161	Expressing the views of the CYP is very important as well as highlighting strengths and providing a balanced view of the child's needs in relation to their context. Test scores are the least helpful and may lead others reading the report to make judgements.	P – Views of C/YP Balance of strengths and needs. N – Test results
162	Formulation not description- most useful Pupil voice is fundamental (often hear 'too young to give views' etc) Consultation reports are key to bringing about change (rather than just report with recommendations driven solely by EP) Least useful are reports used for gate keeping resources- the actions are rarely carried out effectively.	P – Formulation of information C/YP voice Consultation reports N – Gatekeeping resources
163	Explaining assessments unhelpful Agreed actions helpful	P – Agreed actions N - Assessments
164	I think EP reports are important for reframing the child's needs. It is often useful to use psychology to help professionals or adults working with the child to understand what is influencing the child's behaviour	P – Reframing the C/YP's needs Psychology C/YP voice & views

	and what we can do to promote positive change for the young person. Another important aspect is including the child's voice and views in the report and doing something with their views which influences the outcomes and provision so that it reflects a person centred way of working. In terms of the least useful parts, it may be information that can be found in other reports e.g. OT or SALT. It is important to provide a higher level of analysis and use that information in a way which identifies the child's needs rather than copied verbatim.	N – Information held in other reports (e.g. health)
	Formulation and next steps/ agreed actions are most important aspects of a psychological report in my opinion.	P – Formulation Next steps/agreed actions
165	Most useful is the summary which brings together psychological formulation and explains the 'so what' of the work and what has been agreed to therefore be tried.	P – Psychological formulation. Agreed actions.
166	Holistic view of the child - i.e. using an interactionist perspective and including a consideration of contextual factors rather than just a within child view, including strengths and positives as well as difficulties and needs Schools can often find the strategies section most helpful but it is important for them to understand the psychology behind them too	P – Holistic view of C/YP Balanced strengths and challenges Strategies for schools
167	Most useful: CYP, parent and school views Headings to make reading easier Summary Outcomes/ targets Actions/ next steps Not useful: Repeating previous reports e.g. SALT Full background if commented on already elsewhere Full tables for assessments- Better in appendix section with summary in main body	P - CYP, parent and school views Headings to make reading easier Summary Outcomes/ targets Actions/ next steps N - Repeating previous reports e.g. SALT Full background if commented on already elsewhere Full tables for assessments.
168	Collate Information Offer a formulation Identify needs and suggest best ways to meet need. Reports can sometimes repeat info that's documented elsewhere. I think they can be too long.	P = Formulation Identification of need. Strategies/recommendations. N – Repeating information. Length
169	Most useful: way to convey key information to other professionals not present; to offer alternative ways of seeing a situation especially strengths not just difficulties; to facilitate change by providing an aide memoire of actions discussed to support schools	P – Information sharing Balanced. Record for review Reference for parents.

	actually putting these in place and in later review of what was done and related progress. As a reference for parents when working with schools. Least useful: Large amounts of background detail reiterating previous work. Too many actions so client feels overwhelmed and unable to take any.	N -Extensive background information. Repetition of information already given. Too many actions
170	The language used is often too academic and theory based. Therefore for the majority of parents it makes no sense.	N – Academic language
171	Summary of story so far, strengths to build on, agreed actions, explanations and/or reasons for suggestions	P – Summary Agreed actions
172	Useful in supporting others to understand the child/young person in the context of their family. Useful in identifying what IS working for the child/young person and we can build on this. Useful in providing more information to the referrer (could be views of child/parent, assessment results from psychological testing) and understanding what this means in terms of identifying next steps to help move the situation forward. Least useful parts are lots of jargon, technical language, deficit language.	P – Helping others to understand the C/YP Identifying what works Providing information from intervention. Identifies next steps. N – Jargon Complex language Negative language
173	That it is balanced and focuses on strengths as well as additional support needs. There are differences in the Scottish services e.g. we do not routinely write reports in our service although we did a number of years ago. Assessment is very much a collaborative process and we have processes and systems in place to provide evidence of assessment which is gathered collaboratively.	P - Balanced
174	A holistic and uniquely psychological approach	P – Holistic Psychological
175	Most useful - conclusions, the 'so what' bit and then recommendations. Least useful - large amounts of explanatory text about assessments, statistical information and generic information about what psychologists 'do' or the general aim of assessments not specific to the current case.	P – Conclusion Recommendations N – Large explanation of assessment results. Generic information about what has been done. Not specific to case.
176	Important parts - Highlighting strengths, giving the child a voice, bringing to light information that may not have been considered by others Least useful - long descriptions of assessment results that are difficult for others to interpret	P – Highlights strengths Offers C/YP a voice New or different perspective N – Long description of assessment results. Difficult for others to interpret
177	Bringing together, sometimes a lot of information, from a variety of professionals and ordering it in such a way that it makes the needs of an individual more clear so that ways forward can be found.	P – Amalgamation of information from other professionals.

