



**School staffs' views regarding transgender pupils and the role of the  
Educational Psychologist.**

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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 a rationale for the research study. Key literature is presented and critically reviewed, leading to the identification of a research gap regarding the challenges that school staff encounter when working with, or supporting transgender pupils and a lack of guidance for how EPs can best support school staff. An overview and rationale for empirical research questions are also provided.

Part II, the empirical study provides a brief overview of the literature discussed in Part I in order to provide a succinct background to the research study. Following which, the methodology for this mixed-methods research study is described, as is data obtained from Phase 1 (Online Questionnaires) and Phase 2 (Semi-structured interviews). In Phase 1, 54 school staff responses were obtained and in Phase 2, 7 interviews with school staff were obtained. Data for phase 1 is outlined and illustrated in Appendix 2 and qualitative data gathered from phase 2 is discussed and illustrated within the study. Qualitative data (Phase 2) was analysed through the process of thematic analysis; key themes, subthemes, 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 reflective account provides critical reflections on a number of different elements of the research. A critical account of the methodology, including research paradigms, data collection and data analysis are provided, in addition to reflections regarding ethical issues. The second part of this reflective account focuses on the contribution to knowledge and considerations for future research. Finally, the third section provides a brief personal reflection in relation to the research process and how this has impacted the professional development of the researcher.

## Researcher position statement

The rationale for pursuing this topic for my doctoral thesis initially stemmed from a university assignment which aimed to explore frameworks for practice. For this assignment, I decided to explore frameworks which could be used to underpin Educational Psychologists (EPs) work with schools to support pupils who identify as transgender. An exploration of the literature during this assignment highlighted a lack of research regarding the role of the EP in relation to the topic of transgender. I felt this to be surprising given that research in relation to the school experiences of transgender pupils highlighted that education environments remained largely hostile for transgender pupils, as they experience more marginalisation and bullying in comparison to their peers (McGuire et al, 2010; Stonewall 2017; Ullman 2017). The wider research also implicated teachers in the marginalisation of transgender pupils (Stonewall, 2017; Jones et al, 2016; McBride & Schubotz, 2017) and over the course of this assignment I was left with numerous unanswered questions regarding why there may be a lack of acceptance in relation to minority groups within the school systems and what factors were contributing towards negative pupil and staff attitudes and beliefs.

During this assignment, I became interested in the discourse around 'transgender', as a cisgender, heterosexual female and as someone who believes in inclusivity and freedom to self-identify, I wondered what it was about transgender that made it more controversial for others and potentially more challenging for teachers and peers. Furthermore, it seemed that the topic of 'transgender' was being frequently discussed and debated within news articles, broadcast as part of television series and appeared to elicit polarised opinions. As a result, I found myself talking to other EPs and TEPs about this and I was surprised by the variety of responses as to whether supporting schools with concerns and issues relating to the topic of transgender was part of our remit as EPs. As a trainee EP, my understanding of the role to date was to bring about positive change through the application of psychology, to work with and within school systems, at multiple levels and to advocate for the CYP for whom we are involved with. Therefore, on a personal level, I found it difficult to reason why supporting schools in relation to the topic of transgender would be different to any other work we undertake. However, literature searches undertaken during this assignment indicated that there was limited research which outlined how EPs could work with schools in relation to this topic, and more specifically what support schools felt they needed; it was from these beginnings that this thesis topic developed.

Additionally, as part of my training I have been encouraged to use the Constructionist Model of Informed and Reasoned Action (COMOIRA) (Gameson & Rhydderch, 2008) to inform my practice. COMOIRA (Gameson & Rhydderch) puts Social Constructionism, Systemic Thinking, Enabling Dialogue and Reasoned Action Informed by Psychology at its core. Therefore, as a trainee, who is currently developing their practice and conscious of making sure that advice and work undertaken with schools is informed and reasoned, I was unsure what research I would use to inform my practice, given the limited research regarding the role of the EP and the topic of transgender.

Social Constructionism highlights the importance of practitioners engaging with individuals, groups and organisations in ways which help to explore and make sense of another's constructions (Gameson & Rhydderch, 2008). Given that wider research which has explored the views of transgender pupils had implicated teachers in their negative school experiences, it felt important to me to use this research as an opportunity to better understand the 'lived realities' and constructions of school staff in relation to supporting transgender pupils. My hope for this research was that exploring school staff's views and opinions would provide greater clarity in regards to what role might be appropriate for EPs to undertake within the school system to support the inclusivity of transgender pupils.

What I have valued about my training thus far, is that it has encouraged me to put social constructionism at the core of my practice, by doing so I acknowledge that while I do not view it to be challenging when others self-identify beyond the binary genders of male and female, I am aware that others may be likely to do so for reasons that may be felt to be valid within their own context. As a trainee EP who currently has no experience of working with transgender pupils and who is hoping to work collaboratively with key stake holders (such as teachers), I acknowledge that it would not be helpful for me to simply position any views which are oppositional to mine as inappropriate, or to devalue the negative discourses which may surround the topic within the school environment. As such, the aim of this research, on both a practical and personal level was to give voice to the staff who have had experiences working with and supporting transgender pupils in order to gain a better understanding of how EPs can facilitate change in a meaningful way.

## Table of Contents

### **PART I: Literature Review**

1.0	Introduction	Page 2
1.1	Structure of the Narrative Literature Review	Page 2
1.2	Search Terms and Sources	Page 3
1.2.2	Inclusion and exclusion criteria	Page 4
2.0	Transgender and a global landscape	Page 4
2.1	The research context and a welsh perspective	Page 5
2.2	What is transgender?	Page 7
2.3	Why 'other'?	Page 8
2.4	The consequences of being seen as 'other' both within the UK and globally	Page 10
2.5	What legislation protects transgender individuals?	Page 12
3.0	Exploration of school environments for transgender pupils: What are the key issues?	Page 14
3.1	Bullying, not seeing school as a safe place and impact on mental health	Page 15
3.2	Bullying, poorer academic and education outcomes	Page 16
3.3	Lack of support from staff and feeling alone	Page 18
3.4	The importance of teacher support	Page 19
4.0	Bioecological Systems Theory	Page 20
4.1	What is needed at the microsystem level	Page 21
4.2	What is needed in the mesosystem	Page 24
4.3	What is needed at the exosystem level	Page 26
5.0	Challenges for teachers	Page 29
5.1	What are the main challenges?	Page 29
5.2	What do teachers feel would be helpful?	Page 34
6.0	Summary of literature review and implications for the role of the EP	Page 39
6.1	Rationale considering Wales	Page 42
	References	Page 44

### **PART II: Empirical Study**

1.0	Abstract	Page 56
2.0	Introduction	Page 57
2.1	Terminology and Defining Transgender	Page 57
2.2	Challenges for Transgender pupils within the school community	Page 59
2.3	Protective factors	Page 60
2.4	Barriers to inclusive practice	Page 61
2.5	What is needed to help increase school based support	Page 62

2.6	Is there a role for EPs?	Page 63
3.0	Research Questions	Page 64
4.0	Methodology	Page 64
4.1	Ontology and Epistemology	Page 64
4.2	Overall Research Design	Page 65
4.3	Phase 1- Online Questionnaire	Page 66
4.3.1	Rationale	Page 66
4.3.2	Phase 1 Design	Page 66
4.3.3	Summary of online responses	Page 67
4.4	Phase 2- Semi-Structured Interviews	Page 69
4.4.1	Rationale and data collection	Page 69
4.4.2	Recruitment method and Participants	Page 70
4.5	Ethical considerations	Page 72
4.6	Method of Qualitative Analysis: Thematic Analysis	Page 73
5.0	Findings for RQ1	Page 75
5.1	Theme 1: Language	Page 77-80
5.2	Theme 2: Implications of not feeling knowledgeable	Page 81-85
5.3	Theme 3: Challenges within school systems	Page 86-94
5.4	Theme 4: The Challenges of transitioning	Page 94-102
5.5	Theme 5: Balancing Act	Page 102-107
5.6	Theme 6: Lack of information sharing	Page 107-110
6.0	Findings for RQ2: What types of support do teachers feel would be useful to receive?	Page 110
6.1	Theme 1: A need for whole school training	Page 111-115
6.2	Theme 2: Information for all	Page 115-119
6.3	Theme 3: Need for Expert Advice	Page 120-123
6.4	Theme 4: Need for transgender friendly schools	Page 123-126
7.0	Findings for RQ3: What role might be appropriate for Educational Psychologists to undertake?	Page 127
7.1	Theme 1: To work systemically to develop transgender friendly schools	Page 127-131
7.2	Theme 2: EP as an advice giver	Page 132-134
7.3	Theme 3: Working at an individual level	Page 134-136
7.4	Theme 4: Varying constructions of the EP role	Page 136-140
8.0	Discussion	Page 140
8.1	RQ1: What are the most prevalent issues for teachers in Wales in regards to supporting transgender pupils?	Page 141-144
8.2	RQ2: What types of support do teachers feel would be useful to receive?	Page 144-148
8.3	RQ3: What role might be appropriate for Educational Psychologists to undertake?	Page 148-151
8.4	Implications for practice	Page 152-155
8.5	Limitations and future research	Page 155-156

9.0	Conclusion	Page 157
	References	Page 158

### PART III: Critical Review

1.0	Introduction	Page 166
2.0	Research Development	Page 166
2.1	Inception of research topic	Page 166
2.2	Gaps in the literature	Page 168
3.0	Research Paradigm	Page 170
3.1	Ontology and Epistemology	Page 170
4.0	Methodology	Page 172
4.1	Design	Page 172
4.2	Participants and recruitment	Page 175
5.0	Axiology	Page 178
6.0	Data Analysis: Thematic Analysis	Page 178
7.0	Value of the study	Page 180
7.1	Implications and considerations for EP practice	Page 180
7.2	Areas for future research	Page 182
8.0	Impact upon my personal development/ Contribution to knowledge as a researcher	Page 183
	References	Page 185

### List of Tables

Table 1	Search terms and articles generated	See Appendix 1: Page 189-190
Table 2	Ethical considerations for Phase 1: Online Questionnaire	See Appendix 2: Page 191-200
Table 3	Recruitment and interview process	Part II: Page 70-71
Table 4	Participant demographics phase 2	Part II: Page 71
Table 5	Ethical consideration for Phase 2: Semi-structured interviews	Part II: Page 72-73
Table 6	Research activity timeline and details of <i>data analysis based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach.</i>	Appendix 8: Page 209-214
Table 7	Transcript and coding example	Appendix 9: Page 215-221
Table 8	Example of candidate theme table for RQ1, Theme 1.	Appendix 10: Page 222
Table 9	Example of candidate theme table for RQ1, Theme 3.	Appendix 10: Page 223



Table 10	<i>Theme Table example for RQ1, Theme 1 (Language)</i>	Appendix 11: Page 224-227
Table 11	Details of pseudonyms given to participants	Part II: Page 75
Table 12	Overview of themes and subthemes for RQ1	Part II: Page 76
Table 13-15	Example quotes for RQ1- Theme 1	Part II: Page 78-80
Table 16-19	Example quotes RQ 1- Theme 2	Part II: Page 82-85
Table 20-24	Examples quotes RQ1- Theme 3	Part II: Page 87-94
Table 25-30	Examples quotes RQ1- Theme 4	Part II: Page 95-102
Table 31-33	Example quotes RQ1 – Theme 5	Part II: Page 104-107
Table 34-36	Example quotes RQ1- Theme 6	Part II: Page 107-110
Table 37	Overview of themes and subthemes for RQ2	Part II: Page 110
Table 38-40	Examples of quotes RQ2- Theme 1	Part II: Page 111-115
Table 41-44	Example quotes RQ2- Theme 2	Part II: Page 116-119
Table 45-47	Examples of quotes RQ2- Theme 3	Part II: Page 120-123
Table 48-49	Examples of quotes RQ2- Theme 4	Part II: Page 124-126
Table 50	Overview of themes and subthemes for RQ3	Part II: Page 127
Table 51-55	Example quotes RQ3- Theme 1	Part II: Page 128-131
Table 56-58	Example quotes RQ3- Theme 2	Part II: Page 132-134
Table 59-60	Examples of quotes RQ3-Theme 3	Part II: Page 135-136
Table 61-64	Examples of quotes RQ3- Theme 4	Part II: Page 137-140
Table 65	Key areas of focus for training	Part II: Page 145
Table 66	Considerations for how EPs can work at different levels within the school system	Part II: Page 148
Table 67	Implications for practice	Part II: Page 152-155
Table 68	Participant demographics	Part III: Page 176

## List of Appendices

Appendix 1	Search Terms	Page 189-190
Appendix 2	Additional information in relation to Phase 1: Online Questionnaire	Page 191-200
Appendix 3	Information consent form for Phase 1	Page 201

Appendix 4	Interview schedule for semi-structured interviews- Phase 2	Page 202-203
Appendix 5	Gatekeeper E-mail (Director of Education) - Phase 2	Page 204
Appendix 6	Information/consent forms sent to Head Teacher, with a view to be shared with staff. (Phase 2)	Page 205-207
Appendix 7	Debrief form following semi-structured interviews.	Page 208
Appendix 8	Research activity timeline and details of <i>data analysis based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach</i>	Page 209-214
Appendix 9	Example of analysis: Stages 2- 3	Pages 215-221
Appendix 10	Example of candidate theme tables (stage 4 of analysis).	Pages 222-223
Appendix 11	Example of complete Theme Table for RQ1, Theme 1 'Language' (Stage 4 of analysis)	Page 224-227
Appendix 12	Overarching thematic map	Page 228

## List of figures

Figure 1	Overarching thematic map and example of interpretative layers depicted in the thematic map.	Appendix 12, Page 228-229.
Figure 2	Thematic Map for RQ1, Theme 1	Page 77
Figure 3	Thematic Map for RQ1, Theme 2	Page 81
Figure 4	Thematic map for RQ1, Theme 3	Page 86
Figure 5	Thematic Map for RQ1, Theme 4	Page 94
Figure 6	Thematic Map for RQ1, Theme 5	Page 102
Figure 7	Thematic map for RQ1, Theme 6	Page 107
Figure 8	Thematic map for RQ2, Theme 1	Page 111
Figure 9	Thematic map for RQ2, Theme 2	Page 115
Figure 10	Thematic Map for RQ2, Theme 3	Page 120
Figure 11	Thematic map for RQ2, Theme 4	Page 123
Figure 12	Thematic map for RQ3, Theme 1	Page 128
Figure 13	Thematic map for RQ3, Theme 2	Page 132
Figure 14	Thematic map for RQ3, Theme 3	Page 134
Figure 15	Thematic map for RQ3, Theme 4	Page 136



**Part I: Major Literature Review**

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## PART I: LITERATURE REVIEW

School staffs' views regarding transgender pupils and the role of the Educational Psychologist.

### 1.0 Introduction

Increasing numbers of children and young people (CYP) are questioning conventional gender stereotypes and '*are choosing to seek recognition and acceptance for their gender diversity*' (Butler, Graaf, Wren & Carmichael, 2018, pg. 631). The literature highlights that over the last six years, the National Health Service (NHS) has recorded an increasing number of referrals for CYP who wish to develop a body that mirrors their gendered feelings (The Guardian, 2019). When considering the implications that this has for schools, research highlights how teaching staff and other education based professionals are more likely to encounter gender diverse and transgender pupils in their classrooms and through their work with schools (Ullman, 2017). The 2017 Stonewall School Report Cymru highlighted that young Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) people, aged between 11 and 19 are still bullied for being LGBT at school. These pupils reported unacceptably higher levels of poor mental health, poorer academic outcomes, higher drop-out rates and higher levels of suicide in comparison to their peers whose gender identity matches the sex that they were assigned at birth (cisgender). When explored further, both Welsh and International research (Stonewall Cymru, 2017; McGuire, Anderson, Toomey & Russell, 2010) implicates school staff in the poorer outcomes and negative school experiences for transgender pupils.

### 1.1 Structure of the Narrative Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review is to examine the key issues for transgender children and young people (CYP) within secondary education and the challenges that are experienced by teachers when trying to develop

transgender affirming schools and meet the pupil's needs effectively.

Therefore, this review of the literature will be divided into six main sections:

- The first section will briefly examine the contextual background for this research, what it means to be 'transgender', the wider societal challenges being faced by transgender individuals and what legislation is available to protect transgender individuals.
- The second section will explore the literature relevant to the school experiences for transgender pupils, with a particular focus on the prevalence of bullying and the importance of teacher support.
- The third section will explore the wider challenges faced by transgender pupils and what the key protective factors are through the lens of Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory (2001).
- The fourth section will review the literature which has examined the perceived barriers for school teachers with regards to creating a transgender affirming school and addressing victimisation. This section will also explore what support teachers feel they require to address key issues.
- The fifth section will present a summary of the literature and explore the implications in relation to the role of the EP.
- Finally, the sixth section will provide a rationale for why the research is focused within the Welsh context and will discuss relevant gaps identified within the existing literature and how these link to the rationale for the current empirical study.

## 1.2 Search Terms and Sources

The main literature search was carried out between November 2019 and December 2019 with in-depth literature searches being conducted on PsycInfo. Comparative searches were conducted using databases such as ERIC and ASSIA due to their focus on social science. During these comparative search's no addition articles were found that were felt to be relevant to the current research. In addition to this method, when research articles deemed most the most relevant to the current study were found,

further 'pearl growing' search methods were utilised to source relevant studies from references cited, as were follow up searches using Google Scholar.

The main search terms for searching journals relevant to the role of the EP were 'Psychologists', or 'School Psychologists' or 'Educational Psychologists'. The main terminology used for schools and school staff were 'Education Personnel/ or Teachers', or "Teaching Staff", or 'Educational Professionals', or 'Education/or Academic Settings/or High School Education/ or Middle School Education/ or Secondary Education'.

As the terminology relating to transgender was broad, a variety of terms were used such as 'Gender Identity/ or Gender Nonconforming/ or LGBT/ or Transgender\*/ or Transsexualism/ or Gender Dysphoria/ or Sexual orientation'. Specific searches to explore journals relating to school staff and transgender also used the term 'Transgender/or Gender Identity/ or LGBT/ or Transgender (attitudes toward)'.

Detailed description of the literature searches on PsycINFO are provided in **Appendix 1 Table 1**.

### 1.2.2 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Research was selected for inclusion if it has been written in English, published after 2000, involved EPs or School Psychologists (acknowledging various terminology). Additionally, articles were selected if they were specific to school staff and included terminology relevant to transgender (e.g. LGBT, gender). Research was excluded if the majority of participants were not school age pupils.

## 2.0 Transgender and a global landscape

It is important to begin with consideration of the wider context for this research which includes consideration of the Welsh perspective, a definition of

transgender, how it is defined and viewed globally and what legislation protects transgender CYP in education.

## 2.1 The research context and a Welsh perspective

As stated previously, schools, teaching staff and other education based professionals are more likely to encounter gender diverse and transgender pupils in their classrooms and through their work with schools, as the number of CYP choosing to identify as transgender, or gender diverse increases (Ullman, 2017; Butler, Graaf, Wren & Carmichael; The Guardian, 2019). Before exploring why this group of CYP can experience poorer outcomes in relation to education, wellbeing and mental health, it is important to outline why this research is relevant within the wider context of inclusion and diversity in schools in Wales.

While there are key pieces of legislation within the UK which outline the responsibilities and expectations of schools to provide inclusive education for all children (including those with additional learning needs (ALN)) they do not guarantee the quality of inclusion, or its implementation in all cases (Back Up Inclusive Education, 2014).

The Equality Act (2010), which will be considered further below, combines nine separate pieces of legislation into one single Act, which provides a legal framework to protect the rights of individuals and emphasises ways in which discrimination and inequality can be addressed. The Act introduced nine protected characteristics (Age, Disability, Gender reassignment, Marriage and civil partnership, Race, Religion, Sex, Sexual orientation and Pregnancy and maternity) for which the right to equality and opportunity for all is emphasised. The Equality Act 2010 is relevant to all CYP in education in England, Scotland and Wales (its specific relevance to transgender CYP will be discussed later, in addition to other relevant legislation).

However, given that the current research has a Welsh specific focus, it is important to highlight the current context within Wales in relation to inclusion and diversity and how this is relevant to the current research. Ainscow (2020) highlights that the term 'inclusion' can be confusing since it may hold different meanings for different people. However, the 'Welsh Government Guidance for Inclusion and Pupil Support' document (2016) defines inclusion as:

*“Inclusion is a process through which all pupils access common opportunities in ways relevant to their needs, and which ensures that they fully belong to the school community. Inclusion requires the active involvement of all concerned. It places the onus on schools to adapt their organisation and their ways of responding to both meet the needs and value the development of all children and young people in all areas of school life [...]” (Pg. 2)*

This document provides guidance and frameworks for schools, local authorities and their partners relating to inclusion and pupil support and also outlines the essential principles of inclusion.

Similarly, to Scotland and England, over the past few years, Wales has been involved in revising and reviewing provision for children and young people with ALN, otherwise known as special education needs (SEN) (Ware, 2019). Ware emphasises the innovative ways in which Wales are enhancing inclusive education for CYP (including those with ALN) and while it is acknowledged that transgender CYP do not fall within the category of ALN, the context of change is arguably important for all CYP within education, as the Welsh Government work towards developing a new education system which '*aims to help everyone reach their potential, reduce inequality, and improve economic and social well-being*' (Inclusion and Pupil Support, 2016, pg 4).

Key changes include a new curriculum from September 2022, following the 'Successful Futures' report (Donaldson, 2015). The new curriculum proposes six areas of learning and experience (AoLEs), within which a new focus will be placed upon Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). As part of the new curriculum, RSE will be statutory for all learners aged 3-16 years (Welsh



Government, 2019) and Renold & McGeeney (2017) highlight how this new inclusive SRE curriculum will not only positively recognise diversity and difference across the domains of sex, gender, sexuality and relationships, but will also emphasise why these differences are foundational to cohesive, fair and equitable societies. While improvements to the RSE curriculum will help to equip children and young people with the confidence to discuss and understand topics such as LGBT (Welsh Government, 2019), the overall aim of the new curriculum is '*to raise standards for all*' (Welsh Government, 2020). This inclusive ethos is further emphasised in the new Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act which was passed in January 2018 (the ALNET Act) and the new Code of Practice for Additional Learning Needs (ALN) which will be considered further below.

## 2.2 What is transgender?

The term 'transgender' is an umbrella term used to describe individuals whose gender identities, or gender roles differ from those typically associated with the biological sex they were assigned at birth (GLAAD, 2020). Gender identity however, is an internal sense of whether one is male, female or something different (Yavuz, 2016). For some people, their gender identity does not fit neatly within the two binary terms of male and female and may not correspond with the sex they were assigned at birth which Brill & Pepper argue can risk them being seen as 'other' (Brill & Pepper, 2008).

The American Psychological Association (2009) states that the term 'transgender', can be used to describe individuals who express their gender differently along a continuum which exists between the binary categories of male and female. A variety of terms which refer to gender as a more fluid concept can exist under the transgender umbrella, these include, but are not exhaustive to: 'non-binary, gender fluid, gender neutral and gender variant' (Yavuz, 2016). Given the variety of terminology, the researcher will use the term 'transgender' when referring to research, or pupils who may have used some of other terminology available for ease of reading and consistency.