		Clearly defines individual needs of C/YP Promotes next steps.
178	Most useful: application of psychological theory and/or research to enable others to understand and work with the child in better ways. Least useful: Since the Children and Families Act we (EPs) have been increasingly coerced into writing reports in succinct format without any formulation. This is so that under resourced SEN departments can cut and paste. This puts us in a vulnerable position of being perceived as the EHCP writer/gatekeeper rather than providing psychological advice. Unfortunately EPs are targeted for writing very specific outcomes, unlike other professionals who continue to write reports according to their professional styles, allowing for their unique professional perspective. There is nothing in the COP which says EPs write specific outcomes and other professionals don't. All are expected to. The bullet point style of EP reports makes life easier for SEN departments but takes the psychology out of them and diminishes the unique contribution we make.	P – Application of psychology Helps others understand the C/YP Proposes better ways of working with the C/YP. N – No formulation Lacking psychology Not unique to the EP
179	It really depends on purpose of report. This questionnaire hasn't captured that what is useful in EP report is hugely variable, e.g. Tribunal report very different from consultation or statutory or school visit report	P – Has flexibility Adapted to purpose
180	It depends on the purpose. I complete neuro assessments for a team of psychiatrists hence the tools, results are important but HOW the student approaches the tasks and their views are vital Most reports give woolly vague next targets as they're driven by poor LA funding - I find independent EP reports much more detailed	P – Fit for purpose C/YP views Descriptive
181	Most useful - the ways forward which including strategies and approaches to support the young person's learning, agreed in consultation with school staff and parents. I don't feel that any part of report is 'least useful' as all the information presented serves a purpose or it wouldn't be included.	P - Strategies
182	Most useful- signposting Least useful - time consuming	P – signposting N – time consuming
183	The purpose of the report drives the context, length and style of writing.	
184	Reports are useful as a record of work carried out and the process of writing them can aid development of psychological formulation. I feel that generally schools place a high emphasis on having reports written and	P – Records work carried out Process of writing aids psychological formulation.

	receiving them as a matter of urgency, however reports then generally sit in a folder or used as part of the Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment process. I always find that change or shifting of thinking takes place when I'm involved in consultation or multidisciplinary meetings. I find the pattern of writing a report for every child or young person is not the best use of an EP's time or skills. Sadly, I do not think this is the perception of others due to the process involved in education or misunderstanding of the EP role.	N – Time consuming *Not used
185	I think there are various ways to record EP involvement and it doesn't have to be in a report format. I think it can be very unhelpful if the report is just for a tick box exercise and if it is used to inform strategies and change it is best written in a shorter more focused format. I think the length and detail and quality of 'fact' or narratives will be determined by the length of involvement. Equally I think referring to other professional reports is only valid when their strategies/ formulations need to be reinforced. Lengthy reports are often overwhelming for parents and staff but equally I have had feedback (about lengthy reports) that the child has been described well and the relevant factors have been included to give a holistic story about the child. Finally, pupil voice should be an essential part of our assessment and record keeping and this for me can be the most important part of the process of writing a report - where possible I try to write a shorter version to the young person highlighting the things they have raised.	N – serves as a tick box exercise P – Flexible Incorporates C/YP voice Holistic
186	most useful- data plus data interpretation, ways forward, outline/ summary of meeting with parents and child Least useful- from our parents point of view, the reports can be hard to understand as a result of the necessary technical language.	P – Data with interpretation Actions Summary of involvement N – Technical language
187	Actions and Next steps are useful Lots of narrative around observations (i.e. step by step account) less helpful	P – Actions N – Lots of narrative detailing observation
188	Next steps/ strategies are most useful, as long as these are co-constructed in the consultation.	P – Actions/strategies if co-constructed.
189	Most useful: child's voice and the views of stakeholders including parents and school staff, psychological formulation of why a child may be experiencing difficulties in school, history of concerns, provision and what the school has tried before and how effective this has been. Collaborative outcomes and agreed strategies to meet them are also important and helpful. Less useful parts of reports include predominant focus on	P – C/YP's voice Views of stakeholders Psychological formulation What has been tried previously. Collaborative outcomes and agreed strategies.

	difficulties and positioning difficulties as within-child without due consideration of the ecological systems impacting on children.	N – Predominant focus on difficulties Within child No consideration for eco. Systems.
190	I write records of EP consultation. Where possible, most items will have been discussed in consultation. Therefore, it is not so much the record as the consultation that is important.	
191	Recording agreed strategies from consultation. Concise description of pupil needs and appropriate strategies to support.	P – Agreed strategies from consultation. Description of pupil need.
192	I believe the power of a report is only as good as the consultation you conduct in collaboration with school and parents. So much of our time is spent writing reports with very little understanding as to whether this is the most efficacious method of feedback. Often, reports are valued as an access resource for services rather than a tool for change. I believe we have to support our colleagues in SEND and schools to recognise what research tells us about 'high quality feedback' and reaffirm our role as change agents rather than diagnosticians.	N – Time spent writing Gatekeeping
193	Most useful- formulation and strategies Least useful- assessment scores without triangulating	P – Formulation Strategies N – Assessment scores alone
194	The most useful part must be the outlining of the child / young person's needs and strategies to move the young person / child forward. However EP reports are used for a wide variety of purposes and this needs to be remembered. Reports must be adapted to the purpose for which they have been requested, for example a report for an L.A. SEN panel needs to be succinct outlining need. A report for EHC plan assessment needs to be longer and more detailed. Some Las want info included which could be better provided by the school e.g. levels / grades. Ideally EP reports should focus on psychology but we often have to include other information	P – Outline of C/YP's needs Strategies Flexible Psychological
195	It is most useful when EPs are selective with what they include. So, sometimes background information is relevant, but sometimes it is really not. It depends on the case but I hate it when there is loads of irrelevant background info which is not necessary to include, especially in ongoing or complex cases where there have been many reports written and the same information is reported over again in each one.	P – Flexible Individual Assessment results with interpretation. Strategies – new and realistic. N – Irrelevant background info. Repetition of information

	The most useful part is the assessment results, but ONLY when interpretation is offered. Strategies can be useful but only if they are realistic and if they are new ideas.	
196	Helpful-Plans for support Recommendations of strategies to try Offers of further involvement Unhelpful-Regurgitated information from other reports or referrals Unexplained assessment information	P – Plans Recommendations/strategies Offers of further involvement N – Repeated information Unexplained assessment information.
197	The most useful part is an analysis by the EP - their professional opinion based on the evidence gathered during the assessment - which leads into associated recommendations. The least useful aspect is copious description under the CoP headings and when outcomes are structured as if in an EHCP such that they are more about wording than real, accessible next steps & provision is formulaic under each of them.	P – EP professional opinion/analysis. Recommendations N – Copious description under CoP headings Outcomes that are not realistic or accessible.
198	Summary and next steps. Pinpointing solution focused, practical actions. Helping explain alternative viewpoints. Not sure of the least useful... Any info that's just repeated I suppose... Personal details etc.	P – Summary Next steps Solutions focused & practical actions. Alternative viewpoint. N – Repeated information.
199	Most important:- Formulation, co-constructed outcomes & agreed next steps (to feed into assess, plan, do, review cycles). Least important:- Repeating information that could be found elsewhere, e.g. SaLT assessments.	P – Formulation Co-constructed actions N – repetition of information that can be found elsewhere.
200	Background - no one else collates this thoroughly. Child voice Results Interpretation Action linked to strategies at different levels and different audiences. Least useful-outcomes as dictated by Las purely for EHCP.	P – Background C/YP voice Results Interpretation Action linked strategies that are accessible. N – Dictated outcomes
201	Most useful - Agreed actions and strategies. Least useful - spending too much time on concerns/issues.	P – Agreed actions & strategies. N – Focus on concerns/issues
202	Most useful - record of strategies collaboratively agreed by school / parents to hold individuals accountable	P – Strategies collaboratively agreed.