### 2.3 Why 'other'?

The literature presents contesting concepts and theories in regards to 'gender', what it is and how it has become. However, the literature relating to gender is broad and constantly evolving (GIRES, 2019) and it is not possible to explore all definitions within the space provided. Therefore, the researcher has chosen to outline the polarised views and theories in relation to 'gender', to highlight how such views can lead to transgender persons being seen as 'other'.

Newman (2002) states how the polarised views around the creation and definition of gender identity '*essentially centre on the nature versus nurture debate*' (pg. 353), with biological determinist models of gender identity believing gender to be influenced by hormonal brain developmental within the womb. Put simply, such models put forward the argument that the differences which exist between men and women are related to brain structure. While Baron-Cohen (2003), makes reference to the concept of male and female brains, he does acknowledge that culture and socialisation also play a role in regards to how one develops gendered behaviours (such as play, emotions, interests). Despite this, Baron-Cohen (2003) adopts a biological, or essentialist view of gender as a biological given, attributing 'gender' to hormonal exposure in the womb as what essentially contributes to a person developing a male or female brain, citing neurological research as evidence for this.

Within the biological model, sex and gender are seen as binary, thus asserting that no variation can exist between the two polarised categories. Newman (2002) further highlights how within this binary model, there are two sexes and two genders, gender should conform to sex and 'normality' is defined as congruence between sexual anatomy and gender identity. '*To be gendered in opposition to sex is to have a disorder, despite the fact that sex and gender are analytically distinct*' (Newman, 2002, pg. 353). Currently, those whose gender identity is deemed to not 'fit' with their biological sex of male and female, can be diagnosed as having 'gender identity disorder' under

the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems, version 10 (ICD-10) and Statistical Manual of Mental Health Disorders (DSM5) (WHO, 2019). However, in 2019 the World Health Organisation (WHO) confirmed that the 11th edition of ICD will replace diagnostic categories such as “transsexualism” and “gender identity disorder”, with more positive terminology such as “gender incongruence of adolescence and adulthood” and “gender incongruence of childhood”, respectively. In the statement published by WHO (2019) it was acknowledged how diagnoses which have historically labelled transgender individuals as ‘disordered’ and as being conditions of mental ill health have added to the stigma and misconceptions of what it means to transgender.

In opposition to this, constructionists argue that gender is a complex internalisation of cultural systems and social standards which vary across different cultures and throughout history (Butler, 1990; Mead, 1949; Newman, 2002). Richard and Barker (2013) argue that societal rules can influence gender stereotypes and can influence what society deems as ‘normal’ for a variety of things such as clothing, activities and behaviours. These expectations influence the way in which masculinities and femininities are defined and what is thought, or felt to be socially, or religiously appropriate within each gendered category (Brill & Pepper, 2008). Research highlights how those who do not conform to the cultural expectations of their assigned birth gender, and identify as transgender, or gender non-conforming, are at risk of multiple forms of prejudice, discrimination and violence (McBride & Schubotz, 2017).

DePalma (2013) and Butler (1990) both position gender as being socially constructed, arguing that gendered norms are reinforced through everyday social and cultural practices. Research which has explored gender and education highlights how this is particularly prominent in school environments and can lead to transgender pupils being positioned as ‘other’ (DePalmer & Atkinson, 2007; DePalma, 2013; Bowers, Lewandowski, Savage & Woitaszewski, 2015; McBride & Schubotz, 2017; Payne & Smith, 2014).

Given that this literature review aims to explore the challenges that exist within the school system for transgender pupils and the challenges that school staff encounter when trying to create gender affirming schools, the role that schools have in relation to reinforcing gender stereotypes and the concept of 'other' will be discussed later.

#### 2.4 The consequences of being seen as 'other' both within the UK and globally.

Arguably awareness of the transgender community has become increasingly well-known under the umbrella of 'LGBT' (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender). Halberstam (2018) puts forward the argument that in today's society young people who cross-identify are able to imagine themselves into other bodies and be true to who they are. However, despite increasing awareness and transgender being recognised as a 'protected characteristic' within The Equality Act, 2010 (meaning a person's gender identity should have little impact on their accessibility to basic human rights, inclusion or equal treatment), transgender adults and CYP face more marginalisation than their LBG or cisgender peers (Meyer & Leonardi, 2018).

On a global level, high levels of violence and discrimination are reported against transgender individuals. In a report by the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) Foundation titled 'violence against the transgender community in 2019', 26 transgender and gender non-conforming people in the United States were murdered due to anti-transgender bias (HRC, 2019). Furthermore, research conducted by O'Brien, Liu, Putney, Burke and Aguinaldo (2017) details how LGBT and gender non-conforming individuals are at higher risk of physical and sexual violence and that in most cases of abuse, sexual orientation or gender identity were a key factor in the perpetration of the abuse.

A 'Report of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity' (United

Nations [UN], 2018), recognised that violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity exist all over the world. The report makes reference to a monitoring project which recorded 2,609 reports of murdered transgender and gender non-conforming people in 71 countries worldwide between January 2008 and September 2018. Additional information provided within this report suggests that the number of deaths is *'certainly much higher given that the murders of transgender and gender non-conforming people are not systematically regarded in most countries'* (p.10).

This report also makes reference to how LGBT persons are killed as a consequence of the imposition of the death penalty for their sexual orientation or gender expression, with killings being held in people's homes and public spaces as part of *'social cleansing'* and so-called *'honour killings'* (p. 7). Although the report does not specify in which countries within the UN these types of actions take place, it highlights the very real risks being faced by LGBT persons today and the lack of equality and protection afforded to some individuals purely because of their gender or sexual orientation.

Further research conducted within Australia, New Zealand and Canada also highlights how transgender people can experience physical and verbal assault in their homes and from family members (Kenagy & Bostwick, 2008). Rejection from family members can mean that transgender individuals are more at risk of homelessness making it difficult to access relevant mental health support (Steck & Perry 2018). The literature highlights how negative treatment towards those who are transgender puts them at higher risk of suicidal thoughts and attempts, substance misuse and risky sexual behaviours (Kowciw, Palmer, Kull & Greytake, 2012; Bontempo & D'Augelli, 2002; Toomey, Ryan, Diaz, Card & Russell, 2010).

Within the United Kingdom, the Government Equalities Office (2020) published a report titled 'Trans People in the UK'. The report states that following a survey by the equality's charity Stonewall, 41% of transgender men and women had experienced a hate crime because of their gender identity in the last 12 months and 25% had experienced homelessness at

some point in their lives. In addition, the report noted that 67% of people avoided being open about their gender identity due to fears of negative reaction. Responses indicated that they were more likely to avoid public spaces in order to reduce risk of violence and discrimination.

Bowskill (2017) highlights how rejection at an early age can cause children to internalise the view that that they are the problem. Bowskill argued how, in some cases, this can result in CYP feeling the need to hide their gender identities which puts them at risk of becoming withdrawn, anxious and unsociable at school (Whittle et al. 2007).

Despite these challenges and risks, many transgender people are now choosing to identify as a different gender, or 'come out' at a younger age. The Tavistock and Portman NHS foundation Trust report that the number of referrals for under-18s has almost quadrupled from 678 in 2014-15 to 2,590 in 2018-19, which equates to an average year-on-year increase of about 40% (The Guardian, 2019). Furthermore, research conducted by the NHS-commissioned Gender Identity Development Service (GIDS) reports that there has been a large increase in referrals for the number of children and adolescents who are seeking medical support to develop a body that mirrors their gender identity (Butler, Graaf, Wren & Carmichael, 2018). With an increase in referrals to services like GIDS, the likelihood that schools will encounter transgender CYP is much greater, however education environments can remain largely hostile and negative environments for transgender pupil's in comparison to their non-LBGT and LBG peers (Kosciw et al. 2013).

## 2.5 What legislation protects transgender individuals?

Within the UK, there is legislation which protects the rights of transgender individuals under The Gender Recognition Act (2004) and The Equality Act (2010). More specifically, within wales the Welsh Assembly Government

(WAG) has adopted the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) to support its policy making with children.

#### The Gender Recognition Act (2004)

Under the Gender Recognition Act (2004), transgender individuals are able to receive legal recognition of their acquired gender through a new birth certificate. This process is available to those who are aged 18 plus, have received a diagnosis of gender dysphoria and have lived as their preferred gender for at least two years.

#### The Equality Act (2010)

The Equality Act 2010 applies in England, Scotland and Wales. Under this act 'Gender Reassignment' is listed as a protected characteristic which cannot be discriminated against, either directly or indirectly, including in school. The Department for Education (2014) published advice for schools in regards to the Equality Act (2010) outlining how pupils should be treated in accordance with their preferred gender identity. Although the terminology used within the act is 'Gender reassignment', the Department for Education clarifies that this applies to anyone who is undergoing, has undergone, or is proposing to undergo a process to reassign their sex by changing physiological or other attributes. The document states that a pupil does not have to be undertaking a medical procedure to change their sex, but must be taking steps to live in the opposite gender, or proposing to do so.

#### Within Wales: UNCRC

The UNCRC guides all policy decisions relating to CYP in Wales (WAG, 2019). Although specific terminology relating to 'transgender' is not noted within this policy, the UNCRC outlines the rights that all CYP, under the age of 18 have to be safe, to play, to have an education and to be happy. Article 2 within this policy; 'right to non-discrimination', highlights how it is unlawful to discriminate against a CYP regardless of their ethnicity, sex, religion, language, abilities or any other status.

Under Article 12 'respect for the views of the child' and Article 24 'Health and Health Services', the UNCRC also states how every child has the right to the best possible health, which includes good quality education on health and wellbeing. Ronald & McGeeney (2017) highlight how within Wales new guidance on Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) within the curriculum emphasises the need for schools to address the above articles by providing pupils with the *'knowledge, skills and understanding to make informed choices that support the development of positive life experiences for sexual well-being and respectful relationship cultures'* (p.13). However, despite SRE being a compulsory part of the basic curriculum in secondary schools in Wales, under the Education Act 2002, wider literature highlights how within Wales such programmes fail to address the needs, experiences and relationships of LGBT young people particularly in relation to gender, sexual diversity, positive relationships, consent and safety (Ronald & McGenney, 2017; Stonewall Cymru, 2017; McGeeney and Hanson 2017, UK Youth Parliament 2007). The negative impact that this has for transgender CYP will be explored in the sections below.

### **3.0 Exploration of school environments for transgender pupils: What are the key issues?**

Despite legislative protection for transgender pupils, research highlights how transgender CYP can experience significant challenges within the school community and are more likely to experience higher rates of bullying and victimisation, which can negatively impact their mental health, academic outcomes and social experiences within schools (McGuire et al, 2010; McBride & Schubotz, 2017). While much has been written about the key factors and challenges faced by transgender pupils within schools, little remains known about the school based factors and environmental stressors which contribute to maintaining negative school climates (Ullman, 2017). Therefore, this literature review will first provide a brief overview of what the key challenges are for transgender pupils. This will be followed by an



overview of the literature which has sought to explore factors, at different levels within the school system which will be discussed through the lens of Bronfenbrenner's (2005) Bioecological Systems Theory.

### 3.1 Bullying, not seeing school as a safe place and impact on mental health

The Stonewall School Report (2017) found bullying and the use of transphobic language to be a key issue for transgender pupils, with 64% of transgender pupils being bullied for being transgender and 46% hearing transphobic language 'frequently' or 'often'. Furthermore, in a mixed-methods American study conducted by McGuire et al (2010); findings from an online survey which compared school experiences of a large population of non-LGBT pupils (n=2192) to that of transgender, queer or gender questioning students (n=68), found that transgender pupils were more likely to hear negative comments based on gender from peers and staff, to feel that teachers were less likely to intervene in cases of harassment and feel unsafe at school. Additional focus groups with transgender youth (n=35), further reinforced that schools are seen to be unsafe places due to significant harassment and victimisation, with both verbal and physical bullying being common.

Furthermore, data gathered through the focus groups identified that negative treatment from peers contributed to transgender pupils dropping out and avoiding school. Within McGuire et al's (2010) research, participants discussed how they had made the decisions to transfer to other schools purely because other schools were deemed to be more supportive. Participants also noted how they had responded to bullying aggressively to prevent harassment, however coupled with other challenges faced, was linked to high levels of psychological distress.

While the Stonewall School Report (2017) acknowledged the positive progress being made within some schools in regards to the topic of bullying, it was concluded that further progress is needed as poor mental health rates

are alarmingly high among LGBT CYP. Statistics within this report highlight how four in five transgender young people (84 per cent) have self-harmed and two in five (45 per cent) have attempted to take their own lives as a result of bullying and anti-transgender discrimination (Stonewall, 2017). Recent studies also make reference to how bullying and harassment is substantially correlated to increased risks of substance misuse, suicidal ideation and low self-esteem for transgender youth (Day, Iverno & Russel, 2019; Day, Fish, Perez-Brumer, Hatzeenbuechler & Russel, 2017; Kosciw et al. 2013).

Wider research in Canada, Australia, New-Zealand, USA and Wales have highlighted the negative impact that bullying can have on transgender pupil's mental health and wellbeing (Greytak et al. 2009; Grossman et al. 2009; Jones et al. 2016; McBride & Schubotz, 2017; Ullman, 2017; Stonewall Cymru, 2017). Research which has explored pupils lived experiences in school more generally has found that being bullied for being LGBT at school can also impact other aspects of school life.

### 3.2 Bullying, poorer academic and education outcomes

Transgender pupils who discussed their school experiences in McGuire et al's (2010) research described how bullying left them feeling victimised and unsafe in school and how this became a negative reinforcement to avoid attending school, which while believed to impact wellbeing also negatively impacted academic grade outcomes.

Kosciw et al. (2013) examined how negative school climates impacted pupil's achievement and the role of school-based supports for LGBT students in a large-scale study, which included 5,730 LGBT participants (537 were transgender or gender non-conforming) from 50 states within the USA. Statistical analysis indicated that in-school victimisation positively correlated with lower GPA (grade average) and more missed days of school for LGBT pupils. Within this study, Kosciw et al also explored the wider impact that these combined factors had on pupils, concluding that they were positively

linked with lower self-esteem. While these findings are beneficial in understanding the wider impact of bullying, no differentiation was given in regards to results for LGB and transgender pupils.

Furthermore, the model of analysis used within Kosciw et al's (2013) study assumed a one way, static correlation that links victimisation directly to lower grades, self-esteem and days missed. The research does not consider the possibility that there may be other connecting paths and causalities which could exist between these issues. For example, it may have been that victimisation was directly linked to low self-esteem, which increased days missed and lower grades as a result. Consideration of other relationships between these competing factors may have helped to understand the impact of victimisation more broadly for transgender and LGB pupils.

Additionally, while days missed from school was seen to an issue for pupils in this study, it was interesting that the researchers made the decision to exclude 1,531 participants from the data set because they were not currently in education. Arguably, it may have been useful to have explored what factors had contributed to this outcome to better understand what factors within the school, or wider system (such as home), impact pupils being able to attend school.

Until very recently no published research in Britain had explored what factors contributed to LGBT young people not being in education. However, a recent report published in 2020 by Stonewall, which is titled 'Shut Out', explored what impact:

*“LGBT-specific factors (including family rejection and anti-LGBT bullying), on top of wider challenges (such as limited career support, caring responsibilities and managing disabilities), had on LGBT young people’s mental health and their engagement with education, training and employment and how these can limit their life chances” (p.3).*

Data was gathered through interviews with 18 LGBT individuals (n8=transgender) who were not currently in education, training or work. In

addition, 4 interviews were conducted with non-LGBT individuals who were also not in education, training or work for comparison. All participants were aged 16-24 and the majority of participants had been out of education, training or work for 6-12 months. As the focus of this literature review is transgender pupils and education, discussion of this research will be in relation to transgender responses only. In-keeping with the previous literature discussed, one of the key issues identified which contributed to participants not being able to engage in education or work was anti-LGBT bullying. Participants also reported feeling isolated because LGBT people were invisible within the school environment, although some participants acknowledged that their negative feeling towards school were exacerbated due to challenges with mental health. Overall, this research highlights the important role that schools have in enabling pupils to develop a positive outlook on education, as participants in this study highlighted how poor school experiences can result in a loss of confidence to re-enter education, work or training.

### 3.3 Lack of support from staff and feeling alone

In addition to information outlined above, many of the LGBT participants interviewed in the 'Shut Out' report (Stonewall, 2020) discussed having experienced significant difficulties at school, which were compounded by a perception that there was nowhere for them to turn for support or advice.

A lack of support from key adults within the school system was also highlighted within the Stonewall School Report (2017); more than half of LGBT pupils (53 per cent) had stated that there was not an adult at school they could talk to about being LGBT, about issues related to bullying, or coming out. As a result, in some schools, teachers were not viewed by to be advocates for LGBT pupils. Given the high level of mental health implications that are linked with bullying it is concerning that 45% of LGBT students interviewed in this research had not informed anyone about being bullied. The most common rationale for not informing others about bullying was due to not

wanting to talk to anyone about being LGBT, not wanting it to be known that they were LGBT, feeling embarrassed and also not believing that change could be facilitated by teachers if they were aware. Furthermore, in some cases of anti-LGBT bullying, peers and staff became bystanders; fewer than a third of bullied LGBT pupils reported that teachers intervened when present during the bullying and similar findings are reported in McGuire et al's (2010) research.

When exploring staff responses to bullying at a local level, similar reports were found in the Stonewall Cymru (Wales) report (2017). Findings from the Welsh report highlighted that only six percent of pupils stated that head teachers, who were present during bullying, intervened. While the pupil reports in all of the Stonewall research provides an overview of the common challenges faced by LGBT pupils in Britain, it is important to consider that such self-report measures will not be generalisable for all LGBT students experiences within education in the UK. Furthermore, given that this survey utilised an online self-report methodology, it is important to consider the possibility of self-selection bias. In addition, it is unclear how participants were recruited and whether questions were framed in an open manner, or whether they focused on 'challenges' specifically. If the latter is true, it is possible that participants who may have had positive school experiences were less motivated to submit their views.

### 3.4 The importance of teacher support

While the research discussed above has highlighted what feelings were triggered for pupils when there is a perceived lack of support, they do not explore what impact a lack of staff support has on transgender pupils more broadly. However, in a mixed methods Australian study conducted by Jones et al. (2016) the school experiences of transgender and gender diverse students was explored using online surveys (n=189) and online interviews (n=6). Findings concluded that pupils who reported receiving no teacher support were over four times more likely to leave school in comparison to

those with teacher support. A lack of teacher support was also linked to needing to hide during unstructured times (e.g. lunch time), increased risk of online bullying and being spoken to in a discriminatory manner by peers. Within this study pupils also spoke about the importance of pronouns. When a teacher of a transgender pupil used inappropriate pronouns, names or identity, the pupil was more likely to experience harassment from peers. Teachers appropriate use of pronouns and language was also linked to higher academic grades. This study also highlighted that when teachers do intervene, or provide support, they not only benefit the pupil directly, but can also become a positive role model to other pupils. Although participants in McGuire et al's (2010) research had not had particularly positive experiences with their teachers, they did associate supportive teachers with positive school climates, which suggests that teachers could play a key role in mitigating against some of the negative factors identified by pupils.

Within the wider literature, pupils have identified other ways that school staff and processes within the school system have been, or are viewed to be, important in facilitating positive change. Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory (1979, 2001) considers how children and young people are affected by a variety of sources and systems e.g. parents, teachers, schools, homes and community cultures. The researcher has chosen to discuss the additional literature regarding pupil experiences in relation to this model as it allows for the consideration and exploration of how different individuals and systems could support pupils at different levels.

#### **4.0 Bioecological Systems Theory**

Bronfenbrenner's original ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and its most recent revision, known as bioecological theory (2001) acknowledges how children, or young people are affected by layers of relationships, and individual systems which surround them (Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield, & Karnik, 2009). The theory refers to five systems which surround CYP:

1. The microsystem, which refers to the interactions that CYP have with those closest to them i.e. with family, peers and teachers.
2. The mesosystem which refers to the interactions and connections between the child's microsystem.
3. The exosystem, which refers to the institutions and social structures which can affect the CYP indirectly, such as school policies, local authority decisions, or advice given to teachers from other agencies for example.
4. The macrosystem, refers to the wider societal influences and cultural contexts that the child is part of.

The fifth layer, the chronosystem, was added as part of Bronfenbrenner's adaptation to his original (1979) framework. The chronosystem includes the Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) model. This model considers child development to be impacted by the increasingly complex and reciprocal interactions that occur between the four other systems (micro, meso, exo and macro), as the young person and those around them evolve within their environment over time (McGuigan, 2017). The model also encourages consideration for how biological factors can affect development and recognises that interactions (proximal processes) which occur regularly, over extended periods of time will have the most impact on the developing individual. The influence of these systems in regards to transgender pupils' school experience's will be considered below.

#### 4.1 What is needed at the microsystem level

The importance of CYP having access to positive, trusting relationships with adults is acknowledged within psychological theories, such as that of Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1950; Ainsworth, 1978). Bronfenbrenner also acknowledged the importance of positive connections to adults at home, school and the wider community and the role that they will have in developing CYP's social and emotional development, cognitive development and understanding of wider world (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Participants in McGuire

et al's (2010) research identified a key adult in school as a protective factor against harassment, noting how having just one key adult helped support their wellbeing, feelings of safety and helped them to navigate other challenges within the school system, such as gendered facilities, and the process of changing their name.

In addition, in an unpublished thesis, Leonard (2019) explored the positive school experiences of three transgender pupils (aged 16-18) within the UK. Five over-arching themes were identified in regards to what factors contributed to a positive school experience, these included: The importance of language, Whole-school approaches, The importance of community, My own best friend and Individual teacher support.

However, the theme of 'Individual teacher support' was described as being a dominant theme across each of the three participants' narratives and within this theme three subordinate themes were identified: 'Relationships with individual teachers', 'Staff going against the school' and 'LGBT staff'. However, 'relationships with individual teachers' was felt to be particularly salient to this level of Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems theory (2001). Within this subordinate theme, participants reflected on the importance of having staff members who they felt were available and supported them individually, beyond that of generic whole-school types of support. Participants valued this key adult as it made them feel that they had someone who was looking out for them. Additionally, participants acknowledged how these staff members had taken the time to research transgender issues in order to relate to them and identify ways of supporting them. Pro-active steps such as these, were felt to be important as they demonstrated that staff had empathy for them and a desire to facilitate positive change.

The importance of a key adult in the school setting for transgender pupils was also echoed in research conducted by Ullman (2017). This research explored teacher positivity towards gender diversity using responses from data collected in online national survey in Australia (Free2be?). Of the 704 pupil responses collected, 85 described themselves either as transgender or



gender variant and students were aged 14-18. Correlational analysis was used to understand the degree to which teacher positivity and a teacher/student relationship was related to school wellbeing and academic outcomes. Ullman concluded that teacher positivity was significantly associated with wellbeing, safety and belonging. Findings also highlighted how having teachers who are positive and supportive of diversity was linked to positive academic self-concept and being a more motivated learner. This has been echoed in other research, such as that of Osterman (2000), Graybrill & Proctor (2016) and Kosciw et al (2013), where belonging within the school system has been linked to better engagement in learning and academic success.

While participants involved in Stonewall's (2017) School Report did link teacher positivity with feelings of safety, 70% reported that teachers had 'never' or 'hardly ever' been positive about gender diversity. Arguably, findings from research such as that of Ullman (2017) highlights the importance of teachers creating positive classroom cultures where transgender pupil's feel valued. However, participant responses in the Stonewall School Report (2017) suggests that teachers may need more training before they are able to facilitate more inclusive classrooms and challenge wider school gender structures (heteronormative structures) to create a more positive environment.