	Least useful - lists of areas of concern that do not provide any additional concerns from the key change issue. Background info can be useful for key info or life events that may contribute towards a child's psychological well-being but this should be kept short wherever possible	Background (when succinct and relevant) N – Irrelevant concerns
203	There are often so many strategies/recommendations that it becomes overwhelming for school staff. The context is the most important part. Often paediatricians make diagnoses without any regard for the family context or history. By setting this out it makes people consider the relational nature of behaviour and well being	P – Context and history N – Large number of recommendations/strategies
204	Most useful are psychological formulation and explicit reference to hypotheses to help develop/articulate the shared understanding of the child's needs. Least useful are lengthy background sections, however, summary of relevant history is helpful. I think an EP record is a helpful summary to share the information gathered and resulting agreed actions but I think it is the process that is most important in shifting thinking/perceptions/practice.	P – Psychological formulation Hypotheses Record of information shared and actions. N – lengthy background sections.
205	Most useful, is it evidence where a child is at so that it can be used as a measure of progress and evidence base strategies. But also, it is useful when it involves a teacher with Poor teaching as it allows me to flesh out the strategies. I have gone as far as redesigning a lesson or task and using that in a strategy and using that to illustrate my recommendations Least useful...this is difficult because the usefulness of reports vary depending on the school and the individual child. EP reports on children in early years isn't always useful as the main aim is tracking their progress. They are less focused on strategies and at that age they involve more health professionals that offer treatment/therapy. Leaving nurseries with strategies doesn't feel as effective.	P – Current overview to allow for review. Illustrated recommendations N – EYs reports

	Child's voice of a 4 year old is not particularly useful if the they have sever learning difficulties.	
206	Clear succinct co-constructed strategies and collaborative development of outcomes are helpful. I don't think we can always say lengthy reports are unhelpful or short ones better, it is more about being clear and accessible and to demonstrate that the EP has supported thinking around positive steps to change. The language we use to reframe concerns and problems while being respectful of the perspective of others is key. Ensuring that young people's views are used to consider what is possible, staff views on what is do-able and achievable and hearing the view of those with parental responsibility are further key elements. Our written advice should reflect our aim to support others to have the confidence to implement courses of action that will lead to sustainable change and to be motivated to become actively interested in what is working well and curious to try out new ways of working.	P – Strategies (clear, co-constructed and succinct) Reframing Voice of C/YP, parent and school staff.
207	Most useful- background info, strengths, summary of concerns, explanations of direct work, strategies/further actions Least useful- technical assessment data tables (can be summarized elsewhere)	P – Background info. Strengths. Explanation of involvement. Strategies. N – Technical assessment data tables.
208	Useful-record of strategies and consultation points discussed together in consultation Least useful-assessment numerical scores	P – Strategies Record of consultation N – Assessment scores.
209	As an EP, the most important aspects of the report for me are: maintaining a record of a consultation/other meeting; utilising psychological theory to explore concerns and hypotheses and relaying these in an accessible manner so promote an understanding of need; inclusion of the voice of the child; including next steps based on solution focussed psychology - providing that these were discussed during the consultation/other similar meeting. However, I also think that the most important / least important parts entirely depend on perceptions and different systemic issues and, unfortunately, there are some 'important' aspects of an EP report which I, as an EP, am aware of but do not necessarily agree with. For example, access to services, provision, panel, certain health services etc is, I'm aware, sometimes predominantly dependent on an 'EP report' being	P – Record of involvement Psychological theory Exploration of hypotheses Accessible to readers Promote understanding of need. Voice of C/YP Next steps (solution- focused) N – Assessment scores (for EP)