In addition to positive relationships with teachers, peers were also identified as being a key protective factor against harassment, in Jones et al's (2016) research, those who had supportive peers were less likely to experience harassment and discrimination. 68% of participants without supportive peers experienced social isolation in comparison to the 30% of those with peers. However, Jones et al noted the important role that teachers had in facilitating positive peer relationships, highlighting the need for them to be role models in regards to the positive treatment of transgender pupils, as negative staff behaviour was positively correlated to poorer peer behaviour.

## 4.2 What is needed in the mesosystem

McBride & Schubotz (2017) explored the school experiences of transgender and gender non-conforming (TGNC) youth in Northern Ireland (NI). The researchers drew on data obtained from a large-scale survey for 16-year olds conducted in 2014 (Young Life and Times Survey) and conducted five of their own semi-structured interviews with TGNC youth (aged 12-23). While a total of 1,939 responses were collected through the The Young Life and Time Survey, only ten of these identified as TGNC (with 7 out of 10 identifying as sexually attracted to same-sex people). Responses from these ten participants indicated that they were frequently (very often or daily) called homophobic names by peers. Additionally, four in ten reported experiences whereby they had been called homophobic names by their teachers. Findings also highlighted how homophobic comments were more common than transphobic ones. Information gathered from the semi-structured interviews highlighted that all five participants described negative schooling experiences due to heteronormative policies and practices, with participants having experienced difficulty when trying to negotiate policies such as uniform, which resulted in two participants hiding their gender identity at school, holding views that teachers were reluctant to attend LGBT workshops and three in five participants feeling that the attitudes and strict policies in schools were influenced in part by conservative Christian values.

While the participant sample is low and the researchers did not draw firm conclusions from the data, the information gathered as part of this research was considered to be helpful as it does explore the positive account of one secondary school pupil, with researchers taking additional steps (interviewing parent) to triangulate what factors contributed to a positive school experience.

Information gathered from the pupil and parent via interviews highlighted how support from the Head Teacher in regards to addressing bullying effectively, flexibility with uniform and use of facilities was beneficial. Similarly to research discussed in the above 'microsystem' section, having a key adult to discuss concerns with was important for the pupil's wellbeing. In regards to how this research relates to the mesosystem, Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological theory

(2001) highlights the importance of communication between those in the micro and meso systems and this study provides some insight as to what schools could do to strengthen this connection. For example, the parent noted how meetings prior to the pupils first day at school and frequent review meetings throughout the year with senior school staff, CAMHS and the pupil's key adult helped to ensure that any concerns and pupils views are addressed. This research, despite limitations such as lack of depth to analysis, potentially dated reviews of school experiences and unclear methodology is useful as it highlights how proactive engagement can be helpful to support TGNC pupils holistically and suggests that on-going dialogue between families, education and other services can be beneficial to the overall school experience for pupils. Furthermore, there is a lack of research available which has explicitly explored what protective factors can help to support transgender pupils through a positive lens.

In addition to the above, the need for schools to provide parents of transgender and gender variant pupils with more information and support was acknowledged in research conducted by Riley, Clemson, Sitharhtan & Diamon (2013). Gameson & Rhydderch (2003) also highlight the importance of enabling dialogue between those involved with a young person, stating that this helps to facilitate positive partnerships which can have a beneficial influence when trying to facilitate meaningful change particularly for CYP.

Participants in Stonewalls 'Shut Out' report (2020) highlighted that schools needed to recognise the importance of joined up working and the need for more multiagency support (such as that of CAMHS, primary care services, health services, early years services and LGBT groups) for LGBT young people.

## 4.3 What is needed at the exosystem level

### 4.3.1 Need for education

Research highlights the indirect actions and systemic processes within schools and wider authorities that can negatively impact transgender pupils. For example, McBride & Schubotz (2017) put forward the argument that transgender youth are negatively impacted by heteronormativity within school systems. Heteronormativity is defined by Dessel, Kulick, Wernick & Sullivan (2017) as '*a set of assumptions that privilege traditional gender roles and heterosexual orientations*' (pg.136). McBride and Schubotz argue that heteronormativity in school reinforces binary gender expectations through systemic policies such as uniform policies, the designation of male and female facilities, an inadequate level of information provided in regards to LGBT as a topic through the curriculum and a lack of LGBT specific bullying policies. McBride and Schubotz further highlight how this can impede on other pupil's awareness of non-binary genders and limits pupil and staff knowledge in regards to what it means to be LGBT. Within the wider research, pupils themselves acknowledge that LGBT is not represented enough within the school curriculum, which can lead to others not understanding what it means to be transgender, thus influencing negative stereotypes (Stonewall, 2017). At a local level, three in five LGBT pupils in Welsh schools (58 per cent) stated that they are not taught anything about LGBT issues (Stonewall Cymru, 2017).

Further research has highlighted how a lack of training for school staff on the topic of LGBT, both before and after formal teacher training can render staff unprepared to become allies for LGBT pupils and address discriminative views and actions by educating others (Kosciw et al, 2013). Coupled with heteronormative structures, Linville (2011) argues that these factors combined can shape the ethos of a school, which in turn can impact the ways in which staff and pupils treat and interact with transgender and LGB pupils.

Participants in McGuire et al's (2010) study identified systemic practices that could help to improve school climates for transgender CYP. Participants

highlighted that teachers should be required to attend training so that they are able to intervene when harassment occurs and expressed a desire for local authorities to do more to clarify the role that teachers have in preventing bullying and discrimination. Echoing the pupil views gathered in the Stonewall research (2017), the need for schools to provide information on LGBT issues in the curriculum was considered important.

#### 4.3.2 Importance of policy

The Stonewall School Report (2017) noted that while there are many transgender pupils who are supported at school, who are known by their preferred name and wear clothing, or uniform, in line with their gender identity, not all participants felt that this inclusive support extended to all areas of school life. Participants highlighted a need for more inclusive policies as a way of reducing binary views of gender.

A recent study conducted by Day et al. (2019) used a large data sample which enabled the researchers to examine effects of sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) focused policies for LGB students and transgender students separately. SOGI policies were reviewed in relation to victimisation, truancy, academic outcomes and overall perceptions of school climate. The aim of this research was to develop a better understanding of the benefits that whole school policies can have for transgender pupils specifically.

Data was gathered from 113 CYP from across California and 148 Principals (Head Teachers). Information was obtained through a national 'Healthy Kids' survey, data was collected between 2013-2015 and the majority of the CYP who responded were Hispanic (48%). Of Principals who responded, 4% indicated that they had no SOGI policies, 7% had one, 10% had two, 21% had three and 29% had four or five. The types of policies that schools had included the need for staff to facilitate inclusive environments, options for Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) clubs, access to safe spaces, equal treatment and access to other services (e.g. mental health, medical and psychological).

Results indicated that schools with multiple SOGI related policies were associated with more positive school experiences for LGB and T students. However, such policies were not associated with less victimisation for transgender pupils in comparison to other research such as that of Meyer & Leonardi (2018), although policies were statistically linked to better academic outcomes. As policy was not linked to a reduction in victimisation, it may be possible to argue that policy alone is not sufficient to reduce victimisation and that there are other factors which are needed to address this at a whole school level. Furthermore, given the high proportion of multi-cultural participants in this study, it may have been helpful to consider whether other forms of discrimination (such as racial) had contributed to the high level of victimisation experienced by participants.

#### 4.3.3 Need for supportive school ethos

The benefit of GSA clubs was explored within Kosciw et al's (2013) research. Findings highlighted how having GSA clubs within schools was positively correlated with a higher number of supportive educators within the school system, which in turn was felt to reduce victimisation. GSA clubs were felt to promote wider awareness of the LGBT community in schools, suggesting the importance of taking a whole school approach to raising awareness.

GSA's were valued by participants in McGuire et al's (2010) research as pupils commented how these provided a safe location and an opportunity to explore their identity. However, it may be possible to argue that if the wider school system was truly inclusive then the need for 'safe spaces to explore gender' would not be needed as the school itself would be a safe space.

The research discussed above highlights how a positive school climate and a sense of belonging are important for transgender pupils. Although findings discussed highlight how some staff and school processes can contribute to an overall negative school environment for transgender pupils, pupils were also hopeful of the key role that teachers could have in creating a more equal and inclusive school environment. For example, pupils identified how teachers can create positive change through their everyday interactions, the examples they

set to other pupils and by promoting a wider understanding of 'LGBT' as a topic. However, studies such as Stonewall (2017), McGuire et al (2010) and Kosciw (2013) highlight that the frequency with which teachers engage in such practice is rare. Furthermore, Graybrill and Proctor (2016) highlighted that many educators can feel uncomfortable and unprepared to support LGBT youth, therefore the question is why they feel this way and what can other services, particularly Educational Psychologists do to increase their self-efficacy.

The following two sections of this literature review will explore school staff's constructions in regards to what they feel are the barriers and challenges to supporting transgender pupils, and what role Educational Psychologists (EPs) could have in supporting them to overcome these issues.

## **5.0 Challenges for teachers**

### **5.1 What are the main challenges?**

The research detailed above, which explored pupil's views, highlighted how negative school cultures lead schools to be seen to be unsafe and hostile places (McGuire et al, 2010; Stonewall, 2017). One of the key contributing factors to this was teachers' passive behaviours and their reluctance to address heteronormativity to create transgender affirming schools. Pupils viewed this to be due to staff not feeling confident to challenge systemic norms and not feeling knowledgeable. Taylor et al. (2016) explored teacher practice and views of LGBT and Q (queer) inclusive education, as well as what motivates and discourages them from practicing it. This Canadian study gathered data through a large scale online survey (The Every Teacher Matters Project). 3,400 responses were collected via the online survey. A strength of this study, in addition to the large sample size, is that the responses were obtained from a variety of educators who worked at different levels within the school system. The sample consisted mostly of teachers (n=2844) who worked at various key stages (from primary to secondary),

counsellors, social workers and school psychologists also completed the online survey (n=190), as did other school personnel including librarians, administrators and school curriculum personnel (n=280). The online questionnaire provided both open and closed questions enabling participants to provide rich, detailed responses and opportunities to share their views and experiences. Participants were recruited through teaching organisations (unions) rather than through schools, which may have provided more opportunity for staff whose senior leaders may have otherwise been reluctant to give gatekeeper consent due to their own concerns about what might be discussed in relation to their particular setting.

Taylor et al (2016) identified circular links and gaps between teacher's beliefs and personal interactions with LGBTQ students. For example, even though most participants approved of LGBT-inclusive education, fewer than 72% indicated that they felt comfortable discussing LGBTQ topic with pupils.

For those who had engaged in inclusive practices, the most frequent type of practice described was 'challenging homophobia' (n=51%) and 'using inclusive language' (n=47%). However, findings highlight that participants were much less comfortable challenging transphobia, with only 18% reporting having done so. 'Critiquing heteronormative privilege' in response to transphobia was less frequent at 16%, as was 'bringing in guest speakers' to educate on transgender issues (9%). When asked where participants would be most likely to source support to help them overcome such challenges, participants cited teacher organisations as the most common (n=78%), colleagues (n=68%), school administration (n=65%) and legislation documents as the least likely (n=63%).

A further five gaps were identified in regards to participants beliefs and practices. These included:

1. Perceiving school as safe, while at the same time being far less likely to report the LGBT students would feel safe.
2. Believing that LGBTQ rights are human rights, yet a small minority reported to not approve of LGBTQ education.



3. Believing that LGBTQ rights are human rights, despite one fifth agreeing that teachers should be able to opt-out of LGBTQ-inclusive education if it is against their religion.
4. While the majority of participants agreed that LGBTQ rights were human rights, only a third included LGBTQ rights when discussing human rights generally. With cisgender heterosexual educators being even less likely than LGBTQ educators to do so.
5. Even though the vast majority of participants approved on LGBTQ-inclusive education, far fewer felt that their school administrators and senior leaders would support them if they addressed LGBTQ issues in the classroom.

The gaps identified in this research suggests that merely recognising sexual and gender diverse students does not compel school staff to work against the heteronormative systems and develop practices which could decrease LGBT marginalisation. However, the question still remains as to why there are such gaps between school staff beliefs and inclusive practice. While Gap 5, outlines one barrier in regards to a lack of support from senior leaders, this research fails to explore all of the gaps identified in more depth with the participants. Instead Taylor et al (2016) put forward a number of recommendations to help address the gaps identified, some of which include increasing LGBT awareness as part of teacher training programmes, educating senior leaders, so that they are able to foster inclusive systems with both staff and pupils and feel confident in doing so, adopt anti-homophobia and transphobia policies and develop a more inclusive curriculum

Despite having not explored the dissonance between beliefs and practice with the participants, Taylor et al (2016) provide some hypotheses in relation to the 'gaps' identified, citing possible fear of alienating religious, conservative parents and students, as well as risk of offending or exposing LGBTQ pupils.

While the interpretative nature of this research limits a deeper understanding in regards to teachers views and lived experiences', a

strength of this research is that it highlights the differences between LGBTQ educator and cisgender heterosexual educator practices. LGBTQ teachers were more aware of the harassment and challenges experienced by LGBTQ students, and adopted inclusive practices more frequently. While the rationale for why this may be is not explored, such findings may suggest that when educators have a better awareness of the lived experiences and challenges faced by transgender or LGB pupils, they are more likely to take action to address it. If such circular links are true, it may provide a rationale for why external agencies, (such as EPs) need to work with school settings to raise awareness of how heteronormative structures can negatively affect LGBT students, and what positive differences they can make by adopting more inclusive practices.

There is currently very little research within the UK which has explored the views of teaching staff in relation to the topic of 'transgender' specifically. However, O'Donoghue & Guerin (2017) did explore what the perceived barriers are for teachers in addressing homophobic and transphobic bullying. Responses were gathered from semi-structured interviews with 15 participants, from a variety of schools in Dublin. Participants included teachers (n=10), head teachers/deputy head teachers (n=4) and non-qualified teaching staff (n=1) with half of the staff having experience teaching PHSE.

O'Donoghue & Guerin (2017) identified ten themes in relation to perceived barriers to addressing anti-LGBT bullying. Teachers described feeling that they lacked the knowledge to be able to identify and deal with such issues. Participants noted how a lack of knowledge led to them not feeling confident to address anti-LGBT bullying effectively. This lack of confidence also prevented some from discussing the topic of LGBT and discrimination in topics such as Physical Health and Sexual Education (PHSE) and leaving such discussions to specific PHSE teachers, which may further highlight a need for staff training.

At a school level, participants identified the need to prioritise discussions relating to anti-LGBT bullying, however additional barriers for discussing such topics were concerns relating to negative reactions from parents and worrying

about students' own issues (e.g. discomfort in telling staff about their sexual orientation or experiences). Findings such as this provide greater support to the hypotheses put forward by Taylor et al (2016), who had considered whether reactions from parents and students were a barrier to practicing LGBT-inclusive education.

Another barrier to inclusive practice that was identified by O'Donoghue & Guerin (2017) was participants concerns about the transgender community. While no further detail is provided as to why participants may be concerned about reactions from the transgender community, it was wondered whether staff were concerned that their lack of training on such topics could put them at risk of 'getting it wrong' and offending those who identify as transgender.

When considering the usefulness of this research in regards to its application for practice, this research did identify what support can be helpful to address anti-LGBT bullying. Six themes were identified in relation to this; participants discussed the need for consistency in school approaches in regards to how bullying is identified and addressed. Similarly, to other international research the need for training was highlighted as a key issue, as was the need for internal support from senior leaders. Support from staff in senior positions was perceived to be particularly important in regards to tackling anti-LGBT bullying and participant's acknowledged the need to create spaces within PHSE lessons which allow for the positive discussion of topics such as LGBT to highlight the impact of bullying. A lack of discussion in regards to LGBT topics in PSE was also found in research conducted by O'Higgins and Norman (2008).

Findings highlighted in research such as that of Taylor et al (2016) and O'Donoghue & Guerin (2017) suggest that there is a need for different elements of the school system to come together to focus on one key change issue and develop an overall inclusive ethos within the school. In addition, while the research highlights a need for training it does not clarify what topics teachers feel training should address.

## 5.2 What do teachers feel would be helpful?

An American study (Swanson & Gettinger, 2016) which explored whether school level policies and programmes (which were viewed by students to be beneficial) positively influenced staff's attitudes and behaviours. The study consisted of 98 participants, who worked as educators in specialist and mainstream schools across four different states in America. Data was gathered via online surveys.

Findings highlighted how Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) clubs, anti-LGBT bullying policies and opportunities for LGBT professional development were all factors which coincided with increased teacher support for pupils who identify as LGBT.

While policies had not previously been linked to a decrease in victimisation for pupils (Day et al, 2019), within this research, policy was felt to be helpful in regards to clarifying the responsibility that staff have to protect LGBT pupils from discrimination. However, participants acknowledged that policy alone was not be enough to change some educator's mind-sets about the need for all staff to be allies for LGBT pupils.

In comparison to Taylor et al's (2016) study, feeling informed about legislative information was not felt to be critical to participants in Swanson & Grettinger's (2016) research in regards to establishing a supportive school climate for pupils, or felt by participants to hinder their willingness to provide support to LGBT pupils. However, a lack of training was felt to impact participants knowledge of what they could do day to day to support LGBT pupils. This may suggest that training offered to schools on LGBT issues could encourage staff to adopt a person-centred approach, acknowledging what may be important to individual pupils and what types of support they could offer.

Although there is a dearth of research which has specifically explored teachers views in regards to the topic of transgender, a recent study conducted by Meyer and Leonardi (2018) studied the experiences of Canadian educators to explore what the learning needs were for educators

working with transgender pupils. Findings were obtained through skype interviews and included a varied participant sample of 26 educators, from a variety of school settings. 11 participants worked within early years, 12 at a secondary school and 3 worked as district-level (local authority) diversity mentors. Another strength of this research was that participants varied in ethnicity and represented diverse genders and sexual identities. Findings highlight that two dominant themes were identified in regards to what educators felt would help both themselves and their colleagues to be better prepared to create classroom environments which affirm gender diversity. The key themes were: exposure to transgender and gender non-conforming people and conversation about gender diversity.

The theme of exposure was interesting as participants made reference to how they perceived having more pupils who were 'out' in school would be helpful. Some participants felt that their understanding of LGBT would improve if they knew, or taught someone who is LGBT. Others felt that more exposure to LGBT pupils would encourage more inclusivity and learning amongst staff. Responses are indicative of a reactive response from staff, and suggests that there is a risk that staff may put responsibility on the pupils to potentially educate them once they have come 'out'. Furthermore, if staff are reliant on pupils to be open about their gender identity in order to support them, there is a risk that pupils who do not wish to 'out' themselves in school will lack access to appropriate services and support. Furthermore, considering the wider research on the negative impact of sustaining heteronormative within-school cultures, there is a risk that by 'waiting' for a pupil to 'out' themselves before any discussions, or teaching, is had on the topic of LGBT, staff may be involuntarily sustaining heteronormative practice.

The theme of exposure also highlighted a need for more pre-service training on the topic of gender diversity similar to research discussed previously. Participants noted how the promotion of diversity and anti-oppression during training would have been helpful. This information will be helpful for those considering what to include in training packages for schools. Furthermore, information gathered within this theme may suggest a lack of confidence

amongst staff to be proactive within their schools to talk about gender diversity and may be a role for other professionals, such as EPs to provide opportunities for, acknowledging that this is something that staff may feel they have missed in their training. While there is frequent recognition within the wider research that increased training is needed, a participant in this study (Meyer & Leonardi, 2018) suggested that while a one-off training would help to create greater awareness, it would not be enough to create long lasting change. Suggesting there may be a gap in the services available to schools which offers opportunities for continued professional development (CPD).

Within the second theme of 'conversation', conversation was felt to be a powerful tool for teacher learning and growth. It was felt that interactive discussions can provide opportunities for critical self-reflection in regards to teacher practice and provide on-going learning. However, for those participants who had experience of engaging in this type of practice within their schools, it was acknowledged that the space, which is created when people engage in such conversations is uncomfortable and made it difficult to encourage participation. Participants also recognised the need for more conversations with pupils, to discuss what were felt to be complex issues around the types of social injustice they had experienced in relation to their gender identity. Participants also explained that they were cautious about facilitating such discussions, despite acknowledging that they can be a useful as a way of developing alliances with transgender pupils. In addition to this, participants also made reference to how it can be challenging for staff when pupils want to discuss the challenges that they have faced either in wider society or in the school system.

Meyer and Leonardi (2018) put forward the argument that despite the uncomfortable feeling that such conversations provoke, engaging in them will be important if schools want to provide safe and affirming spaces for all pupils. As such conversations will provide space for voices to heard that have arguably been marginalised in education and in wider society.

Much like the current 'Black Lives Matter' movement which gained momentum in the wake of George Floyd's murder (Fundafunda, 2020), is calling on those

of majority groups to recognise their privilege, Kumashiro (2002), argues that educators have to recognise the privilege which exists within the school system, reflect on the ways things are and re-evaluate what counts as 'normal'. Kumashiro acknowledges that this will involve active listening and moving away from what we know, which can feel uncomfortable. Kumashiro further explains how it can be uncomfortable when such conversations encourage self-reflection, as this can lead to people becoming consciously aware of their own practices and actions and how they may be contributing to normative structures.

Research conducted by Steck and Perry (2018) in California, consisted of semi-structured interviews with 7 participants who were secondary school teachers. The aim of the research was to explore their experiences in trying to create safe and inclusive environments for LGBTQ students. Their findings identified a number of themes, the first of which related to 'providing safe spaces whilst working to create an inclusive environment' and highlighted how participants felt that providing pupils with safe spaces (e.g. offices and classrooms) gave students the option to seek refuge if they felt threatened, to report harassment/bullying and chances to engage in positive interactions with teachers or peers. Participants who had experiences of implementing such systems felt that this had a positive impact on student wellbeing, and created a sense of belonging, which is important as it is linked to development and learning for pupils who feel victimised or marginalised (Currie et al, 2012). Furthermore, similarly to previous research discussed, GSA clubs were also felt to be beneficial for students to meet with allies and engage in justice-based activities.

'Promoting student awareness and acceptance of diversity' was the second theme presented from the participant's interviews. This theme highlighted the importance of promoting awareness, and administrators did acknowledge that their role as a leader is to voice the importance of diversity and acceptance. Participants discussed having used assemblies, policies and 'teachable moments' to talk about diversity and the importance of acceptance.

However, in regards to the challenges of promoting diversity and challenging heteronormativity; participants discussed the importance of collaboration and the need for pupils to receive one message to deconstruct heteronormativity. However, it was acknowledged that pupils may receive mixed messages at home and in the community, which makes being consistent difficult. The research presented here focuses on the school system, but it is acknowledged that there is a need for a collaborative effort to deconstruct prejudice and a need to do so collaboratively with school staff, families and within the community. Participants within this study found that providing opportunities for those within the community who identify as LGBTQ to share their voices and experiences with pupils had helped to promote wider awareness within the schools amongst peers and staff.

Although the wider research has highlighted that there is a lack of training available for educators in regards to the topic of transgender, participants in Steck and Perry's (2018) research, who had accessed training discussed the need to make training mandatory for all staff. Participants felt that before whole school change could occur, all staff would need to have greater awareness, hence the need for mandatory training.

From the research discussed, which has explored the views of LGBT pupils, it is clear that pupils want teachers to intervene in bullying, to challenge discriminative language and to recognise the importance of LGBT needs more generally through classroom practice, curriculum and policy. However, while there is likely to be many schools and staff who are doing this, research such as that of Stonewall (2017) suggests that this is happening less frequently than it needs to, particularly in Wales. Thus, creating a question of why some school staff are not taking steps to be allies for LGB and particularly trans students.

Despite recognition that wider school level changes are important, Swanson & Gettinger (2016) acknowledge that these may not be enough to bring about meaningful change and that a shift in the attitudes and behaviours of key stakeholders is needed to ensure that the school environment, particularly the classroom is inclusive. The importance of staff members counteracting



heteronormativity within schools and setting a good example for pupils can be understood within Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological System Theory (2001). As the theory notes how individuals are positioned within various contexts and systems ranging from the micro (e.g., classrooms) to distal (e.g., wider school structures). Bronfenbrenner's theory (2001) highlights how peoples (i.e. pupils) behaviours are not only attributed by their own beliefs and characteristics, but can also be influenced by others and norms in their social context. When considering the social ecology in the school system, in relation to transgender pupils, teachers have an important role in establishing prosocial classroom and school norms.

## **6.0 Summary of literature review and implications for the role of the EP**

The literature, which has explored the views and school experiences of transgender young people, provides critical insight into the challenges that pupils encounter within their school community. Comparisons between transgender pupils and their cisgender heteronormative peers highlights that transgender pupils perceive the school climate to be more negative due to higher incidences of bullying, victimisation and social exclusion which were associated with lower academic success, increased risk of poor mental health and lower attendance (Kosciw, Palmer, Kull & Greytak, 2013)

While research highlighted a need for wider systemic factors such as policy, school ethos, structure and curriculum to be more inclusive to deconstruct heteronormativity in schools, responses given by pupils suggests that beyond school-level programs and policies, teachers themselves are viewed as having a key role in establishing a more supportive school environment (McGuire et al, 2010). In relation to Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological model, teachers are ideally placed to function as the nexus between broader school systems and individual pupil support (Greytak, et al. 2013).

Despite pupils positioning teachers as a key protective factor and teachers themselves acknowledging the responsibility that they have to ensure a safe

learning environment, research highlights that they are generally more reluctant to intervene at both an individual level (harassment) and systemic level (challenge heteronormative structures) (Taylor et al, 2016; Meyer & Leonardi, 2018).

Teachers themselves attribute a lack of training and a lack of confidence to facilitate reflective conversations around gender with both colleagues and students (Meyer & Leonardi, 2018). Research which has explored the views of teachers, highlights concerns relating to family and student reactions. However, there is currently no research which explores in more depth what support teachers feel would be useful to receive from other services and specifically what EPs could do to help them overcome some of the challenges that they encounter.

While training is commonly noted as a need, there is little research which explores what teachers feel training should cover specifically in relation to transgender. Furthermore, there is currently limited research on teachers' perspectives and experiences of working with, and supporting, transgender youth (Meyer & Leonardi, 2018). In addition, what is currently available has explored teachers views generally at a more surface level and have been conducted in Canada, America and Australia. Highlighting a lack of research specific to UK and Welsh education systems more specifically.

The research which has explored teachers experiences and views in regards to working with and supporting transgender tends to also explore this in conjunction with experiences of working with LGB pupils also. There is currently no published research has been conducted in Britain, or more specifically in Wales, to ascertain what challenges teachers face when supporting transgender pupils, what they feel they need to overcome such challenges and whether schools see EPs as being a professional who could provide such support.

While it remains unclear how EPs could best support teachers, The British Psychological Society has published guidance for Psychologists working with gender, sexuality and relationship diversity (GSRD) (2019). This document

covers a variety of considerations for working with this group, for example the importance of EPs considering the limits of their own practice and engaging in continued professional development (CPD), the need to understand how social stigmatisation may affect clients and a need to consider the implications of wider systems around the individual. However, the guidance does not provide clarity on how EPs specifically could work with transgender pupils or those around them in the context of education.

This literature review revealed only two published research articles which explored the role of the EP in relation to the topic of 'transgender'; Yavuz (2016) and Bowskill (2017) and it has previously been acknowledged that the transgender community remains marginalised in psychology (Case et al. 2009).

Yavuz (2016) outlined ways in which EPs could work across three levels of individual/family, school and educational/council authority level by providing practice examples. At the individual/family level, Yavuz highlights how EPs can positively reframe any concerns relating to transgender, ascertain the voice of the young person if it not being heard and signpost those around the child to relevant information if needed. Within the school, Yavuz suggests that there is role for EPs to work universally, to utilise a consultation based-approach, or facilitate multi-agency working when necessary.

Furthermore, Yavuz outlines how EPs could support schools to develop transgender friendly schools by helping to develop appropriate policies and develop an awareness of mental health implications. At the LA level, Yavuz discussed how there is a role for EPs in raising awareness in relation to a need for inclusive facilities (e.g. toilets, changing facilities) and a role to develop delivery training around gender identity for staff and other professionals within the LA.

Bowskill (2017) explored how educational professionals can improve the outcomes for transgender CYP. The qualitative sample included 25 participants: 15 were transgender adults (aged 18-68) and 10 were professionals (n=3 EPs, n=1 Clinical Psychologists, n=3 Teachers, n=1

Teaching Assistants and n=2 Youth Workers). Barriers to good practice were similar to those discussed previously, such as a lack of training, a need to understand more about transgender and develop diversity within the curriculum.

Key findings relevant to the role of the EP within Bowskill's (2017) research highlights that EPs could help encourage staff to reflect on and consider how school systems may be reinforcing binary stereotypes, to provide training and support for staff so that they feel more supported and are able to provide individualised approaches which consider the holistic needs of the CYP. Additionally, EPs were considered to be a professional who could help to signpost staff to relevant information, provide links with other external agencies and obtain views of the CYP so that school could help meet their needs. While the information provided is one of the only studies which explored the views of school staff in relation to the role of the EP, the limited participant sample restricts the depth of insight that is needed, given the lack of wider research.

### 6.1 Rationale considering Wales

Within Wales the new Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act (Welsh Government, 2018) highlights the need for schools to meet the individual needs of pupils at a universal level where possible, putting the onus on schools to support pupils in ways which ensures the voice of the CYP is heard. The new ALN Bill also calls for there to be an increase in collaborative work between key stakeholders to ensure the best outcomes for pupils. Therefore, it may be possible to argue that with schools being held more accountable to meet the needs of pupils, EPs do have a role in supporting them to do this, upskilling where needed and building capacity in schools. This provides further rationale for needing to clarify what the needs of school staff are in regards to addressing the challenges associated with the topic of transgender, for example, what do those, who work and interact with pupils on a daily basis feel they need and would they benefit from?

While Yavuz (2016) and Bowskill (2017) outline a variety of ways in which EPs can work, it is unclear what ways of working, or what types of support, teachers in Wales feel would be beneficial. Arguably if EPs privilege certain ways of working without understanding and co-constructing what may be beneficial for schools, there may be potential risk of EPs positioning themselves as 'experts'. Furthermore, conclusions drawn from Taylor et al's (2016) research also supports the need to elicit teachers views as a way of informing EP practice, as it was noted how teachers are often sceptical of research recommendations and can be resentful of advice that is perceived to be ungrounded in the lived experiences of teachers.

Based on these findings, the current research aimed to offer a Welsh based perspective regarding the challenges that school staff face in meeting the needs of transgender pupils. This research also aims to explore what role might be appropriate for Educational Psychologists to undertake, as there is a dearth of research which explores the views of school staff in relation to how EPs might best support them to meet the needs of transgender and gender diverse pupils. Due to the current limited volume of research it is unclear how EPs could work best with schools to address their concerns. Therefore, this research aims to address the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the most prevalent issues for teachers in Wales in regards to supporting transgender pupils?

RQ2: What types of support do teachers feel would be useful to receive?

RQ3: What role might be appropriate for Educational Psychologists to undertake?

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**PART II: Empirical Research Study**

**(Word Count: 14,294)**

## 1.0 Abstract

Research highlights how transgender Children and young people (CYP) can experience significant challenges within the school community and are more likely to experience higher rates of bullying and victimisation, which can negatively impact their mental health, academic outcomes and social experiences. Although school communities can be challenging for transgender pupils, research highlights that pupils generally view teachers as a key protective factor within the school system.

Despite teachers themselves acknowledging the responsibility that they have to ensure a safe learning environment, research highlights that teachers are generally more reluctant to intervene at both an individual level (harassment) and systemic level (challenge heteronormative structures).

Given that Educational Psychologists (EPs) are able to support schools at individual, group and systems levels, there is arguably a role for EPs in supporting school staff to develop a school climate that is perceived to be more safe and inclusive for pupils. However, there is currently no research which explores in depth what support teachers feel would be useful to receive from other services and specifically what EPs could do to help them overcome some of the challenges that they encounter.

Research which has explored school staff's views in relation to supporting and working with transgender CYP, has mostly been conducted in Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Based on these findings, the current research aimed to offer a Welsh based perspective regarding the challenges that secondary school staff face in meeting the needs of transgender pupils, what support is felt to be needed within schools and what role might be appropriate for Educational Psychologists to undertake specifically.

The current study utilised a mixed-methods approach as data was collected via online questionnaires (n=54) and through semi-structured interviews (n=7). Through the qualitative analysis of interview data, using thematic

analysis, findings demonstrated that school staff perceive there to be a number of key challenges at an individual and systemic level. These challenges include access to helpful information and knowledge, support from staff in senior leadership positions, concerns for others reactions and concerns in relation to terminology.

In relation to the type of support that is needed, participants acknowledged a need for more training and resources in relation to the topic of 'transgender' and support from outside agencies in regards to best practice and legal concerns.

Overall, participants valued the potential contribution that EPs could have in regards to addressing their needs and concerns and suggested additional ways in which EPs could work to support both staff and pupils at individual and systemic levels. Implications for EP practice and further research are discussed.

## 2.0 Introduction

### 2.1 Terminology and Defining Transgender

The term 'transgender' is often used as an umbrella term to describe those who *'embody, self-identify and/or express their gender in a way which differs from their assigned birth gender'* (McBride & Schubotz, 2017, pg.292). Under this umbrella exists multiple 'terms' which describe individuals whose gender identities, or gender roles differ from their biological sex (GLAAD, 2020).

Gender identity is an internal sense of whether one is male, female or something different. For some people, their gender identity will not fit neatly within the two binary categories of male and female and may not correspond with the sex they were assigned at birth (Brill & Pepper, 2008). However, society generally acknowledges only two biological sexes and two gender categories for which gendered norms, or stereotypes, are associated (Yavuz,

2016), meaning that those whose gender identity is not perceived to 'match' their biological sex are at greater risk being seen as 'other' (Brill & Pepper, 2008). This in turn works to reinforce a set of assumptions that privilege traditional gender roles and heterosexual orientations, otherwise known as heteronormativity (Day, Kulick, Wernick & Sullivan (2016).

DePalma (2013) argues that '*gender binary has been socially constructed through normalising discourses that frame certain ways of thinking and doing as 'commonsense' and thus unassailable*' (pg.1). In opposition to gender identity as a social construct, the essentialist belief, or biological determinist model, positions gender identity as something that is '*founded in prenatal brain development*' (Newman, 2000, pg. 353). Within this model, gender is innate and fixed, however within the wider research other theories such as that of queer, transgender, feminist and poststructuralist (Leonard, 2019), also sit in opposition to that of the linear essentialist belief.

Theory and literature relating to 'gender', what it is and how it has become are varied (GIRES, 2019) and require space for discussion that is not available within this research. Therefore, for the purpose of this research, the definition of gender as a social construct is accepted, as it acknowledges how school systems can reinforce gendered norms through everyday heteronormative social and cultural practices. Such practices can include gender-differentiated uniform policies, gendered language and segregated lessons such as sports (Leonard, 2019). Day et al (2016) put forward the argument that when schools reinforce heteronormative assumptions, they send a message that such behaviours and practices are 'normal' and valued. Day et al argued that this in turn advantages pupils who are gender conforming and disadvantages those who are not.

## 2.2 Challenges for Transgender pupils within the school community

Research highlights that transgender pupils are more likely to be bullied and experience harassment in comparison to their LGB and heterosexual cisgender peers, and were more likely to describe school as being unsafe (McGuire, et al 2010). Wider research in Canada, Australia, New-Zealand, USA and Britain has highlighted the negative impact that bullying can have on transgender pupil's mental health, wellbeing and academic outcomes (Greytak et al. 2009; Grossman et al. 2009; Jones et al. 2016; McBride & Schubotz, 2017; Ullman, 2017; Stonewall Cymru, 2017; Kosciw et al, 2013).

While a large-scale UK study, the Stonewall School Report (2017), highlighted the positive progress being made within some schools in regards to the topic of bullying, the report concluded that further progress is needed as poor mental health rates are alarmingly high among LGBT CYP. Statistics within this report highlight how four in five trans young people (84 per cent) have self-harmed and two in five (45 per cent) have attempted to take their own lives as a result of bullying and anti-transgender discrimination (Stonewall, 2017). Research also highlights how bullying and harassment are correlated with increased risks of substance misuse, suicidal ideation and low self-esteem (Russell, Day, Iverno & 2019; Day, Fish, Perez-Brumer, Hatzeenbuechler & Russel, 2017; Kosciw et al. 2013). While bullying and harassment from peers is a dominant issue highlighted within the literature, transgender pupils identified other factors within the school system that contribute to a negative school environment.

Other factors included a lack of LGBT awareness in the school curriculum, a lack of appropriate facilities, incorrect use of pronouns and restrictive policies in relation to uniforms and school processes (McGuire et al, 2010; Steck & Perry, 2018; Graybrill & Proctor, 2016; Jones et al, 2016). Concerningly, pupils also reported negative and discriminatory treatment from staff members and a lack of acceptance within the wider school community (Kosciw et al 2016, Sausa 2005), which included discriminatory comments, inaction when

observing anti-transgender bullying and a lack of support more generally within the school community (Stonewall, 2017).

A combination of factors discussed above can lead to transgender pupils perceiving the school environment to be unsafe and marginalising, which research has shown can lead to low self-esteem, higher drop-out rates and poorer academic achievement.

### 2.3 Protective factors

Research which has explored transgender pupil's views and experiences of school, has identified a number of protective factors in the pupils' lived experiences. These factors stem from the microsystem and include having supportive parents, acceptance from peers and positive relationships with teachers (Kenagy & Bostwick, 2008; McBride & Schubotz, 2017; McGuire et al, 2010). Additionally, within the mesosystem, support from staff in senior positions, joined up working between staff members, other agencies and parents were also felt to be important.

At a wider systemic level, an inclusive school ethos, policies which specifically consider the needs and protection of transgender pupils, inclusive curriculums and local authority level processes were also felt to contribute to safer and more inclusive environments.

While consideration of how home and community environments can impact transgender is important (Swanson & Gettinger, 2016), pupils spend a considerable amount of time in the school environment, which, if not inclusive and supportive, can put pupils at higher risk for social, wellbeing and academic challenges (Stonewall, 2017). Therefore, further consideration of what factors can help to support transgender pupils and support the development of transgender inclusive schools is arguably important.

### 2.3.1 Importance of Teacher support

While the research discussed in Part I highlights a need for wider systemic factors such as policy, school ethos, structure and curriculum to be more inclusive to deconstruct heteronormativity in schools, responses given by pupils suggests that beyond school-level programs and policies, teachers themselves are viewed as having a key role in establishing a more supportive school environment (Jones et al, 2016; Ullman, 2017, Greytak et al, 2013; McGuire et al 2010).

Despite pupils positioning teachers as a key protective factor and teachers themselves acknowledging the responsibility that they have to ensure a safe learning environment (Steck & Perry, 2018), research highlights that they are generally more reluctant to intervene at both an individual level (harassment) and systemic level (challenge heteronormative structures) (Stonewall, 2017, Taylor et al, 2016; Meyer & Leonardi, 2018).

### 2.4 Barriers to inclusive practice

Research which has explored the views and experiences of school staff highlight that staff generally feel ill-prepared to manage bullying incidents, do not feel confident to engage in reflective conversations about pupil's negative school experiences in relation to discrimination, or engage in discussions about the topic of gender in the classroom (PSE lessons) (O'Donoghue & Guerin, 2017; Taylor et al, 2016; Grossman and D'Augelli, 2007; Payne & Smith, 2014; Meyer & Leonardi, 2018).

Furthermore, research also highlights that the barriers to challenging heteronormative structures within the school system more generally were due to concerns regarding the reaction of administrators (senior leaders), parents and peers (Taylor et al 2016; O'Donoghue & Guerin, 2017; Payne & Smith, 2014). However, research conducted by Swanson & Grettinger (2016), also highlighted how school staff's own beliefs, values and discomfort in relation to

the topic of transgender also posed a barrier to the support offered to pupils and staff willingness to challenge discriminatory behaviour.

## 2.5 What is needed to help increase school based support

Research discussed in Part I highlights that school staff feel there needs to be an increase in training and professional development opportunities to increase their understanding and ability to support (Taylor et al, 2016). However, the research which has highlighted this as a need has generally not explored what training should address in order to help staff feel more knowledgeable or prepared.

In addition, research has also highlighted a need for teachers to feel more confident to engage in discussion around the topic of transgender, a need for more resources and clearer policies and a need for processes for how staff can support pupils (Meyer & Leonardi, 2018; Steck & Perry, 2018).

Research which has explored teachers' experiences and views in regards to working with and supporting transgender tends to also explore this in conjunction with experiences of working with LGB pupils also, and research has generally been conducted in other countries such as Canada, America and New Zealand, where it is acknowledged that cultural values, beliefs and staff training on the topic of transgender may be different to that of the UK.

While research discussed above and in Part I highlights challenges and barriers for school staff at individual and systemic levels, there is currently no published research in Wales which ascertains what the most prevalent challenges for teachers are when supporting transgender pupils, whether these challenges are predominantly at an individual level, or systemic level, what staff feel they need to overcome such challenges and whether schools see EPs as being a professional who could provide support in relation to the challenges they encounter.



## 2.6 Is there a role for EPs?

Given that EPs are able to work at various levels within the school system, with pupils, staff and other key stakeholders and are able to apply psychology and utilise evidence based practice to bring about positive change (Yavuz, 2016), there is arguably a role for EPs to support school staff to develop more transgender inclusive schools. However, only two UK based research studies have explored the role of the EP in relation to the topic of transgender and school environments (Yavuz, 2016; Bowskill, 2017).

While Yavuz (2016), provides practice examples for how EPs could work to support pupils at various levels within the school system and highlights how consultation based approaches, multi-agency work with schools, parents and other agencies, as well as work at a local authority level (developing and disseminating training and resources) could be effective ways for EPs to work. It is unclear whether staff view these types of approaches as being helpful to address their key concerns.

Building on findings from Yavuz's (2016) research, Bowskill (2017) explored how educational professionals can improve the outcomes for transgender CYP, with findings based on the responses of 25 participants, 3 of which were school based staff. Findings supported the ways of working suggested by Yavuz, in that EPs are well placed to work collaboratively with key stakeholders, to provide training and support to parents, teachers and pupils. Bowskill also emphasised how EPs are well placed to challenge negative systems and reframe ways of thinking in regards to inclusivity, policies and diversity within the curriculum, however the views and voice of school staff are still relatively unrepresented within this research.

Although not specific to the role of the EP, Bartholomaeus & Riggs (2017), have published a number of specific approaches relating to the development of whole-school approaches to support transgender pupils, staff and parents based on a review of challenges highlighted within the wider literature. Suggestions place emphasis on the need for the following:

- A whole school ethos;
- Appropriate policies, procedures and guidelines;
- Staff in leadership roles to facilitate whole school change;
- Appropriate record keeping;
- Appropriate use of language and terminology; and
- Staff engagement with training and inclusive curriculums.

The recommendations suggested here and in the research which has explored the role of the EP, highlights a variety of ways in which EPs could work with schools, although it is arguably not possible for EPs to work at all of these levels, and to address all of the points raised above. This provides further rationale for exploring the views of school staff in relation to the role of the EP, as such exploration may provide more clarity in regards to EP practice.

### **3.0 Research Questions**

Based on the information outlined above, this research aims to address the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the most prevalent issues for teachers in Wales in regards to supporting transgender pupils?

RQ2: What types of support do teachers feel would be useful to receive?

RQ3: What role might be appropriate for Educational Psychologists to undertake?

### **4.0 Methodology**

#### **4.1 Ontology and Epistemology**

This research is rooted in a relativist ontology, acknowledging that there are multiple constructed realities rather than one, pre-social reality. This research

recognises that what is defined as 'real' or 'truth' can differ across time, location and context (Cromby & Nightingale, 1999). Braun and Clarke (2013) offer further insight into this position by describing how we can never get beyond these constructions because there is not one truth that is more dominant than another, as what we can know reflects where and how knowledge is generated.

The epistemological stance taken is social constructionism which puts forward the notion that what we know of the world, ourselves and other objects within the world are produced through various discourses and systems of meaning that we all exist within (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Burr (2015) highlights the importance of language and culture in how knowledge of the world is constructed between people through interactions stating, '*when people talk to each other the world gets constructed*' (Pg.25).

When considering how this translates into everyday life and coincides with this research topic of gender, Burr (2015) highlights how language can result in different social constructs being created which can impact individual's actions, with some social actions being sustained and others excluded. Furthermore, Burr (2015) makes specific reference to gender and sex, describing how through world observations it appears that there are two biological categories of human, male and female. However, what it means to be 'masculine' or 'feminine' is bound within gendered norms that are socially constructed and set within a changing cultural, social, moral, ideological and political landscape (Burr, 2015).

## 4.2 Overall Research Design

This study sought to explore the views of school staff in relation to the role of the EP, challenges experienced when working with, or supporting transgender pupils and aimed to explore what support staff feel is needed.

This research adopted a mixed-methods design and consisted of an online questionnaire (**Phase 1**) and semi-structured interviews (**Phase 2**). Although it is recognised that mixed methods research requires additional time due to the need to collect and analyse both qualitative and quantitative data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011), this approach allows the researcher more flexibility to draw on both quantitative and qualitative information, which can help to provide a deeper understanding of the complex phenomena in our social world (Creswell, 1999). The current study will be described in two phases.

### 4.3 Phase 1- Online Questionnaire

#### 4.3.1 Rationale

The literature discussed in Part I highlights that a large proportion of research which has sought the views of school staff in relation to the topic of transgender, has been conducted in the USA, Canada, and Australia, with secondary school staff and pupils. While this could have provided a rationale for adopting a purely qualitative methodology, the epistemological stance taken within this research highlights the importance of acknowledging that accounts and what we know are locally, historically and culturally specific (Burr 2015). Therefore, the rationale for conducting an initial online questionnaire was not to add validity to past findings, but to aid a collaborative inquiry (Gergen, 1999) where the research process is informed by the needs of the participants. It felt important to specifically explore whether secondary school teachers would be the most appropriate people to interview and whether they shared similar concerns to those highlighted in the wider research. The aim of Phase 1 was to provide direction and areas of focus for phase 2 (semi-structured interviews).