	present. Very often then, scores are looked for which would lead to another â€˜important â€˜ part of the EP report for others which I do not necessarily feel is important myself.	
210	List of recommendations for care most useful	P – Recommendations
211	Whether or not something in a report is useful/effective/important depends entirely upon the child and the context. I think the maxim "the report is not the intervention" should be borne in mind and it is the dialogue with young people, parents and schools that brings about change. The report *merely* provides a record of that which may or may not be useful in yet unforeseen future contexts. I think far more important things are the EP relationship with those involved (be that long term or very brief); the involvement of adults and young people in the problem solving process; the adoption (or otherwise) of a person-centred approach in determining goals.	P – Child and context dependant. N – Does not hold the same level as importance as intervention/involvement.
212	Useful: Basis of report, Observations/Assessments/ Parent and CYP's views, Outcomes and strategies Not useful: Background, assessment results tables, explanation of assessment tools	P – Reason for involvement. Observation detail Assessment detail C/YP and parent views Outcomes/strategies N – Background Assessment table results Explanation of assessment tools.
213	Most useful-strategies for teachers and parents to use i.e. how do they move forward to best support the young person Least useful- It depends on the intended outcome. What is not useful is writing a report that does not address the initial concern or the reason why the report was commissioned in the first place	P – Strategies N – Not addressing initial concern or reason for involvement.
214	The most useful are identification of needs and support required to inform intervention. From an EP perspective I feel that the whole of the report is useful but appreciate that the origins / creators of assessments used may not be so useful for others.	P – Identification of needs Support required
215	Sometimes the existence of an EP report of any quality and length is enough to remove barriers to accessing further resources or services so sadly sometimes this is what it is used for. I think the report should be clear and simple enough for anyone to pick up and feel they get a 'feel' for the child and how they can support them, as it will be concerned and involved people who will both read the report and work with the child.	P – Offers an understanding of the C/YP. Advice/support

216	Summary	Summary
217	Most useful - ; clarification of strengths and needs; strategies and interventions least useful - background - this will be elsewhere e.g. in referral forms and the request for EHCP pack	P - Strengths & needs Strategies & interventions N - Background
218	Clarifying concerns and priorities with regard to children and young people. Identifying relative strengths and weaknesses. Suggesting evidence based strategies for promoting development and learning.	P – Clarifying concerns & priorities (C/YP) Strengths and weaknesses Strategies
219	Agreed actions are the most useful. These are necessarily done in consultation with parents and teachers. The child's strengths balanced with the child's needs are also a necessity even in a short consultation record. The psychological formulation and hypothesis (summary paragraph) is extremely useful for pulling everything together and providing a quick reference for other professionals.	P – Agreed actions Balanced strengths and needs. Psychological formulation and hypothesis (summary)
220	Useful - Background info, assessment info, summary of discussions held, strategies/actions agreed jointly Not useful - lists of recommendations not jointly agreed	P – Background Assessment information Summary Co-constructed strategies/actions N – Recommendations (not agreed)
221	most useful bits are the summary of strengths and needs, the formulation of the issues and the suggested ways forward - these might be outcomes, strategies, involvement of other agencies etc. - essentially the report is a record of a solution focussed process	P – Strengths and needs Formulation Actions Solution focused process.
222	An EP report is a tricky thing as it is different things to different people. For parents and pupils it needs to be warm and positive and sensitive in terms of information conveyed - it's mostly a written document of what has happened. for schools it is something they can use as part of an evidence pack to request extra funding/alternative provision - it's a means to an end and they want it to be factual and have detail for a panel to act upon. The panel want assessment information to cross reference against criteria and it helps to summarise a background (lengthy process for the EP). The EP (or me in particular) probably doesn't want to write the report at all, the main focus being on facilitating change and this can be done through verbal consultation process and no need for report. However, it is useful to have a brief report that can be referred back to in subsequent consultations to check what was	P – Warm and positive (parents and pupils) Factual and detailed (schools) Brief (EPs) *suggests EPs do not want to be writing reports as it takes away from direct work.

	discussed previously and whether the agreed actions have been carried out.	
223	I think that the formulation and next steps/strategies are the most useful parts, whereas long descriptions of the assessment process are less helpful.	P – Formulation Strategies

N – Long descriptions of assessment process. |
| 224 | most useful - interpretation of information/discussion and recommendations

least useful - some background information | P – Interpretation of involvement. Recommendations.