#### 4.3.2 Phase 1 Design

An electronic questionnaire was developed using the online Qualtrics application via Cardiff University. The online questionnaire consisted of 22

questions which consisted of a combination of closed (multiple choice and Likert style) and open questions. Questions explored demographics, geographical location, job role, confidence in regards to supporting transgender children, challenges faced in schools and experiences of working with EPs.

Three open-ended/narrative questions enabled participants to give their views in relation to a variety of topics such as school environment and resources.

Full details regarding procedure, participants, ethical considerations and findings are detailed in **Appendix 2**. However, a brief overview of key findings and how this informed phase 2 will be discussed briefly below.

#### 4.3.3 Summary of online responses

The questions developed as part of the questionnaire were established with the overall thesis research questions in mind. However, this aim of this online questionnaire was to gain clarity in regards to the following:

- Who might be the most relevant and accessible group of staff to try and recruit for semi-structured interviews and;
- What topics would be appropriate to explore within the interviews.

Responses for question 1 in the online questionnaire (Q1, **Appendix 2**) suggested that secondary school staff, and specifically teachers had the most experience working with transgender pupils, this suggested there may be more success recruiting secondary school staff to take part in semi-structured interviews in Phase 2.

Following the analysis of all data collected in Phase 1 (**See Appendix 2** for entire dataset), the topics detailed and summarised below were felt to be the most salient to explore further in Phase 2.

### Confidence/Competency

Despite responses to questions 6, 16 and 19 (**Appendix 2**) indicating a lack of training, resources and support from the local authority, responses for questions 14, 15 and 21 (**Appendix 2**) highlighted that staff were comfortable addressing transphobic bullying, were relatively confident to address the topic of transgender within the classroom and felt relatively prepared to deal with pupil disclosers in relation to gender identity.

This provided a rationale for Phase 2 to further explore staff feelings in regard to confidence and competence, as it was unclear what contributed, or enabled staff to feel confident despite a lack of training and resources.

### Safety and inclusion

Although the majority of participants had said 'yes' to their school being safe for transgender pupils in question 9 (**Appendix 2**), it was interesting that a large proportion (43%) stated that name calling and harassment were 'sometimes' an issue for transgender pupils (See question 13, **Appendix 2**). This was interesting to the researcher as it suggested that there may be other factors which contribute to a safe environment that were not explored in this phase. It was therefore decided that exploring staff views in relation to safety and inclusivity would be important in the semi-structured interviews.

Furthermore, in wanting to unpick what other factors contributed to feelings of safety and inclusion, the researcher was interested in the responses for question 8 (Q8, **Appendix 2**); as 62% of respondents stated that they were aware of a policy that prevented discrimination based on gender, despite acknowledging that transgender pupils did sometimes face harassment in question 9 (Q9, **Appendix 2**). Therefore, it was decided that exploring staff views in regards to policy may also be helpful.

## Perceived challenges

Responses to question 5 (Q5, **Appendix 2**) suggested that the following are key areas of concern for staff:

- Questions related to gender identity;
- Gender school facilities/resources;
- Views of other students/ their families and;
- Bullying

This provided a rationale for these topics to be explored further in phase 2, in addition to what it was about these perceived challenges that were the most concerning.

## EP involvement

Responses to question 20 (Q20, **Appendix 2**) highlighted that a large majority of participants had not received support from an EP. Therefore, the researcher decided that having experience working with an EP would not be an inclusion criteria for participants in semi-structured interviews, as it was felt this may impact on recruitment.

### 4.4 Phase 2- Semi-Structured Interviews

#### 4.4.1 Rationale and data collection

In keeping with the epistemological stance of social constructionism, whereby language is seen as a medium to enter into social realities (Bruner, 1990), more consideration is given to the qualitative data obtained within this phase.

The interview schedule used to guide the semi-structured interviews in this phase (**See Appendix 4**) was constructed having reviewed the literature and data from phase 1. Prior to interviews, the schedule was reviewed with an

external party, which led to the incorporation of questions relating to outside agencies more generally and not just EPs.

#### 4.4.2 Recruitment method and Participants

*Table 3: Recruitment and interview process*

Steps taken	Process
<b>1. Local Authority 1: Gatekeeper permission</b>	A Gatekeeper E-mail ( <b>See appendix 5</b> ) was sent to the Director of Education in Local Authority 1, asking permission to begin research by contacting all Secondary Schools in the Local Authority. The Gatekeeper E-mail outlined the research aims, rationale for study, methodology and provided contact details for researcher and university.
<b>2. Contacting school</b>	Having gained consent from the Director of Education, an E-mail was sent to all Secondary School Head Teachers ( <b>See Appendix 6</b> ) in Local Authority 1 containing the same information listed above. Head Teachers were invited to share the email and an attached consent form with all teaching staff in their schools inviting them to take part in the research.
<b>3. Resubmission to ethics</b>	<p>A request to amend the recruitment process was submitted to Cardiff University Ethics Committee following a limited uptake up participants.</p> <p>The request to ethics sought permission to specifically contact one Secondary School (School B), in a different Local Authority (Local Authority 2). This school was chosen as the researcher had received a request from a staff member to take part following earlier participation in the online questionnaire.</p>
<b>4. Local Authority 2: Gatekeeper permission from school B Head Teacher</b>	Following formal consent from Cardiff University Ethics Committee, the same information from step 2 was sent to the Head Teacher of School B. Following which, four participants were gained (as detailed in table 4).
<b>5. Contacting participants to arrange interviews</b>	Once informal consent had been received through email, or telephone conversation, an interview was arranged for a date, time and location which best suited the participants.



	All interviews lasted between 30-60 minutes and were recorded using a mobile phone 'voice memo app'.
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Seven participants were recruited from three different secondary schools across two different Welsh Local Authorities. A purposive sampling method was used as there was a pre-selected criterion for participants based on the literature review and online questionnaire findings.

The original inclusion criteria meant that participants must occupy a teaching role, work within a secondary school and have experience working with transgender pupils. However, due to challenges with recruitment, the parameters in relation to role were adjusted and Head Teachers were asked to send information and consent letters to all staff regardless of role. Table 4 details the participant demographic that was recruited.

*Table 4: Participant demographics*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Local Authority</b>
1	Deputy Head, Teacher and Head of Wellbeing	A	1
2	Subject Teacher	B	2
3	Subject Head, Teacher and Head of staff wellbeing	B	2
4	Wellbeing Officer (Non-teaching role)	B	2
5	SENCo (Non-teaching role)	B	2
6	Subject Teacher	C	1
7	SENCo and Subject Teacher	C	1

#### 4.5 Ethical considerations

As stated previously, ethical approval was sought from Cardiff University ethics committee prior to beginning this research. Key ethical considerations and how they were addressed in relation to the participant interviews are detailed in table 5 below:

Table 5: *Ethical Considerations for semi-structured interviews*

Ethical Considerations	How this was addressed
Informed consent	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Information and research objectives were clearly explained on the information and consent form (<b>See Appendix 6</b>).</li> <li>2. The researcher and participants discussed the consent and information form prior to starting interviews to ensure that all participants were fully informed. Opportunities to ask further questions were also provided.</li> <li>3. Gatekeeper permission and informed consent were sought prior to all interviews (via email or written).</li> </ol>
Risk of harm and Debrief	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Although it was not anticipated that the questions asked would result in any distress, or cause negative emotions, the contact details of the researcher and university were provided to all participants.</li> <li>2. Participants were reassured that they did not have to answer any questions which they were not comfortable discussing, or reflecting on.</li> <li>3. Following the interviews, participants were given an opportunity to ask any further questions and the researcher ensured that participants were aware that they could contact them at a later date should any additional questions arise.</li> <li>4. A debriefing form (<b>Appendix 7</b>) was given to participants following the interview. This thanked them for their participation, gave an overview of the research aims and provided contact details should they require further information.</li> </ol>
Anonymity and Confidentiality	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The information and consent forms (<b>Appendix 6</b>) informed participants that their data would be stored confidentially for two weeks. Participants</li> </ol>

	<p>were made aware that during this time period they would be able to withdraw from the study, however following the two-week period, data would be transcribed and anonymised. Following this process, participants were made aware that they would be unable to access their data. No participants requested their data be destroyed.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. All personal data was anonymised during transcription. For the initial transcription, all participants were referred to by a number and during the report writing they were assigned pseudonym for ease of reading (Braun &amp; Clarke, 2013).</li> </ol>
Right to withdraw	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. All participants were reminded of their right to withdraw (this was stated in the consent form (<b>Appendix 6</b>) and was discussed before interviews).</li> <li>2. All participants were reassured that withdrawing would have no negative consequences.</li> </ol>

#### 4.6 Method of Qualitative Analysis: Thematic Analysis

Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that Thematic Analysis (TA) can be a useful method when one is wanting to analyse a dataset with specific research questions in mind. This was felt to be pertinent, given that the researcher wanted to explore the following research questions (RQs):

RQ1: What are the most prevalent issues for teachers in Wales in regards to supporting transgender pupils?

RQ2: What types of support do teachers feel would be useful to receive?

RQ3: What role might be appropriate for Educational Psychologists to undertake?

In addition, TA could also be considered a useful method for analysing data as the approach is flexible and enables the researcher to identify, analyse and report patterns (themes) within the dataset in detail (Braun & Clark, 2013).

Although the three research questions were separate, it was hoped that links and connections could be made and the use of thematic maps were felt to be a helpful process for achieving this.

TA was also considered to be an appropriate method because the researcher was keen to give voice to the specific accounts of participants. Braun & Clarke (2013, p.175) emphasise TA as a useful tool in this respect as it enables researchers to *'focus on the participants standpoint and how they experience and make sense of the world'* (Braun & Clarke, 2013 pg.175).

All interviews were transcribed verbatim and the six-phase analysis procedure outlined by Braun & Clarke (2006) was used to guide data analysis. For a detailed description of the process undertaken **see Research and Analysis Activity Timeline, Table 6, Appendix 8.**

Data was analysed at a latent level as this study took a social constructionist approach to explore teacher's views. This position places focus on the social realities people collectively construct within particular locations (cultural, contextual, historical) (Niland et al, 2014; Burr 2015). Furthermore, social constructionism places importance on language as a tool for understanding others social realities (Burr, 2015) and as the focus of this research was understanding school staff's own socially constructed interpretations, it felt appropriate to look carefully at what meanings and views were being construed through language. It was therefore felt that a more interpretative form of data analysis was appropriate (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

As recommended in Braun & Clarke's (2013) description for analysis, visual thematic maps were also used to highlight relationships between themes and subthemes for each research question. This exercise was undertaken by the researcher to help visualise the themes and consider how different themes interlinked. Links between all themed are evidenced in an overarching thematic map (**See Appendix 12, figure 1**).

The researcher recognised the active role that they had in the data analysis; Braun & Clarke (2013) highlight the importance of recognising how the researchers own experiences and perspectives can shape the analysis. Braun & Clarke (2013) highlight how being aware of this is important as it will impact what data is prioritised and brought into the consciousness of the reader. Therefore, the researcher is aware that some themes, subthemes and codes may be interpreted differently by others and the ‘particular story’ which is told about the data will be influenced in part by their experiences, but also by their investment in the research and the dyadic engagement with the participants throughout the interview process.

Themes relating to research questions 1, 2 and 3 will be discussed in turn. The researcher aims to provide an overview and description of each theme, accompanied by a thematic map and supporting example quotations from transcripts and theme tables.

As stated earlier, pseudonyms were given to the participants to ensure anonymity and also for ease of reading. Table 11 below details the name given to each of the participants and highlights the number assigned to their transcript.

Table 11: *Details of pseudonyms given to participants*

<b>Participant numbers used during transcription and coding</b>	<b>Assigned pseudonym for ease of reading</b>
1	Andrew
2	Martin
3	Kate
4	Sally
5	Ann
6	Nia
7	Emily

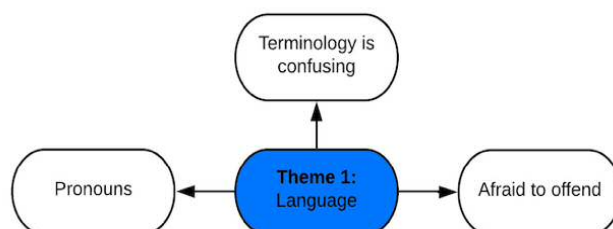
**5.0 Findings for RQ1:** What are the most prevalent issues for teachers in Wales in regards to supporting transgender pupils?

The table below, provides an overview of the 6 themes and corresponding subthemes which were identified within the analysis for RQ1, each theme and corresponding subtheme will be discussed in turn.

**Table 12: Overview of themes and subthemes for RQ1**

Theme Number	Main Theme	Subthemes
1	Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Afraid to offend</li> <li>• Pronouns</li> <li>• Terminology is confusing</li> </ul>
2	Implications of not feeling knowledgeable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact on self-efficacy</li> <li>• Not understanding what it means to be 'trans'</li> <li>• Triggers an emotional response</li> <li>• Using other sources of information</li> </ul>
3	Challenges within the school system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilities</li> <li>• Senior Leadership Team (SLT)</li> <li>• Transgender not a priority</li> <li>• Lack of information sharing within the system</li> <li>• Lack of time</li> </ul>
4	Challenges of transitioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact on pupil</li> <li>• Impact on staff</li> <li>• Varied role for staff when supporting transgender pupils</li> <li>• Parent reaction</li> <li>• Others reaction to physical transition</li> <li>➤ <i>Male to female transition more controversial (Subtheme to above).</i></li> </ul>
5	Balancing Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Managing responses of peers</li> <li>• Need for individual approach</li> <li>• Legal concerns</li> </ul>
6	Lack of information sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With parents</li> <li>• With pupils</li> <li>• Between services and school</li> </ul>

## 5.1 Theme 1: Language



**Figure 2:** *Thematic Map for RQ1, Theme 1 and related subthemes*

### 5.1.1 Afraid to offend

Participants frequently reflected upon the challenges that they experience in their day to day discussions with transgender pupils and their use of language within the classroom. Participants reflected on how being afraid to offend transgender pupils led to them to overthink the most basic of conversations within the classroom.

In Table 13 Kate's first quote highlights a lack of confidence when it comes to engaging with transgender pupils and it was wondered whether the fear of offending is part of a much bigger fear of not wanting to appear prejudiced. The fear of offending also appeared to be linked to a concern that there is a right way to work with transgender pupils, and to risk getting it wrong was concerning for staff and appeared to make everyday discussions more difficult, indicated by Nia (Table 13).

The concept of 'needing to say the right things' may suggest that staff are seeking reassurance and guidance in relation to their everyday practices. Kate, who holds both a senior position within the school and a wellbeing role, is someone who is used to supporting in a pastoral capacity, however she also makes reference to feeling concerned about not working in the right way. Again, her response, in the same way as Nia's, is indicative of not wanting to offend the pupil by 'getting it wrong'.

When considering what else may be reinforcing staff's concerns about offending, many of the staff made reference to worrying about what emotional impact their 'getting it wrong' could have on the young people. Kate worried that mistakes would lead pupils to think she "wasn't supportive of them" (Transcript 3: Line 81-82). Whereas Nia spoke about how mistakes made her feel "guilt ridden" (Transcript 6: Line 60-62) and how other staff can "feel embarrassed that they [...] have let the person down" (Transcript 6: Line 66-69).

Table 13: Example quotes for subtheme - Afraid to offend

1. **Kate:** *"I will say to someone else can you help him or her, but with transgender pupils I will say can you help and then their name. That's because I don't want to make a mistake, rather than the fact [...] I'm not acknowledging it, it's just I'm trying not to say the wrong thing".* Transcript 3: Line Number 76-79
2. **Nia:** *"You can reassure them as much as you do, sometimes it's a little bit false and I try and say the right things but I don't know if I am".* Transcript 6: Line number 238-239
3. **Kate:** *"If a child wanted specific support, or wanted to talk to me about things, I wouldn't know if there was a right or wrong answer".* Transcript 3: Line Number 184-186

### 5.1.2 Pronouns

Staff concerns relating to pronouns was felt to be a prominent issue and something that should be addressed in its own right as staff were explicit in referring to it as their 'biggest concern', as highlighted in the first quote by Martin below (Table 14). Martin's second quote indicates that he also reflected on how pronouns are something that pupils find challenging. Four out of the seven participants all made reference to the fact that their concerns around the correct use of pronouns were directly related to their worries about



offending the pupil. Nia spoke about the challenge of using the correct pronouns (Quote 3, table 14) and her quotes listed in the table below highlight the types of worries that can exist for staff when they feel they may have offended the pupil.

Finding pronouns challenging was linked to the automatic use of gendered language, Emily and Martin both recognised the challenges of adapting spoken language more genuinely, however Emily was reflective of the everyday gendered language that is used within schools (Table 14).

Table 14: Example quotes for subtheme – Pronouns

1. **Martin:** *“It’s that use of the pronoun is the biggest sort of issue I think”*. Transcript 2: Line Number 19.
2. **Martin:** *“They’ve (pupils) kind of had the same issues as us with the pronouns”*. Transcript 2: Line number 137-138.
3. **Nia:** *“There are still times when I revert back to the wrong pronoun and again it’s not intentional it’s just I’ve taught that young person since year x you know? But I would say that’s the biggest issue because I want them to feel as included as possible and I would never want them to feel that they have taken ten steps backwards either and I wouldn’t want to put them backwards”*. Transcript 6: Line number 84-88
4. **Nia:** *“I’m always concerned that even though it might seem minor, something that might seem really trivial to someone who is perhaps not going through it that they don’t go home then and that means they do something silly and I’m really mindful of that”*. Transcript 6: Line Number: 88-90.
5. **Emily:** *“I am very aware that I say morning girls you know morning girls and morning boys and I’m really trying to change you know by*

*just saying you know, morning, why do I have to put the label on you know?”. Transcript 7: Line Number 42-44.*

### 5.1.3 Terminology is confusing

Martin specifically makes reference to how the large volume of terminology that is associated with transgender can make it confusing (Quote 1, Table 15). In addition to feeling confused Martin also discussed how he did not feel knowledgeable about terminology (Quote 2, Table 15). Sally also made reference to this being a common issue amongst staff, explaining that a dictionary of terminology in her office has been helpful to others because “*a lot of staff are still quite naive towards these things*” (Transcript 4: Line Number 134-135).

While transgender pupils are free to define the terminology and pronouns that they would like to be known by, Emily explained how she felt that the terminology was more confusing for those around the pupil (Quote 3, Table 15). For the participants, the challenges and concerns they have when engaging in everyday conversations with transgender pupils appeared to be a concerning issue.

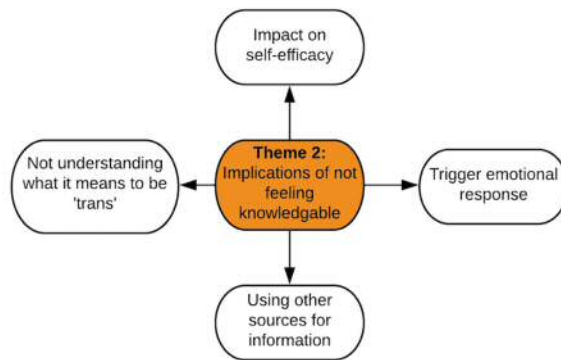
Table 15: Example quotes for subtheme 1.3 - Terminology is confusing

1. **Martin:** *“There was someone fighting about gender fluidity and saying actually if you count them there is actually 60 different gender types and then there is someone else who is trans saying but actually I find this insulting as a trans women you know...”. Transcript 2: Line Number 407-409.*
2. **Martin:** *“I mean there is a lot [...] we don’t know enough about it”. Transcript 2: Line Number 171-172*
3. **Emily:** *You’ve got fluid, neutral you’ve got everybody they are really really confused not necessarily the pupil but everybody else is*

*confused and I think because there are so many different labels coming out now". Transcript 7: 82-84.*

## 5.2 Theme 2: Implications of not feeling knowledgeable

This theme addresses the deeper issues that participants associated with not feeling knowledgeable and the impact this has. This theme also highlights systemic issues which could be addressed within the wider school and local authority (LA) systems. This theme has four subthemes as detailed in Figure 3 below.



**Figure 3:** *Thematic Map for RQ1, Theme 2*

### 5.2.1 Impact on self-efficacy

This subtheme highlights how staff link confidence to knowledge and because they feel they do not have adequate knowledge of the topic, they lack belief in their own ability to support, this is mirrored in Martin and Andrew’s quotes (table 16). Andrew’s comment also highlights how ‘transgender’ is an area that needs to be addressed more within schools.

The need for training was a dominant issue raised in the interviews. Emily stated that training was needed for *“confidence and a little more understanding, but really confidence mainly”* (Transcript 7: Line Number 128-

130). Training was also linked to increased knowledge as highlighted in Nia's quote (Quote 3, Table 16).

Table 16: Example quotes for subtheme - Impact on self-efficacy

<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. <b>Martin:</b> <i>"At the moment surrounding this issue we do not know enough about it, when we do it makes sense that we support".</i> Transcript 2: Line Number 217-218.</li><li>2. <b>Andrew:</b> <i>"It's probably one of the areas that people are generally less well supported or knowledgeable on".</i> Transcription 1: Line Number 120-121.</li><li>3. <b>Nia:</b> <i>"I suppose the more training you have the more confident you are".</i> Transcript 6: Line Number 245-246.</li></ol>
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### 5.2.2 Not understanding what it means to be 'trans'

Emily's statement of *"I [...] spoke to the Head Teacher [...] and she actually said that she didn't know whether it was another phase, or fad coming through transgender"* (Transcript 7: Line Number 84-86) was felt to be a powerful quote and one which may give some insight into the wider systemic issues that can influence negative school experiences for transgender pupils. Ann's first comment in table 17 also shows how a lack of knowledge within the wider school system can lead to misconceptions around transgender.

Ann felt it was important to increase others understanding as she believed it could be positively correlated with a reduction in staff discrimination (Quote 2, Table 17).

The need for training links with this subtheme also, as Kate discussed how understanding the transition process could help develop staff confidence (Quote 3, table 17)

Table 17: Example quotes for subtheme - Not understanding what it means to be 'trans'

1. **Ann:** *"I do remember when it was first disclosed, a member of staff did say it's just another ASD control thing and that wasn't very nice to hear".* Transcript 5: Line Number: 269-270.
2. **Ann:** *"All discrimination is due to ignorance, so most of the time not knowing the facts and you making your own presumptions about things umm yeah and you know there may be members of staff who just don't get it".* Transcript 5: Line Number: 165-167.
3. **Kate:** *"You can almost relate to a death but actually if you can't relate to a child who's transitioned there might be that fear of not knowing what to do".* Transcript 3: Line Number 141-144.

### 5.2.3 Triggers emotional response

The overarching theme 'Implications of not feeling knowledgeable' highlights a need for more information, however not feeling knowledgeable also appeared to trigger feelings of fear and avoidance for some staff and pupils. This is evident in Nia and Martin's first and second quotes in table 18.

In Martin's second comment (Quote 3, table 18) he reflects on how some staff might feel embarrassed to ask for help from those in senior leadership positions. One possible implication of not seeking support due to fear or embarrassment however is reflected in Kate's quote (Quote 4, Table 18).

In addition, Sally's comment (Quote 5, Table 18) suggests how a lack of information can leave staff feeling that they are working in isolation.

Table 18: *Example quotes for subtheme - Triggers emotional response*

1. **Nia:** *“Sometimes staff and pupils react in a way because they don’t know how else to react and they have never been told how to say this so they are afraid”*. Transcript 6: Line Number 179-181.
2. **Martin:** *“I think a lot of people are afraid to talk about it because they just don’t know how to, or will go well stop talking about that now”*. Transcription 2: Line Number 319-320.
3. **Martin:** *“Some might feel embarrassed to go to the head (Head-Teacher) to say I don’t understand this issue because they [...] feel like they should if that makes sense?”* Transcript 2: Line Number 288-390.
4. **Kate:** *“There are some staff who might feel that they don’t have enough information to support the child so they’d rather not support them than support them in the wrong way”*. Transcription 3: Line Number 133-135.
5. **Sally:** *“We are kind of working, paddling on our own”* (Transcription 4: Line Number 277-278).

#### 5.2.4 Using other sources for information

While it is not uncommon for professionals, such as teachers, to independently seek information from a variety of sources, what defines this subtheme as significant is the rationale for why staff were needing to search for additional resources.

Martin’s first quote (Quote 1, Table 19) highlights that there is a lack of information available to staff within his school which has resulted in him seeking information from other pupils, including pupils who are also part of the LGBT community. This led the researcher to reflect whether others who are

seen to be part of the LGBT community are positioned as ‘experts’ regardless of whether they themselves might identify as transgender.

Martin’s first and second quotes (Quotes 1 and 2, Table 19) may also suggest that information from other agencies and systems may not be forthcoming, or easy to access. This was addressed by Ann (see quotes 3 and 4, table 19)

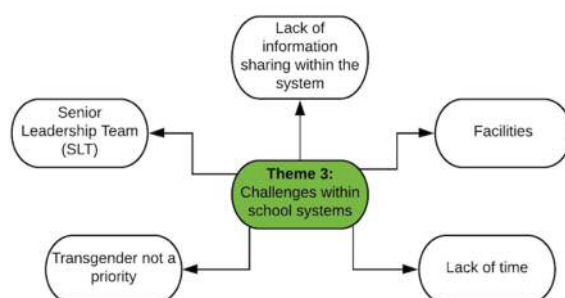
In quotes 3 and 4 (table 19), Ann highlights how she seeks information online as there is a lack of information and training available. Quote 4 arguably raises concerns for the transgender pupils who are not fortunate to be in schools where staff are ‘totally inclusive’.

Table 19: Examples of quotes for subtheme – Using other sources of information

1. **Martin:** *“I wouldn’t know who to go to in school anyway to talk to, or ask questions about other than the pupils themselves”*. Transcription 2: Line Number 119
2. **Martin:** *“I had another conversation with a pupil who’s left now and he was openly gay himself [...] and I was like I don’t understand, I don’t get it and he had to explain it (Transgender) to me”*.  
Transcription 2: Line Number 66-69.
3. **Ann:** *“Basically there is not a lot (of information) that I am aware of, but good friend Google”*. Transcript 5: Line Number 217.
4. **Ann:** *“We’ve never had any particular training or anything like that I think we’re very lucky that we have staff who are just accepting totally inclusive”*. Transcription 5: Line Number 117-118.

### **5.3 Theme 3: Challenges within school systems**

When discussing what the most prevalent issues are for staff, the participants made reference to five distinctive areas that have been challenging for them within the school system. Relevant subthemes are detailed in Figure 4 below:



**Figure 4:** *Thematic map for RQ1, Theme 3*

#### **5.3.1 Facilities**

Within this subtheme two distinctive issues were raised in relation to facilities; toilets and changing facilities.

Toilets were a common concern raised, as was the moral dilemma that occurs when appropriate unisex, or gendered facilities are not available and pupils need to use areas labelled as 'disabled' (Quote 7, table 20). Nia's quote (Quote 2, Table 20) suggests that the issue with toilets is more about a need for a space which is safe and inclusive.

Moral dilemmas were also raised in relation to changing facilities, quote 3 (Table 20) suggests that issues surrounding changing facilities were felt to be more complex and challenging for staff to address as they do not solely impact the transgender pupils.

Discussions around changing facilities was the first time that participants appeared to construct gender identity as being separate to gendered appearance. Within these discussions the dissonance between how someone



identifies and how someone looks appeared to be challenging for some staff to understand in relation to how the issues around changing facilities could, or should, be addressed. This is evident in quotes 4 and 5.

Furthermore, Andrew's quote (Quote 6, table 20) suggests that different staff roles can influence how participants thought about use of facilities. While quote 6 (Table 20) highlights the complex task that staff have in trying to adhere to relevant policies, whilst also balancing the needs and rights of all pupils, the researcher reflected on whether Andrew's concerns are influenced in part by his awareness of the systemic consequences that schools can face if not seen to meeting the needs of all pupils. Staff whose role was solely teaching based raised concerns that tended to focus less on policy and more on the logistical daily challenges, as evidenced in quote 7 (table 20).

Overall, responses suggest that issues around 'facilities' are multi-faceted because of the complexities relating to personal boundaries and wanting to meet the needs of all pupils.

Table 20: Examples of quotes for subtheme - Facilities

1. **Emily:** *"We've got the disabled toilet they can use [...] well then let's take the disabled sign away and just put toilet".* Transcription 7: Line Number 274-275.
2. **Nia:** *"That day when I went on that course made me realise how lucky we are because there are children in schools where there are clearly just boys and girl's toilets and then for our pupils who are transitioning at least they've got that safe space because toilets are a huge issue".* Transcription 6: Line Number 203-206.
3. **Emily:** *"The local authority say you can choose your gender, so if you have a male body and see yourself as a female you should be able to use the female changing rooms, but how as a school do we deal with that with parents?"* Transcription 7: Line Number 261-262.

4. **Kate:** *"I am very open minded and I am accepting to all, however I wouldn't want my twelve-year-old in a changing room with a male exterior I mean you know she may see herself as female, but looking at her she's not and I think that's a very difficult area, but I don't like the idea that it's ok they can use the disabled toilet because they are not disabled".* Transcription 7: Line Number 265-268.
5. **Martin:** *"The fact that he identifies as a male, but then everything else looks wise and mannerism wise is you know female how does that fair with going to the boys changing rooms?".* Transcription 2: Line Numbers 89-91.
6. **Andrew:** *"What's not helpful is when you have to weigh it up between child protection and doing right by the child and the other act. I say that because if they insist they want to be Luke and not Lowri they have the right to be able to go into the changing room with the other pupils and I think that's a safe-guarding issue personally".* Transcription 1: Line Number 100-103.
7. **Emily:** *"The changing rooms over in the leisure centre, so we've got the girls changing rooms and the boys changing rooms so then what about [NAME] (transgender/gender fluid pupils) where do they go?".* Transcription 7: Line Number 259-261.

### 5.3.2 Senior Leadership Team (SLT)

The involvement of the Senior Leadership Team was discussed as an important part of the school system, for example, Martin and Kate's quotes (1 and 2, table 21) provide some insight as to why staff feel the need to use other sources for information and why transgender may not be fully understood.

When considering how positive change could be affected within their schools for transgender pupils, Andrew's quote (quote 3, table 21) suggested how there would need to be a shift towards a whole school change, however he acknowledges that creating meaningful change within the system may be more challenging.

While Andrew does not specifically state that the difficulty in creating whole school change is due to a lack of support from senior leaders, the researcher reflected on how this would most likely need to be influenced by a top-down approach. Kate's experiences suggest that a bottom-up approach can be challenging when hierarchal systems are not willing to change; explaining how, in her school, she has "challenged the head about this (addressing transgender pupils needs), but it's not going to change" (Transcript 7: Line Number 242-243).

Table 21: Example of quotes for subtheme –Senior Leadership Team (SLT).

1. **Martin:** *"It's just the head of year and I don't think that they have had the amount of training that they need"*. Transcription 2: Line Number 106-107.
2. **Kate:** *"I would check on an SLT level what do we do, where do I go? But I don't even know if they would know"*. Transcription 3: Line Number 148-149.
3. **Andrew:** *"It's the simple little changes that can make the difference, but I think staff need to be aware that we can make mistakes and that transgender pupils are generally fine because they are learning as well and you know I think it's just (pause) I think it needs to be teacher led by the whole school, but I think the whole school need to be on board (sighed) and I think that's where we'll always have difficulty"*. Transcription 1: Line Number 19-21.

### 5.3.3 Transgender not a priority

Quote 1 and 3 (Martin and Sally, Table 22) highlights how it can be difficult to create inclusive schools for transgender pupils when their needs are not seen to be a priority. Participant responses suggest that this is partially due to transgender pupils being a minority, in comparison to the volume of pupils with other 'needs'.

Sally highlights in quote 2 how this impacted on the accessibility that transgender pupils have to EP support.

Table 22: Examples of quotes for subtheme – Transgender not a priority

1. **Martin:** *"If we went to the Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinator, or someone like that he's dealing with a whole range of issues and the wellbeing person is dealing with thousands of issues all the time, so I mean you kind of get it in that we have only 4 or 5 students identifying as transgender, or gender fluid whereas we've got fifty students suffering with other issues".* Transcription 2: 112-117.
  
2. **Sally:** *"To be honest we have such a limited access to the Educational Psychology Service, their time is predominantly taken up with behaviour needs rather than actually dealing with anything of a pastoral nature...Educational Psychology is really limited in this school so there isn't actually support for pastoral, or emotional needs it's all behaviour or educational needs".* Transcription 4: Line Number 241-245.
  
3. **Emily:** *"[...] transgender pupils aren't high on the list of pupils do you know what I mean?"*  
**Researcher:** *Because they are not causing any problems?*  
**Emily:** *No, they try to be quite quiet lets be fair*  
**Researcher:** *I think that's a really good point actually*

**Emily:** [...] *I think because most schools will only have one-two, maximum of three in any whole year [...] that's not really a priority over attendance, or wellbeing because something else is higher they sort of do tend to go unnoticed*". Transcription 7: Line Number 219-229.

#### 5.3.4 Lack of information sharing within the system

Quotes 1 and 2 (Table 23), highlights how lack of information provided in relation to specific transgender pupils was felt to be insufficient and how 'pockets of information' tended to exist, but were not being disseminated to relevant teachers.

Sally commented how she was "*one of the only people in the school that is up to date with terminology*" (Transcription 4: Line Number 183-184) having previously acknowledged that this was an issue for staff within her school. This may indicate that staff within the schools are not disseminating information to upskill others and may suggest a lack of communication between staff. This was pertinent in Emily's school as she described information sharing in relation to transgender support as "sort of a Chinese whispers thing [...]" (Transcription 7: Line Number 256-260).

Quote 4 (Table 23), suggests that there is a lack of information sharing at a systemic level and provides some insight into how schools could be supported to feel more informed.

Table 23: Examples of quotes for subtheme – Lack of information sharing within the system.

1. **Martin:** "*The most we get is an email to say this person has changed their name to such and such and we are going to call them him or her and this person doesn't identify as any gender at the moment so if your splitting or if you're doing a boy girl seating plan please be*

*aware of that and um that's all we get". Transcription 2: Line Number 101-104.*

2. **Kate:** *"For the transgender children we have, they are fully supported and have counsellors and stuff, but no member of staff is given information on counselling the only thing you would know is if the child is marked out of your class so it could be that there is support provided, but as teachers [...] we don't know that information [...]"*

*Transcription 3: Line Number 29-31.*

3. **Kate:** *"An issue at home, the information won't go to all staff, but to the staff that are directly working with that child so as a school we don't find out all the information about everyone it just goes to the pockets of staff". Transcription 3: Line Number 95-98.*

4. **Kate:** *"Nothing apart from the name changes, nothing comes out about the transgender students at all, not even if there's such a thing as a local authority booklet nothing, so that's the thing... that's difficult, nothing is fed to staff apart from a name change".*

*Transcription 3: Line Number 107-109.*

### 5.3.5 A lack of time

Quotes 1 and 2 (Table 24) indicate how a lack of time can make it challenging for staff to engage in pastoral and wellbeing roles to support transgender pupils. For example, staff highlighted the need for time to be prioritised and dedicated to continued professional development (CPD) and opportunities to discuss the topic of 'trans' in PSE lessons with pupils. Quote 3 (Table 24) highlights how different school values can dictate what opportunities are available to discuss topics such as transgender.

Furthermore, Nia's quote (Quote 4, Table 24) highlights how a lack of time available and a lack of time dedicated to increasing staff knowledge is an issue despite the best intentions of some staff.

Table 24: Examples of quotes for subtheme – A lack of time

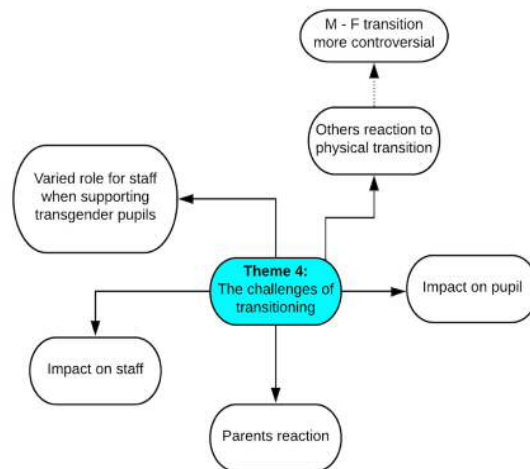
1. **Sally:** *"I think teaching timetables are so full at the moment and the pressure is so much [...] having the time to actually build the relationship support the pupils, support the friendship groups, keep that link keep up to date with everything is a struggle for them".*  
*Transcription 4: Line Number 150-153.*
2. **Kate:** *"We've raised as school that the support is not sufficient for that child umm so it could be that some staff are thinking that I just don't have the time without being selfish, but not the time throughout the school day to have quality support for that child to get them through whatever they are going through".* Transcription 3: Line Number 137-141.
3. **Martin:** *"I taught sex education and that kind of umm it was that really open environment where everybody was included and everyone understood and everyone talked about different things whereas now we do it for 25 minutes a week in form time and by the time we've done everything else in form its usually about 15 minutes we don't actually deal with anything to do with it and we need more of that".* Further highlighting how *"it would be good to have PSE lessons on timetable".* 2: 352-356.
4. **Nia:** *"[...] the school is so busy, with all the best will in the world and all the best intention of I'm going to read that, I'm going to find this out... until you're actually told this hour is devoted to this, here's the information and you are actually given it, some people don't go and source it even though it's something they intend on doing so even if*

*just an hour was devoted to just training people then that would be beneficial".* Transcription 6: Line Number: 266-271.

#### 5.4 Theme 4: The Challenges of transitioning

This theme highlights the prominent challenges faced by staff when working with, or supporting pupils through their transition journey. Participants spoke about key aspects of the transition which they felt were difficult for the pupils and for those around them, such as parents and staff.

What was clear in all interviews was the participants commitment to wanting to work with pupils in the best way they knew how and it was during these discussions that it became clear to the researcher how varied the participants' roles were. Figure 5 below details subthemes included in this theme:



**Figure 5:** *Thematic Map for RQ1, Theme 4*

##### 5.4.1 Impact on pupil

This subtheme highlights the negative impact the transition was felt to have had in relation to pupils' emotional wellbeing, school experience relationships and academic attainment.



Nia was the only participant to make reference to a specific time whereby a pupil had not officially made it known to others, or school, that they were wishing to change their gender identity, but had started to make small changes to their appearance that were being noticed and commented on negatively by others (Quote 1, Table 25). This was felt to be particularly insightful because it highlights a time which could be potentially challenging or lonely for transgender pupils. Nia's quote highlights a potential 'grey area' whereby staff are aware that this is what pupils are wanting to do, but feel unable to offer support as they may be conscious of not wanting to get it wrong, or offend, despite knowing that a pupil may be struggling. The researcher questioned whether the 'stage before' transition (as referenced by Nia) should be acknowledged more by staff, as this may be when pupils are at their most vulnerable, or would benefit from a trusted confidant

Kate made reference in quotes 2 and 3 (Table 25) to feeling concerned about addressing the topic with pupils when it may not be clear if pupils are choosing to identify as the opposite gender. Kate noted how she was conscious of saying something wrong, which links with theme 1 (*'Afraid to offend'*).

Both Ann and Emily's quotes (Quotes 4 and 5, Table 25) suggests that it might be important for staff to move past a level of uncertainty and fear to offer support, as pupils may not be receiving support from others within the systems around them, which as highlighted in both Ann and Emily's comments, can have negative consequences.

Table 25: Examples quotes for subtheme – Impact on pupil

1. **Nia:** *"I think it does impact on them when they are going through the stage before they are ready to transition and I think that takes a lot out of them"*. Transcript 6: Line Number 8-10.
2. **Kate:** *"It's almost like, I don't know whether taboo is the right word, but I wouldn't feel comfortable saying to the child is there any way*

*that I could support you because you wouldn't want to point out to that child that there is an issue in the first place".* Transcription 3: Line Number 61-64.

3. **Kate:** *"I don't know if there was a grey area of what is appropriate to say I don't know".* Transcription 3: Line Number 187-188.

4. **Ann:** *"Family wasn't accepting at all and unfortunately she on maybe three or four occasions while in school took tablets. Ambulances had to be called it wasn't positive at all, it was a real hard challenge".* Transcript 5: Line Number 75-78.

5. **Emily:** *"She did have a lot of problems within the community which is why she moved schools and so on".* Transcript 7: Line Number 17-18.

#### 5.4.2 Impact on staff

When participants were aware that pupils may be self-harming or experiencing family rejection, they discussed the negative impact that this had on them also. This was discussed frequently by Ann as evidenced in Quotes 1 and 2 (Table 26).

This theme also relates to the need for staff to provide individualised approaches when they are aware that pupil may be struggling socially or emotionally, as detailed in quotes 3 and 4 (Table 26).

Andrew's comment (Quote 5) highlights that it can be challenging when trying to do right by the pupil, whilst also acknowledging other issues in the systems around the pupil.

Table 26: Examples of quotes used in subtheme – Impact on staff

1. **Ann:** *“I was quite upset by that experience because I felt that they were lost and they did not have any support which is why there were cries for help with the tablets all the time [...] it was quite a harrowing experience”. Transcript 5: Line Number 83-85.*
2. **Ann:** *“Inside you feel really frustrated because you’ve done everything you possibly can, but when that student goes home and there is no support from the family and that’s really heart-breaking”. Transcript 5: Line Number 140-142.*
3. **Ann:** *“They didn’t want to go, at first they said can we come and sit with you so I said that’s not usually the norm sitting with staff but we can see what we can do. After a lot and I tried to get them involved in lots of fundraisers for the prom and things like that and they were ok. They sat on a table with their peers, but it was only a short distance away from me so I left them there and just to see them on the dance floor just being themselves it was amazing”. Transcript 5: Line Number 62-65.*
4. **Nia:** *“You have to deal with it in a way that makes them feel better about it, about themselves”. Transcript 6: 55-56.*
5. **Andrew:** *“A lot of the time they can be confused and some can be very certain [...] the challenges are trying to do the best thing for the children and the family, but also do the right thing for the other children in the school”. Transcript 1:Line 9-12.*

#### 5.4.3 Varied role for staff when supporting transgender pupils

Participant responses revealed how varied their roles within schools can be, particularly when supporting transgender pupils. Information gathered within

this subtheme highlights how staff adopted a person-centred and individual approach to their work with pupils. For example, Ann's quote (Quote 1, Table 27) highlights the personalised approach she took to ensure a pupil felt confident and included enough to attend a school prom and Nia's quote (Quote 2, Table 27) highlights why individual approaches may be considered important.

In addition, Andrew's comment provides a meta perspective in relation to how varied the teaching role can be when needing to support the pupil and the various systems around them (Quote 3, Table 27).

Table 27: Examples of quotes from subtheme – Varied role for staff when supporting transgender pupils

1. **Ann:** *"They didn't want to go, at first they said can we come and sit with you so I said that's not usually the norm sitting with staff but we can see what we can do. After a lot and I tried to get them involved in lots of fundraisers for the prom and things like that and they were ok. They sat on a table with their peers, but it was only a short distance away from me so I left them there and just to see them on the dance floor just being themselves it was amazing".* Transcript 5: Line Number 62-65.
2. **Nia:** *"You have to deal with it in a way that makes them feel better about it, about themselves".* Transcript 6: Line Number 55-56.
3. **Andrew:** *"A lot of the time they can be confused and some can be very certain [...] the challenges are trying to do the best thing for the children and the family, but also do the right thing for the other children in the school".* Transcript 1: Line Number 9-12.

#### 5.4.4 Parents reaction

Supporting parents once they are aware of their child's decision to identify as a different gender was identified as an 'issue' for some staff, particularly Sally, as detailed in quote 1 (Table 28).

In addition, Sally's comment, quote 2 (Table 28) suggests that staff may find parents reactions particularly challenging because they are aware and able to observe the negative impact that parent reactions can have on the pupils themselves.

Andrew's comments also highlighted how parental rejection can add to the work that staff need to undertake as detailed in quote 3 (Table 28).

Table 28: Examples of quotes from subtheme – Parent reaction.

1. **Sally:** *"The biggest challenge we have is parents and actually getting parental acceptance".* Transcript 4: 104-105
2. **Sally:** *"The parents are like not my child, not my child. We do get a lot of parents saying no not my child and then the kid tends to withdraw quite a bit".* Transcript 4: Line Number 105-106.
3. **Andrew:** *"It's the parents who if they are split 50/50, saying no I don't agree, it's not going to happen then we say ok we have to work together on this for what's best for the child".* Transcript 1: Line Number 63-65.
4. **Ann:** *"You can put all the support guidance and agencies in with the family, but if the family don't want to take that on board its really difficult".* Transcript 5: Line Number 146-148.

#### 5.4.5 Others reaction to physical transition

The reaction of peers appeared to vary across different settings, for example during both Nia and Emily's interviews, they made reference to times when peers had been discriminatory towards transgender pupils. In comparison to all other participants, who credited their pupils with being understanding, respectful and accepting once a peer had made their decision to transition known and began changing their appearance. However, the negative views of staff were a common issue raised by participants.

This subtheme specifically explores why some school staff's reaction to transgender pupils can be more negative in comparison to pupils. Quote 2 (Table 29) is an example given by Emily of a time when a staff member reacted negatively towards a pupil who had socially transitioned.

While this extract explicitly highlights how the reactions from staff can be more of an issue in comparison to pupils, Emily's account does not provide further insight as to why staff find appearance difficult to adapt to. However, within some of the interviews, there was a discussion around the fact that male to female transition was more difficult for staff to make sense of, in comparison to female to male. This is explored in the next subtheme.

Table 29: Examples of quotes from subtheme- Others reaction to physical transition

1. **Emily:** *"It was a staff issue rather than a pupil issue".* Transcription 7: Line Number 13.
  
2. **Emily:** *"A couple of years ago one of our male pupils turned up wearing skirt and tights. The comments and the whispers that you could hear [...] was mainly from staff".* Transcription 7: Line Number 205-206.

#### 5.4.5.1 Male to female transition more controversial

Nia explained how staff found male to female (M-F) transition more controversial than female to male (F-M) and commented particularly on how physical appearance was an implication, this is detailed in quote 1 (Table 30).

Furthermore, in his school Andrew discussed how his only experiences have been with pupils who have transitioned F-M, but perceives the M-F transition to be more challenging because of physical appearance (as detailed in quote 2, table 30).

In trying to understand why M-F is perceived as more challenging the researcher discussed this further with Andrew. Andrew's response as detailed in quote 3 (Table 30), has two main constructions. The first being that is perceived to be harder for males to present as feminine, in comparison to women wanting to present as more masculine. The second is the need for people to 'pass' visually as a certain gender.