N – Some background information. |
| 225 | To provide a formulation - based on the evidence collected - of the child's current situation. This includes both strengths and needs. | P – Formulation Strengths and needs. |
| | The most important thing is that it encapsulates useful information. The report is just as much for myself (to remember what I have done what I know about the case) as it is for the school, young person, family. I also think it is very important that it focuses on solutions, recommendations, next steps, otherwise it is pointless. I also think it is key that strategies/recommendations are linked with the why, e.g. visual timetable, in order to improve the child's understanding of routines.

I think they are least useful when they only state all the things the young person struggles with. I don't see the point of that.
I think is important to consider that the key involvement of an EP should be done through consultation, through real conversations rather than with a piece of paper, so anything that is on a report should have been discussed with school/family and the young person. | P – Encapsulates relevant information. Solution focused Recommendations (with reasons) Actions

N – Focus on challenges. |
| 226 | The summary and agreed actions are important because most of the time this is all anyone will read. Recommendations that haven't been jointly agreed are not useful at all, and just create a view of EPs that we write unrealistic stuff down that changes nothing for the child.
We desperately need to move away from this view of our profession, and use our time to show how the psychology can really make a difference, and that simply isn't through writing thousands of words down that get put straight into a filing cabinet.

Writing long in-depth reports is in my view largely a waste of time, that could be better spent effecting change in schools, by actually working with children, teachers and parents. In an ideal world maybe teachers | P – Summary Agreed actions (collaborative) For statutory purposes As part of 'plan, do, review' cycle.

N – Recommendations (not co constructed) Long in-depth reports

*sense that reports are not read. *time can be used more effectively |

	would have plenty of time to read lovely narrative descriptions of children's lives, but they don't. The consultation process is in my view the best way to effect change around individual children. A shift in emphasis away from the report is needed in my opinion. The meaningful work is the psychological discussion which leads to a jointly action plan that everyone can sign up to - the report is just a record of that meeting. I find that if this there is a transparent discussion with parents and schools about the focus of the work and how it might help, then the report is no longer a big issue (in my experience).

Reports are however sometimes a necessary part of statutory processes - e.g. to go to EHC or placement panel. They can also help the 'plan, do, review' process by providing a record of previous work. | |
| 227 | Useful: to reinforce what was said in the meetings, to go through strategies in more details so people feel confident in implementing them in school, to unpick what psychologically could be going on for a young person | P – Summary of EP involvement. Strategies (in detail) Psychological perspective. |
| 228 | As an EP, I write many different types of report, some long, some short; some for the child, some for professionals; some recording consultations, some recording assessment over time. My method of recording these varies by context and purpose, so I found it hard to give a single answer. I believe the most useful part is the part where we express the CYP's viewpoint and integrate it into the practical implications. | P – Flexible C/YP's views Practical implications |
| 229 | most helpful background history child's views areas of concern assessment results

I think psychological theory is missing | P - background history C/YP's views Areas of concern Assessment results

N – No psychological theory |
| 230 | Most useful - psychological formulation and the young person's voice Least useful - lots of descriptive information | P – Psychological formulation C/YP's voice.