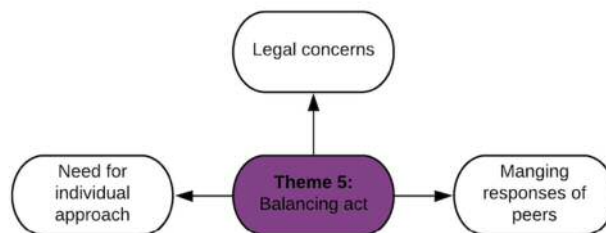
Table 30: Example quotes from subtheme- Male to female transition more controversial

1. **Nia:** *"The other young person who I spoke about earlier, they transitioned born a female and transitioned to a male and I don't even think people noticed, it wasn't seen as such a huge thing. Staff were talking about the person who is now a female more than they ever did about the other person and I just think it's mainly on that physical appearance".* Transcription 6: Line Number 166-170.
2. **Andrew:** *"We haven't had it the other way around yet where a boy wants to be a girl, or wants to wear a skirt. I think that will be even harder one to... not hard, it will be more of a challenge".* Transcription 1: Line Number 268-270.

3. **Andrew:** “I think it’s a very bold statement from the boy to do that and they all know in that sense they’ll be brought in and people will see them straight off and this is most probably a little bit of naivety maybe, but the girls find it a lot easier because they wear trousers anyway”. Transcription 1: Line Number 272-274.

### 5.5 Theme 5: Balancing Act

The theme aims to capture the challenges that were referred to by participants in regards to trying to meet the needs of all pupils and wanting to ensure that all pupils felt supported and heard. The subthemes within this theme are highlighted in Figure 6 below:



**Figure 6:** *Thematic Map for RQ1, Theme 5*

The researcher acknowledges that some of the data extracts and analysis discussed within these subthemes could have sat within other themes and subthemes such as ‘*Varied role*’, ‘*Facilities*’ and ‘*Others reaction to physical transition*’, however the researcher felt it to be appropriate to analyse them separately in order to provide a deeper insight as to why staff were conscious about wanting to meet the needs of all pupils and not wanting to be perceived as prioritising either transgender pupils, or their peers. The researcher felt that this depth of analysis, the ‘why?’, has not been explored within other themes.

#### 5.5.1 Managing responses of peers

Although participants spoke frequently about wanting to ensure that the needs of transgender pupils were met, this theme highlights how there is also a



concern for other pupils and not neglecting their views and needs. This is highlighted by Andrew's comment (Quote 1, Table 31). Given Andrew's position within the SLT, the researcher wondered whether he was more conscious of maintaining a meta perspective within the system.

Quote 1 was also interesting to the researcher as it positions transgender students and cisgender students in two separate groups. The researcher also wondered whether the numerical comparison is potentially a way of justifying his own views and practices.

Andrew's comment (Quote 2, Table 31) suggests that he himself is unsure whether it is right to expect other pupils to be accommodating. If schools see acceptance as a 'grey area', whereby some individuals are accepted without question, but wider acceptance for others is a 'grey area', this may have the potential to create a discriminatory environment.

A concern for other pupil's views when the needs of transgender pupils are met was also discussed by Martin in relation to the use of facilities (Quote 3, Table 31). Responses suggest there is a concern amongst staff, that meeting the needs of one group potentially disadvantages another.

In comparison, Nia appeared to be more concerned about needing to manage and contain the negative responses of peers (Quotes 4 and 5, Table 31). The researcher felt quote 5 (Table 31) to be good reflection of the overarching theme 'Balancing Act', as Nia describes the difficulty staff have in addressing all views to support inclusivity.

Nia also discussed the important role that teachers have in developing inclusivity and setting boundaries for what is and is not acceptable in quote 6 (Table 31), however quote 5 (Table 31) suggests that she also acknowledges the challenges of doing so.

Table 31: Example of quotes from subtheme – Managing responses of peers

1. **Andrew:** *“As a school we are not breaking the law by trying to support all the other children in the school as well as those 2% who are vitally important, but it’s also the other 98% and we need to protect them as well to make sure that they are still safe”. Transcript 1: Line 339-343.*
2. **Andrew:** *“It’s been presented to me from others that actually no, the other pupils they have to get used to it [...] that’s my biggest sort of grey area”. Transcript 1: Line Number 103-105.*
3. **Martin:** *“I suppose technically they should be going into the boys changing rooms, but then how do the boys feel about that”. Transcript 2: Line Number 91-93.*
4. **Nia:** *“Although it’s becoming more normal shall we say, there is still this prejudice [...] against trans young people so it’s just being very aware and very vigilant”. Transcript 6: Line Number 6-7.*
5. **Nia:** *“It’s about finding a balance because when you speak to people who don’t understand they say it’s because your rubbing it in our faces, or throwing it down our throats and I don’t want that either, I don’t want it to be like you oh have to listen”. Transcript 6: Line Number 123-125.*
6. **Nia:** *“I think as a teacher it is my job to educate [...] and the only way for people, all people, race, gender, whatever to be accepted is to educate people to realise that this is just who they are and that you know it’s not a case that you think its ok to say x y z”. Transcript 6: 114-118.*

### 5.5.2 Need for individual approach

The need to adopt a person-centred way of working when supporting transgender pupils is echoed within this theme (See Nia's quote 7, Table 32) and links with subtheme 'varied role of staff' (Theme 4). Although Nia felt that resources such as Local Authority transgender resources were helpful to staff, she further highlighted the importance of a person-centred approach in quote 2 (Table 32) and the need to go beyond ready-made resources.

When discussing their own experiences, participants made reference to how past experiences have all been different, this was reflected in Ann's comment (Quote 1, Table 32). The researcher had initially wondered whether having past experiences to draw upon would have made participants more confident, however it appeared that this was not necessarily true for some participants. It appeared that participants felt it to be important to do what is best for the pupils and acknowledge their views and needs, as highlighted in Andrew, Ann and Nia's comments (Quote 4, 5 and 6, Table 32).

Table 32: Examples of quotes from subtheme- Need for individual approach

1. **Ann:** "My two-main one's were both totally different characters and are totally different experiences". Transcript 5: Line Number 3-4.
2. **Nia:** "*I think it was very good and I would still consult it now if I was trying to find some information [...] but I do think it's all individual you know and I think every case is different*". Transcription 6: Line Number 49-54.
3. **Nia:** "*It might be that I would have to approach it totally different*". Transcription 6: Line Number 68- 72.
4. **Andrew:** "*They are coming to us wanting to be called a different name different pronoun and actually at this stage parents haven't*

*had those conversations with their children so we tread very carefully listen to the child and take on their views and concerns". Transcript 1: Line Number 6-8.*

**5. Ann:** *"I think it was just being open to the child's needs and I think that the good communication with mum at that time, the modified timetable was put into place for a couple of hours each day. My approach with mum was to make it so that they make it to school when they make it. Just because that they are doing 9 till 11 for example, if something happens in the morning and they are so anxious that they can't make it here until half past ten that's fine, its having that flexibility". Transcript 5: Line Number 276-284.*

**6. Nia:** *"It was very much you know just telling certain people it wasn't a huge you know, it wasn't a case of coming in one day and saying this is who I am it was very small steps". Transcript 6: Line Number 38-39.*

**7. Nia:** *"You have to see it from the child or young person's point of view and deal with it in a way that makes them feel better about it, about themselves". Transcript 6: Line Number 54-56.*

### 5.5.3 Legal Concerns

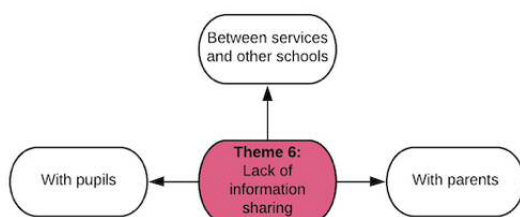
Although policy was not considered to be an area of concern for the participants, Andrew was the only participant to comment on his worries in regards to action and legal concerns (Quote 1, Table 33). As reflected on before, this may be because Andrew's position within the SLT encourages a more meta perspective and consideration of the wider consequences that schools could be faced with if they are not seen to be inclusive to all pupils.

Table 33: Example quotes for subtheme- Legal Concerns

1. **Andrew:** *“Know legally whether we are doing the right thing, as well and not doing them an injustice and we are not breaking the law by trying to support all the other children in the school as well as those 2% who are vitally important”*. Transcript 1: Line Number

## **5.6 Theme 6: Lack of information sharing**

Issues relating to a lack of information sharing was a concept that was touched upon by all participants, with a lack of information sharing impacting the level of support that is afforded to pupils. The need for more accessible information was also a consistent issue raised. Subthemes related to this theme are detailed in Figure 7 below:



**Figure 7:** *Thematic map for RQ1, Theme 6*

### **5.6.1 With Parents**

Although Kate was the only participant to comment on the lack of information which is shared between home and school in relation to transgender pupils, her comment below (Table 34) may be important to consider when thinking about meeting the needs of pupils holistically.

Other participants, such as Ann, discussed how important it was in their experience to have positive relationships with parents, particularly in the case where the pupil felt unable to attend school (Transcript 5: Line Number)

Table 34: Example Quote for subtheme- With parents

1. **Kate:** *“We don’t much get any feedback in how things are going at home, or how things are at home, we just get this child will now be known as X. So, the issues are the lack of information for us I suppose”.* Transcript 3: Line Number 29-31.

### 5.6.2 With Pupils

While a lack of training and knowledge has been discussed as an issue for staff and is felt to be a contributing factor to a lack of understanding, some participants such as Martin, Emily, Nia and Sally recognised a need to develop pupils understanding in order to create a system that is truly inclusive. When this point was raised by Emily she was the only participant to state that pupils may benefit from information in relation to the topic of ‘LGBT’ more generally (Quote 1, Table 35). In addition, Sally also felt that having information specifically for pupils could help to create a more inclusive school environment (Quote 4, table 35).

The topic of educating pupils in relation to transgender was felt to be an important issue to Martin, as noted in quote 2 (table 35). Within this quote Martin also spoke about how Physical, Sex Education (PSE) could be utilised more to educate pupils and highlighted a need for better resources. Quote 3 (Table 35) highlights why Martin believes this to be important.

Table 35: Examples of quotes from subtheme- With Pupils

1. **Emily:** *“I don’t think it’s just transgender, I think it’s all LGBT”.* Transcript 7:79.
2. **Martin:** *“We don’t do enough PSE and what we do is not good enough and outdated, so we could do more in the sense of that”.* Transcript 2: Line Number 349-350.

3. **Martin:** *“We don’t actually deal with anything to do with it and we need more of that [...] as open and as accepting as the pupils are I don’t think they understand as much as we think they do, they’re still quite young and naïve”*. Transcript 355-358.
4. **Sally:** *“It would be really useful if there was some sort of resource for pupils”*. Transcript 4: Line Number 279-280.
5. **Sally:** *“The kids are aware, so that they know what’s going on”*. Transcript 4: Line Number 98.

### 5.6.3 Between Other Services and Schools

Quotes 1-5 (Table 36) highlights that a common issue amongst participants was the lack of information which is made available to them.

In addition to a lack of support for staff, Kate’s quote 3 and 6 (Table 36) suggests that there is not also enough information shared regarding what support is available for pupils.

Table 36: Examples of quotes from subtheme- Between other services and schools

1. **Ann:** *“Basically there’s not a lot that I’m aware of but good friend Google...I would find it if I needed, but not a lot that I’m aware of in (Local Authority name) or nationally”*. Transcription 5: Line Number 214-218.
2. **Kate:** *“There’s nothing on a professional learning level at all, there’s just not enough information full stop”*. Transcription 3: Line Number 86-87.

3. **Kate:** *“I don’t know even in the community what’s available for children”*. Transcription 3: Line Number 122-123.
4. **Sally:** *“Within the local authority there is hardly anything that schools can access”*. Transcription 4: Line Number 256.
5. **Martin:** *“I don’t know if there is training that is available”*.  
Transcription 2: Line Number 36-37.
6. **Kate:** *“Although I am really supportive of the child I don’t have any specific information about how to support the child so that’s something that would be useful”*. Transcription 3: Line Number 18-21.

**6.0 Findings for RQ2:** What types of support do teachers feel would be useful to receive?

The table below, provides an overview of the 4 themes and corresponding subthemes which were identified within the analysis for RQ2, each will be discussed in turn.

Table 37: Overview of themes and subthemes for RQ2

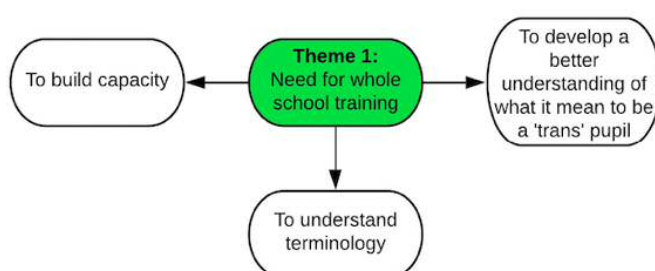
Theme Number	Main Theme	Subthemes
1	A need for whole school training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To build capacity</li> <li>• To understand Terminology</li> <li>• To help develop a better understanding of what it means to be a ‘trans’ pupil</li> </ul>
2	Information for all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That staff can disseminate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Information that is trustworthy</li> </ul> </li> <li>• To educate pupils</li> <li>• That is accessible</li> </ul>
3	Need for Expert Advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need for professional advice</li> <li>• To ensure that staff feel supported</li> <li>• To help staff prepare for pupil transition</li> </ul>



<b>4</b>	Need for transgender friendly schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need for positive relationships</li> <li>• Need for peer support</li> </ul>
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### 6.1 Theme 1: A need for whole school training

Within this theme there are three subthemes which relate to why training is needed, subthemes are *detailed in Figure 8 below*:



**Figure 8:** *Thematic map for RQ2, Theme 1*

The need for whole school training was generally felt to be a beneficial first step in developing a greater awareness and understanding in relation to transgender. Quotes 1 and 2 (Kate and Andrew, Table 38) highlight why staff felt training would be useful.

In regards to how training should be delivered, Martins quote (Quote 3, Table 38), suggests that training on a whole school level would be more beneficial. When reviewing information gathered from all interviews, the need for whole school training was generally considered to be what was needed.

Table 38: Examples of quotes for subtheme- A need for whole school training

<p>1. <b>Kate:</b> <i>“I think as a starter point it would be helpful as a whole staff to explain these are the key issues, this is the number of children who might be effected”. Transcript 3: Line Number 276-277.</i></p>
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2. **Andrew:** *“Somebody to talk about umm about transgender in the whole”. Transcript 1: Line Number 118-119.*

3. **Martin:** *“I think personally... I see whole schoolish would be more beneficial”. Transcript 2: Line Number 191.*

As relevant data extracts are the same for subthemes *'To build capacity'* and *'To understand terminology'*, the researcher has chosen to discuss these two subthemes together.

### 6.1.1 To Build Capacity and To Understand Terminology

Quotes 1, 2, 3 and 6 below (Table 39) highlight how staff perceived training to be an avenue to increase capacity amongst school staff to support pupils effectively. In addition, quote 3 (Table 39), highlights that training would be beneficial if it were to provide some clarity in regards to terminology.

Martin's comment (Quote 1, Table 39) was interesting to the researcher as it provides a rationale for needing to develop transgender friendly schools. The researcher wondered whether only having certain staff members within the system who are able to support pupils may potentially position the needs of transgender pupils as more complex, and in need of more specialist support.

Martin's comment (quote 2, Table 39) suggests a desire to create a more inclusive and nurturing environment. This was echoed in Kate's response (Quote 2, Table 39). Within this quote Kate provides further suggestion for how training could be disseminated, noting how a tiered approach may be helpful as not all staff may need in-depth.

The researcher felt quotes 3, 4 and 5 (Table 39) to be particularly interesting in regards to the need for training and why participants felt it would be useful. However, the language used within each of these quotes encouraged the

researcher to reflect on whether participants held a construction of there being a right way to work with transgender pupils. For example, Sally uses the words 'best practice', and Kate uses 'best way'.

Furthermore, Nia's comment (Quote 5, Table 39), suggests that training would be helpful if it was to clarify the right ways and wrong ways of working. In regards to building capacity, the researcher considered whether training for staff is seen as an opportunity for clarity and direction.

Table 39: Examples of quotes from subthemes- To Build Capacity and To Understand Terminology

1. **Martin:** *"The welfare offices are aware of them and support, but then they aren't with that person all day so I think we need to know more about what they're going through and how we can support and the little things that we can kind of say and do to support them throughout the day".* Transcript 2: Line Number 174-177.
2. **Kate:** *"I think for all staff to have an awareness and basic training of how to support the children in the best way that would be better as an overview first and then for more detailed support to go to the staff who work more closely with the children".* Transcript 3: Line Number 288-289
3. **Kate:** *"I think for all staff to have an awareness and basic training of how to support the children in the best way".* Transcript 3: Line Number 288-289.
4. **Sally:** *"I think staff training would help with terminology and also with understanding best practice".* Transcription 4: Line Number 193-194.
5. **Nia:** *"I think, like I said when you don't know something you tend to fear it so I think we would have definitely benefited from someone*

*coming in for an hour and saying these are the do's and these are the don'ts and don't worry". Transcription 6: Line Number 190-193.*

6. **Researcher:** *"What do you hope the training will give the staff what is it that you are looking for in that training?"*

**Emily:** *"Confidence really, a little more understanding, but really mainly confidence". Transcription 7: Line Number 128-130.*

### 6.1.2 To help develop a better understanding of what it means to be a 'trans' pupil

Martin in quotes 1 and 2 (Table 40) suggests that there is a need to be able to distinguish who genuinely is transgender in order to be able to support effectively. Martin's desire to be able to identify who is transgender may suggest that training may be useful to clarify what it means to be transgender, in that how someone identities may not necessarily be obvious to others, or need to be.

Quotes 3, 4 and 5 (Table 40) within this subtheme highlight a desire to gain a better insight into what it means to be transgender and the journey for CYP.

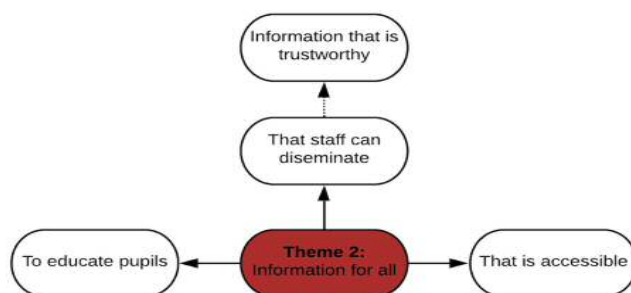
Table 40: Examples of quotes for subtheme – To help develop a better understanding of what it means to be a 'trans' pupil

1. **Martin:** *"We get a lot of people pupils jumping onto the bandwagon and then going oh well I think I'm transgender as well I'm this, I'm that and two weeks later its forgotten about. When somebody comes out as transgender then there's that a bit of not limelight, not to use that word, but the attention is on them and then you've got other people going well I'm this as well because it almost becomes cool and so I think we need to know also how to identify the ones who are actually really?" Transcription 2:184-190*

2. **Martin:** *“How do we identify the right people I suppose?”*  
Transcription 2: Line Number 197-198.
  
3. **Ann:** *“To know the whole journey that they have to go through would be really good”.* Transcription 5: Line Number 176.
  
4. **Ann:** *“I think the whole thing really, knowing what a child goes through with the whole transition whether its mentally, physically”.*  
Transcription 5: Line Number 173-174.
  
5. **Martin:** *“What the psychology is behind it, to get a better understanding of what this person is thinking feeling”.* Transcription 1: Line Number 170-171.

## 6.2 Theme 2: Information for all

A desire for more information that could be shared with others and that is easily accessible for staff, was a prominent theme expressed by most. The subthemes within this theme (Figure 9) aim to provide an insight into the types of information that staff feel would be helpful to receive and why.



**Figure 9:** *Thematic map for RQ2, Theme 2*

### 6.2.1 That staff can disseminate

Being able to access information that can be shared with others was felt by the researcher to be an important requirement for participants. The researcher considered whether having access to information that can inform their teaching practice and their discussion with parents and pupils would enable staff to feel more confident and informed.

In his interview Martin discussed his views in regards to how PSE could be used more effectively to support pupil understanding. When discussing what would be helpful in order to overcome such issues, Martin suggested that it would be helpful for schools to be given information that can be used to inform PSE lessons (Quote 1, Table 41). This suggestion was also echoed by Ann in Quote 2 (Table 41).

There was also a shared construction that schools would benefit from information that can be shared with parents and used to signpost pupils as detailed in quote 3 (Table 41). Being able to signpost was also felt to be important, as detailed in Sally and Kate's responses (quotes 4 and 5, Table 41).

Table 41: Example quotes for subtheme- That staff can disseminate.

1. **Martin:** *"Um but more contacts and information because there's no reason why we couldn't put it into our PSE, but um as far as I know there isn't anything that we would generically use to deliver that to children".* Transcription 2: Line Number 54-56.
2. **Ann:** *"I think it would be good to have information just for teachers to use as part of PSE, [...] to deliver to the pupils as some scheme of work [...] so they can ask questions and we can answer questions".* Transcription 5: Line Number 160-164.

3. **Nia:** *“Pupils have their own questions, as well parents so [...] even though it’s still a relatively new thing for myself; we need to be able to signpost them to areas that are helpful for them as well”.*

Transcription 6: Line Number 29-32.

4. **Sally:** *“Knowing how to signpost and knowing how to support is one of the biggest things”.* Transcription 4: Line Number 278-279.

5. **Kate:** *“Its having links for parents on medical issues, or where they can get support, help and guidance from really”.* Transcription 3: Line Number 297-298.

#### 6.2.1.1 Information that is trustworthy

Although acquiring information and resources that can be shared in school and with families was felt to be important, participants made reference to the need for this information to be from trustworthy sources. When discussing his confusion with terminology, Martin previously made reference to how different sources of information can give different advice, however quote 1 (table 42) suggests that Martin wants also wants to be able to clarify for others, what is and is not, reliable information.

Having access to agencies that can offer clear and consistent advice for pupils and signpost them to support services, was also felt to be important (as detailed in quote 2, table 42).

The need for advice from trustworthy sources was also discussed by Nia (Quote 3, Table 42), who valued the information she had received from the Local Authority (LA). This was echoed by Kate in quote 4 (Table 42) who noted how the LA would be a preferred source of information, although in her experience this was something that the LA could do more of.

Table 42: Examples of quotes for subtheme- Information that is trustworthy

1. **Martin:** “But also then saying yeah, but what you witnessed on the news is not actually right”. Transcription 2: Line Number 416-417.
2. **Sally:** *“I think it would be nice if we could have some sort of assembly where someone could come in and actually speak to the year group and say this is this, this is open if you have any questions and these are the people you can speak to”*. Transcription 4: Line Number 283-287.
3. **Nia:** *“Having information from the local authority I knew where we stood as a school because it’s all well and good me reading something and I’ve bought a few books, but if that doesn’t go hand in hand with the authority’s policy then it’s no good in me trying to say we could do this [...] if that goes against what the local authority wants”*. Transcription 6: Line Number 44-48.
4. **Kate:** “Advice booklets from LA would be helpful”. Transcription 3: Line Number 100.