N – Lots of descriptive information. |
| 231 | Most Useful - documenting the action plan co-created with the problem owner, documenting information collected for other professionals, summarising the current situation alongside psychology theory exploring hypotheses. | P – Collaborative actions Documentation of involvement. Summary of current situation. Psychological theory exploring hypothesis. |

	Least Useful - overly detailed observation notes or dense information without a summary - though this is rare.	N – Detailed observation notes. No summary
232	They need to be understanding of individual circumstances. They should keep parents updated on changes and delays. Least important is sarcastic remarks and undermine a parents worries.	P – Individual to Y/CP's circumstances. N – Non professionalism
233	results tables summary and recommendations	P – Summary Recommendations N – Results tables
234	I feel that an EP report tells a story of the child starting with background information. Everything in the report should be useful but the feedback I get is that the most useful to SENCO's and parents is the recommendations, followed by the hypothesis where one's psychological knowledge is applied. The least useful to parents is often the assessment section but SENCO's find that useful.	P – Recommendations Hypothesis – underpinned by psychological knowledge N – Assessment section
235	I believe the most useful part is the psychological theory underpinning the EP's work and hypotheses... but in my experience this is rarely given space on report templates. The least useful part is trickier. I'm wary of test scores, but know they have their place.	P – Psychological theory N – Test scores (but recognise some purpose)
236	Very dependent on the child and his/her needs. Strategies and evaluation of the inpact of these (review) are the most useful area in my opinion.	P – Strategies Review
237	Agreed actions that have been discussed and agreed during the consultation are the most useful. A list of recommended strategies are least useful. A summary section detailing hypotheses based in psychological theory is useful to support readers in understanding the child's needs.	P – Agreed actions Summary detailing hypotheses, based on psychological theory. N – Recommended strategies.
238	Assessment results. Outline of child's needs and what needs to be provided to support child.	P – Assessment results Outline of child's needs Support needed.
239	Only ever had one and it was not useful as it contained lots of terms which weren't explained. Links to explanations would have helped.	P – links to explain psychological terms/theory N – Unexplained terms
240	Most useful sections are psychological explanations, background and support strategies. Least useful are overly long accounts of observations and lots of tables of results.	P – Psychological explanations Background Support strategies N – Long accounts of observations. Lots of tables of results

241	To provide further psychological perspectives and positive reframing or empathy building is most useful. Conversation is more powerful. Many reports don't even get read or referred to. Good luck please let us know how you get on through epnet!	P – Psychological perspective Positive reframing Empathy building N – Reports not being read
242	The story of the yp, putting the issues in an eco-systemic context	P – Story of C/YP Eco systemic context.
243	For me, the most useful parts are a situation summary and the record of actions agreed as part of the consultation process. The least useful part? I hope this won't sound facetious, but I wouldn't include anything that wasn't useful.	P – Situation summary Record of actions - collaborative
244	Young person views and recommendations.	P – C/YP views Recommendations
245	Most useful is the school based strategies. Least useful is theory	P – School based strategies N - Theory
246	Most-child's views, different perspective, holistic view of child, strength based focus Least-extensive background information	P – C/YP views Different perspective Holistic Strength based N – extensive background information.
247	not useful summarising information found elsewhere	N – Repetitive information
248	Most useful - a record of actions already agreed in consultation. I would not see the EP report as the 'goal' of my work with a child/school - instead it is a record of what has been done in person (i.e. the information that was gathered, the formulation which was developed through discussion with staff and/or parents, actions agreed). Least useful - I try not to include anything in my reports that aren't useful...! I suppose it would be a long list of classroom strategies or suggested actions which nobody has agreed to in person. I don't think these tend to be put into place, especially the classroom strategies that need to be carried out by a class teachers/TA (who may not even get to see the report).	P – record of agreed actions Record of intervention N – Long list of classroom strategies *class teachers/Tas may not receive report. Actions that are not collaboratively agreed
249	I think EP reports have the potential to be extremely useful as a document, however I do not believe they are always passed on to the people delivering support I.e. I think they stay in a draw with the SENCo. When the child moves up a year, often the new teacher has no understanding of previous discussions	*barrier – believed that reports aren't passed on to relevant people.

250	I am now retired and work for parents and individual adults rather than schools. After an assessment I now do an immediate verbal discussion. I then complete a draft report that I ask them to read carefully to correct any inaccuracies or mis-information. They then either contact me by phone or email with any comments they may wish to make or areas that they feel need a change of emphasis. I can then revise things accordingly. I feel that this makes it much more of a joint effort	*collaborative writing – immediate verbal discussion; draft report; feedback from recipients, amendments if necessary; final report.
251	Most useful - agreed actions and developing a way forward. Sometimes it's helpful to include detailed background, but that depends on the concern. A record of strategies and interventions tried and in place and attainment levels. When appropriate the voice of the child too. Less useful - very long detailed reports that schools do not read. Sometimes there is a place for a longer report when evidence is required to refer on to another service.	P – Agreed actions Plan Background (case dependent) What has been tried and tested. Voice of C/YP – when appropriate. N – Very long & detailed (some exceptions) *assumption that it is not read by school when long.
252	Within the introduction we give a formulation linking the presenting concerns with primary needs. I believe that this can help to give an understanding of why the CYP has SEN. this should be the most useful part in terms of beginning to move forward. The least useful parts are very individual. However, generally this can often be the standardised assessment results. Some put too much emphasis upon the results rather than the engagement with class learning or individual work with the EP.	P – Formulation Understanding of C/YP N – Standardised assessment results
253	Most useful is a copy of the agreed actions to come out as a result of discussions with the child and those concerned. This becomes a point of reference for where the situation was before change began. Least useful depends on the person reading the report. I personally find that being able to see the formulation and background helps me to understand the thinking that was going on when we were holding discussions. I doubt schools and families feel the same way, but other professionals may also value this insight.	P – Agreed actions (collaborative)
254	Useful - offering an overview of background, strengths, needs and provision and how these all interact / overlap. Least useful - how the report is distributed and often missed by the very people it is intended to support! I have lost count of the number of times I have visited teachers following a report being shared with school only to find that they have not seen it!	P – Background Strengths & needs N – Not received by intended audience.

255	I feel the most useful part for schools is the agreed actions so that the service users have direction for what to try. The least helpful is the assessment results if they do not include a clear interpretation and the implications for support for the child.	P – Agreed actions. N – Assessment results (not well explained)
256	Formulation and recommendations	P – Formulation Recommendations
257	Most useful: Providing a space for parents and young people's voices and lived experiences to be heard. Working record of agreed strategies. Re-framing perspectives held of a child Least: Reports that relate to access of provision and potentially put EPs in a gatekeeper role. Prescriptive element of statutory reports that dictate the writing style and direction or a report. Not having a single audience makes it difficult to target the report. I often worry it becomes inaccessible to some parties. Long reports that no one reads - length sometimes needed to cover needs etc appropriately but we are told only the summary will be read.	P – C/YP voice Parent voice Collaborative strategies Re-framing N – Promoting gatekeeper role. Prescriptive in the way it's written. Length
258	Useful - psychological formulation, advocation, documenting Least useful - extensive background and contact information when this is not relevant to current situation	P – Psychological formulation Voice of child Record N – Extensive background Information not relevant to the current situation
259	Most useful = insight and understanding plus co-produced ways forward, rooted in evidence Least useful = loads of narrative about what was done, what was seen.	P – Collaborative actions Insight & understanding Evidence based N – Lengthy descriptive text.
260	Most useful - to identify the next steps for a learner; to identify appropriate outcomes; and to accurately represent their views. Least useful - to label learners; and for the report to be used as a 'tick-box' exercise to gain additional resources/a statutory assessment	P – Next steps/actions Identify appropriate outcomes. Voice of C/YP N – Labels Tick box exercise for additional resources/statutory assessment.
261	Most useful; summarising key strengths, aspirations and barriers to achieving desired outcomes and recording agreed strategies / approaches or outlining provision for EHCP.	P – Strengths aspirations and barriers to achieving outcomes. Agreed strategies

		N – Lengthy Psychological jargon
	Least useful; long descriptions of observations etc, use of psychological jargon	
	Least useful - narrative, extensive detail about what was seen without evaluation or synthesis Most useful- details of strengths, what's working and recommendations	P – Strengths What is working Recommendations N – Lengthy Descriptive
262	Formulation and agreed actions	P – Formulation Agreed actions