### 6.2.2 To educate pupils

Although the need for information that can be shared has been addressed in the two subthemes above, the researcher decided to discuss this in more depth to highlight why participants feel it is important. Andrew’s comment below (Quote 1, Table 43) suggests that educating and sharing information with pupils is important to ensure that all pupils have greater awareness.

When considering what would be useful information for schools to receive, Ann’s comment (Quote 2, Table 43) suggests that information would be useful if it enabled staff to increase pupils understanding. Nia reflected on how information made accessible to staff could be used to educate pupils and discussed how education is important in trying to reframe pupil’s discriminative views (See quote 3, Table 43)



Table 43: Examples of quotes for subtheme- To educate pupils

<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. <b>Andrew:</b> “The biggest challenge [...] is educating the other pupils in the year group who don’t get”. Transcription 1: Line Number 44.</li><li>2. <b>Ann:</b> “To be able to deliver material that was appropriate to our pupils just to give them the knowledge. Transcription 5: Line Number 252-354.</li><li>3. <b>Nia:</b> <i>“This school is a valleys community mind-set, we are sort of very old fashioned in our thinking you know and the only way for people, all people race gender whatever to be accepted is to educate people”.</i> Transcription 6: Line Number 115-119.</li></ol>
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### 6.2.3 That is accessible

When exploring what useful information could look like, Emily and Nia emphasised the need for information to take into account the limited time that staff have, as detailed in quotes 1 and 2 below (Table 44).

Table 44: Example quotes for subtheme – That is accessible

<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. <b>Emily:</b> <i>“I think really what they need to do is do something that is really simplified almost like a one to ten bullet point if you like because once you give staff a document which is almost what the transgender toolkit it’s a substantial read you know um they get to page two and they are too busy and it needs to be an extremely simplified one to ten bullet point this is how you can support”.</i> Transcription 7: Line Number 152-155.</li><li>2. <b>Nia:</b> <i>“Especially as a teaching member not just teaching any member of staff the school is so busy with all the best will in the world and all the best intention of I’m going to read that I’m going to find this out</i></li></ol>
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*until your actually told this hour is devoted to here's the information and you are actually given".* Transcription 6: Line Number 266-269.

### **6.3 Theme 3: Need for Expert Advice**

This theme hopes to provide a deeper insight as to why staff feel expert advice is needed. Figure 10 below provides an overview of the subthemes that are included within this theme.



**Figure 10:** *Thematic Map for RQ2, Theme 3*

#### **6.3.1 Need for professional advice**

When discussing what staff felt would be useful support to receive, there was a common response of needing professional advice more readily. The researcher felt that quotes 1,2 and 3 (Table 45) were a good example of this construction.

In regards to how else staff could receive advice from professionals, Nia discussed how it would be useful to have frequent opportunities for staff to reflect on their decisions in regards to supporting transgender pupils, as detailed in quote 4 (Table 45)

Table 45: Examples of quotes from subtheme Need for professional advice

1. **Kate:** *“I wouldn’t say I’m any kind of an expert so anything that we may not be aware of as non-professionals”. Transcription 3: Line Number 165-166.*
2. **Martin:** *“We would still need experts coming in to just help us”. Transcription 2: 205*
3. **Martin:** *“I think we would still need the psychologists to come in and help us and help the pupils as well”. Transcription 2: Line Number 214-215.*
4. **Nia:** *“To have someone who comes in once every half term, that’s from the LA that we could go and speak to about pupils who were struggling, or members of staff who said right I said this, or just having a contact that you could phone and say look this has happened today and I’ve dealt with it this way would you agree [...] it’s almost just having someone to link up with for staff support as well”. Transcription 6: Line Number 255-259.*

### 6.3.2 To ensure that staff feel supported

While data extracts in relation to the subtheme above are more explicit in outlining a need for more professional advice, this subtheme provides a slightly deeper insight as to why. Quote 1 (table 46) was felt to be powerful by the researcher as it gives a greater insight into the emotions and feelings that some staff may be left with when trying to provide support on a topic they may not feel secure about. Ann’s comment (Quote 1, Table 46) suggests that professional advice may be useful for support and space for reflection, that goes beyond the reassurance of colleagues.

When discussing with Martin why additional support was felt to be needed, quote 2 (Table 46) highlights how he feels it would be useful to help increase

the number of staff who felt comfortable with the topic. Although the rationale for why expert advice would be useful is different to Ann's, the essence of what is hoped (reassurance) is the arguably the same.

Table 46: Examples of quotes for subtheme- To ensure that staff feel supported

1. **Ann:** *"I have always worked in SEN and the staff around me are very good if you feel [...] that you haven't done enough and are thinking what more can I do, you need to offload that don't you? But sometimes you need someone to go right you've gone above and beyond there's only so much you can do".* Transcription 5: Line Number 137-140.
  
2. **Martin:** *"I think there could be some support for those staff who feel uncomfortable and saying you don't need to be uncomfortable".* Transcription 2: Line Number 339-340.

### 6.3.3 To help staff prepare for pupil transition

The need for expert advice to help staff feel more prepared for pupil's transitions was discussed by Martin, Kate and Sally (see quotes 1,2 and 3, Table 47).

In quote 1 (table 47), Martin discussed how having information and support for teachers in the initial stages of a pupil disclosing their desire to be known by as a different gender would be useful, as some staff can find this surprising and may not react in the most appropriate ways. The researcher considered how important the initial stages of transition are to pupils, and if staff are more prepared to support pupils in the early stages, it may prevent further challenges occurring and help to ensure that pupils to feel supported.

In quotes 2 and 3 (Table 47), Kate and Sally made reference to how expert advice would enable staff to better support pupils, once others are aware of their decision to transition.

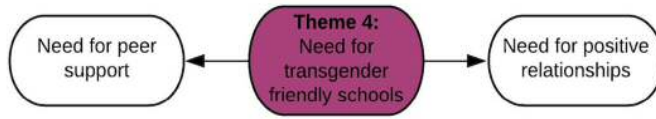
When discussing why expert advice is needed, Sally was the only participant to make reference to how specialist support services are limited for secondary school pupils, especially within the LA (as detailed in quote 3, Table 47).

Table 47: Examples of quotes for subtheme- To help staff prepare for pupil transition

1. **Martin:** *“I was just thinking about support for the teachers, not just to help the kids, but for them as well. I was just thinking that a lot of people [...] were not expecting, [...] ... they were initially taken aback”*. Transcription 2: Line Number 311-314.
2. **Kate:** *“Anything that we could put in place that would assist them really and make the process easier for them in school”*. Transcription 3: Line 270-271.
3. **Sally:** *“Within the local authority there is hardly anything that schools can access [...] I’ve got good links to MIND the mental health association which are very supportive, but unfortunately they have just lost their funding for young people so the remit for MIND tends to be 18 plus, they did have funding for 13 plus which covers the majority of our pupils”*. Transcription 4: Line Number

#### 6.4 Theme 4: Need for transgender friendly schools

Through the analysis process the researcher identified two core subthemes which were felt to be important for transgender pupils, these are detailed in Figure 11 below:



**Figure 11:** *Thematic map for RQ2, Theme 4*

#### 6.4.1 Need for positive relationships

Although the topic of policy did not feature heavily in participant responses, Nia makes reference to how policy alone is not enough to create a safe environment for transgender pupils, she instead reinforced the importance of relationships (See Quote 6, Table 48).

In quote 3, Ann (Table 48) highlights how positive relationships between staff and pupils can help provide pupils with the space to discuss their gender identity.

Being afraid to offend was a dominant theme for most participants in RQ1, Theme 1, however as explained by Nia (Quote 2, Table 48), having positive relationships with the pupils helped her to feel more comfortable correcting any mistakes by being open and honest with pupils.

When considering how participant responses could inform how professionals can better support the systems around the CYP, Nia's comment (Quote 4, Table 48) highlights the importance of working with family, as family support was felt to have a positive impact on pupil's overall wellbeing. Furthermore, Ann's comment (Quote 5, Table 48) reflects the importance of both home and school environments working together for the benefit of the pupil. Ann's comment highlights how developing positive relationships with parents is helpful to facilitate joint working.

Table 48: Examples of quotes for subtheme- Need for positive relationships

<p>1. <b>Sally:</b> <i>“Not everyone needs to be an expert in it I think a lot of that comes from building relationships”. Transcription 4: Line Number 202-203.</i></p> <p>2. <b>Nia:</b> <i>“Yea it is having good relationships and I’ve had that conversation and said look I’m really sorry, but I’m able to do that but with other people they can’t”. Transcription 6: Line Number 65-68.</i></p> <p>3. <b>Ann:</b> <i>“I wasn’t sure how long they had had these feelings before they disclosed them to me. I think I sort of gave them the confidence that this is ok, this is ok to talk about”. Transcription 5: Line Number 49-50.</i></p> <p>4. <b>Researcher:</b> <i>[...] “but thinking about the differences with the home um did you notice that that had a big impact on their ability to kind of be in school and feel confident in themselves?”</i>  <b>Nia:</b> <i>“Definitely I think knowing that home supported them one hundred percent, even though dad particularly had struggled with the transition, knowing that to go home and be able to confide in somebody they know and know that they have that persons back and things you know”. Transcription 6: Line Number 22-27.</i></p> <p>5. <b>Ann:</b> <i>“uh mum was very... because we had a lot of contact before about other things and had built up a little bit of a relationship she would ask and ring, they would come in and the three of us would speak together”. Transcription 5: Line Number 23-25.</i></p> <p>6. <b>Researcher:</b> <i>[...] It’s whether there is a link, whether the policy makes the school safe and inclusive or is it the ethos of the school, attitudes of the staff or whatever?</i>  <b>Nia:</b> <i>[...] I don’t know, I think it’s about the relationships that you create with the children. Transcription 6: Line Number 218-224.</i></p>
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#### 6.4.2 Need for peer support

Participants discussed the need for information to be made available for pupils, both in terms of resources that can be disseminated by staff and information that is provided through other services (RQ2, Theme 2). Analysis of why this was needed suggested that participants linked greater peer understanding to greater peer acceptance.

However, the researcher felt that the responses given during Nia and Ann's interviews (See quotes 1,2 and 3, Table 49) provided powerful evidence as to why investing time in educating pupils can be beneficial to the overall school experiences for transgender pupils.

Although Nia's comments throughout her interview suggest that while positive peer reactions may not be as common as one would hope, quotes 1 and 2 (table 49) provide evidence for the positive impact that peers can have, in regards to developing supportive and safe environments. Within these quotes, Nia also reflected on how both of the pupils she has worked with have benefited from positive social relationships. This was also echoed in Ann's interview, where she reflected on what helped to contribute to a positive school experience for one pupil (see quote 3, table 49).

Table 49: Examples of quotes for subtheme- Need for peer support.

1. **Nia:** *"I think I'm really fortunate because my form are really accepting and are really open minded. Fortunately, that young person who has transitioned in my class feels safe and that was the main things".  
Transcription 6: Line Number 146-148.*
2. **Nia:** *"I do feel that both individuals benefited from having that close group of friends around them who supported them because I think that then as helped them to feel accepted". Transcription 6: Line Number 104-106.*



3. **Ann:** “I think other pupils did take a key part they were so accepting it was fabulous to see”. *Transcription5: Line Number 71-72.*

## 7.0 Findings for RQ3: What role might be appropriate for Educational Psychologists to undertake?

The table below (Table 50), provides an overview of the 4 themes and corresponding subthemes which were identified in relation to RQ3, each will be discussed in turn.

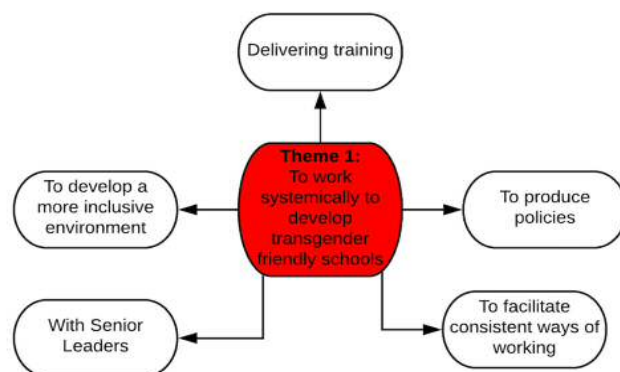
Table 50: Overview of themes and subthemes for RQ3

Theme Number	Main Theme	Subthemes
1	To work systemically to develop transgender friendly schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivering training</li> <li>• With senior leaders</li> <li>• To produce policies</li> <li>• To facilitate consistent ways of working</li> <li>• To develop a more inclusive environment</li> </ul>
2	EP as an advice giver	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To clarify</li> <li>• To support legal concerns</li> <li>• Specific guidance for practice</li> </ul>
3	Working at an individual level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With pupils</li> <li>• With staff</li> </ul>
4	Varying constructions of the EP role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EP role misunderstood</li> <li>• EP as the expert</li> <li>• Unique contribution unknown</li> <li>• EPs not accessible</li> </ul>

### 7.1 Theme 1: To work systemically to develop transgender friendly schools

Themes identified in RQ1 and 2 highlight the key challenges that participants experience and what support they feel is needed. The themes discussed

below highlight the ways in which participants felt EPs could work to support them in relation to these challenges. Subthemes relevant to this theme are detailed below in Figure 12:



**Figure 12:** Thematic map for RQ3, Theme 1

### 7.1.1 Delivering Training

The lack of, and need for training has been frequently raised throughout multiple themes in RQ1 and 2. When discussing how EPs could work with schools, both Kate and Ann (who have previous experiences working with EPs) felt training would be a beneficial role for EPs to undertake.

Quote 1 (Table 51) highlights why Kate felt that training from EPs is important. This links with subthemes in RQ1, (Theme 2 '*Implications for not feeling knowledgeable*', '*impact on self-efficacy*' and '*not understanding what it means to be trans*').

When considering that participants identified a need for whole school training in RQ2, Theme 1 ('*A need for whole school training*'), Kate's third quote (table 51) suggests that this would be a useful role for EPs to undertake. Within this quote and in the second quote (Ann, table 51), participants provide useful information as to what training delivered by EPs could address.

Table 51: Example quotes from subtheme – Delivering training

1. **Kate:** *“I think it’s just to upskill us in the best way to support the child day to day so whether it’s as a school we could set up specific contacts for them to go to the staff that were trained”*. Transcript 3: Line Number 265-271.
  
2. **Researcher:** *“If time allocation wasn’t an issue and they sort of said look we are here what can we support you with what is it that you would like to have? [...]”*  
**Ann:** *[...]it would just be in house training and to be able to deliver material that was appropriate to our pupils”*. Transcription 5:249-255.
  
3. **Kate:** *“I think as a starter point it would be helpful as a whole staff as a whole staff these are the key issues this is the number of children who might be effected”*. Transcription 3:276-277.

#### 7.1.2 Work with senior leaders

Although Kate was the only participant to discuss the role that EPs could have in regards to working with those in senior positions, it suggests that there is some recognition that change is best placed being facilitated from the ‘top-down’ rather than working “one to one” with pupils.

Table 52: Quotes from subtheme- work with senior leaders

1. **Kate:** *“I don’t think you could work one to one and it might be more beneficial to then work in more detail with Heads of Year maybe”*. Transcript 3:283-286

#### 7.1.3 To produce policies

Similarly, to the above point, Kate was the only participant to discuss the role that EPs could have in regards to producing policies. Despite only being raised by one participant, it does provide some clarity in regards to what role

EPs could undertake at a more systemic level and particularly what aspects within the system may be in need of change.

Table 53: Quote from subtheme- To produce policies

1. <b>Kate:</b> “Maybe for schools to be guided towards producing a policy so that its... there’s a consistency for all staff”. Transcript 3:310-313
--

#### 7.1.4 To facilitate consistent ways of working

RQ1, Theme 3 (subtheme ‘*lack of information sharing within the system*’) highlighted that not all staff felt equally knowledgeable and up to date with relevant information, with Emily comparing information sharing to “*Chinese whispers*” (Transcript 7: Line Number 256-260). Quotes 1 and 2 (Nia, table 54) highlight that it would be useful for EPs to upskill staff by providing resources, training and advice to all staff, so that there could be similar ways of working amongst staff.

Quote 3 (Andrew, Table 54) suggests that EPs could be a good link between the LA and schools. Highlighting how there is a need for more information as to how schools can address challenges with facilities (which was also raised as an issue in RQ1, Theme 3). Andrew’s comment suggests that it would be useful for all schools to know how to address such controversial topics in the same way.

Table 54: Example quotes from subtheme – To facilitate consistent ways of working

1. <b>Nia:</b> “ <i>I think that if all staff were educated in the same way and you could say, no remember they said it’s fine to say so and so or no we can’t we need to I would approach that differently</i> ”. Transcript 6: 252-254.
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2. **Nia:** *“I think there should be more resources available and that contact could be more available and training for staff so that we are all singing from the same hymn sheet so that we could all help young people a little bit more”*. Transcript 6: 264-266

3. **Andrew:** *“Some clear guidance perhaps form local authority in that this is what we suggest you do in schools and this is how you should operate this is how you should deal with a situation where you are in a school that is built in the 50’s and 60’s where you haven’t got centralised toilets and this is how we suggest you do this ...that would be a useful thing because that would then bring all the schools together in how we do it and I appreciate that not everything easily goes into a flow chart”*. Transcript 1: 344-351

#### 7.1.5 To develop a more inclusive environment

The two quotes detailed in the table below (Table 55) highlight how in addition to training, some participants also felt EPs could provide them with information for how schools could educate pupils and set up support groups in schools. This links with RQ1, Theme 6 ‘Lack of information sharing’ (*with pupils*) and RQ2, Theme 1 *“To build capacity”*.

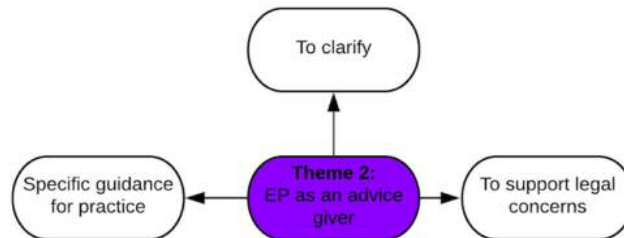
Table 55: Example quotes from subtheme – To develop a more inclusive environment

1. **Ann:** *“Participant 5: [...]it would just be in house training and to be able to deliver material that was appropriate to our pupils just to give them the knowledge you know and to have the support a really good strong support group for them I think they would be the two main things”*. Transcript 5: 249-255.

2. **Kate:** *“I think it’s just to upskill us in the best way to support the child day to day so whether it’s as a school we could set up specific contacts for them to go to the staff that were trained”*. Transcript 3: 265-271.

## 7.2 Theme 2: EP as an advice giver

Subthemes that will be explored within this theme are detailed below in Figure 13:



**Figure 13:** Thematic map for RQ3, Theme 2

### 7.2.1 To clarify

Participant responses had previously highlighted a lack of certainty in regards to understanding the topic of transgender (RQ1, Theme 2 and RQ2, Theme 1). Andrew's comments in the table below (Table 56) suggest that he saw the EP as being someone who could help to clarify concerns in regard to this area and provide guidance for specific support.

Table 56: Example quotes for subtheme – To clarify

1. **Andrew:** *“We need you guys to tell us the bits we don’t understand and the bits we can’t work out”*. Transcript 1: Line Number 164-166.
2. **Andrew:** *“I think somehow it would be good if we had a real clear guidance and if it is there then I haven’t seen it and will look for it”*. Transcript 1: Line Number 334.

### 7.2.2 To support legal concerns

Andrew had discussed his concerns in relation to legal responsibilities when it came to supporting transgender pupils and balancing the need to support all students (RQ1, Theme 5, subtheme '*Legal concerns*'). The need for support on this topic was a prominent issue for Andrew and it was something that he felt EPs could provide support and guidance with.

Table 57: Example quotes for subtheme – To support legal concerns

1. **Andrew:** *“I think as school we ask what we want to know legally as well and make sure we are doing the right thing as well and not doing them an injustice”*. Transcript 1: Line Number 339-340.
  
2. **Andrew:** *“Some guidance which is based on legal aspects which may have come up in some places but I think knowing some schools they don’t have that”*. Transcript 1:350-351

### 7.2.3 Specific guidance for practice

Although Andrew highlighted a need for specific guidance in relation to legal concerns above, participants also felt that EPs could provide specific guidance in relation to other areas, as discussed in the quotes below (Table 58). For example, Kate (quote 2, table 58) discussed how specific guidance in regards to supporting pupils through their transition could help to make the process more positive for pupils.

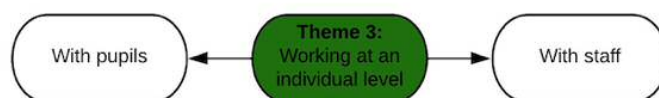
Nia (quote 3, table 58) discussed how it would be useful for staff to be able to meet with EPs regularly to discuss their concerns. In comparison, Emily felt it would be useful for EPs to provide specific guidance through the form of simplified handbooks (quote 3, Table 58). This links with RQ2, Theme 2 (a need for information '*that is accessible*').

Table 58: Example quotes from subtheme- Specific guidance for practice.

1. **Kate:** *“Its more about the information I think and the how to rather than anything else that’s the main thing because it’s unknown it’s quite new in terms of that being so prevalent in the classes that you teach”*. Transcript 3: Line Number 310-313.
2. **Kate:** *“Anything that we could put in place that would assist pupils really and make the process easier for them in school”*. Transcript 3: Line Number 265-271.
3. **Nia:** *“Maybe having someone who comes in once every half term that’s from the authority that could come in and we could go and speak to them about pupils who were struggling or members of staff”*. Transcript 6: Line Number 264-266.
4. **Emily:** *“I think really what they need to do is do something that is really simplified almost like a one to ten bullet point if you like [...]it needs to be an extremely simplified one to ten bullet point this is how you can support, this is perhaps the terminology you need to use and leave it at that [...]”*. Transcript 7: Line Number 152-157

### 7.3 Theme 3: Working at an individual level

Subthemes that will be explored within this theme are detailed below in Figure 14:



**Figure 14:** *Thematic map for RQ3, Theme 3*



### 7.3.1 With pupils

Participant response's in this theme suggest that there are different views in regards to how schools see EPs working with them. Andrew and Kate's comments in the table below (Table 59), suggest that staff may see it as being beneficial for pupils if EPs work with them directly, in order to ascertain what types of support might be best for schools to provide.

Table 59: Examples of quotes for subtheme – With pupils

1. **Kate:** "Whether it would be that EPs would work with pupils who are transgender would have a far greater awareness and to sort of point out the areas to look for or the little signs to look for day to day". Transcript 3: Line Number 265-271.

2. **Researcher:** "[...] *Is there something that you feel the educational psychology service could do? What do you think would be useful if time was there what would be useful for us to offer schools?*"

**Andrew:** "*From a transgender point of view I think it's that time with children assessing children, but again (pauses)... yea it would be because ultimately we want the best for children we want to unpick how we can support them best so if we could yes*". Transcript 1: Line Number 222-226.

### 7.3.2 With staff

RQ2, Theme 3 highlights how participants felt 'Expert Advice', could help them to feel more confident when supporting transgender pupils; Kate's comment (quote 1, table 60) provides support for EPs being a service which could help to ensure that staff, who work with pupils more frequently feel supported.

Furthermore, Nia (quote 2, table 60) felt that it would be useful for staff to link with EPs regularly, to help ensure that pupils who are being supported, are being supported in a suitable way.

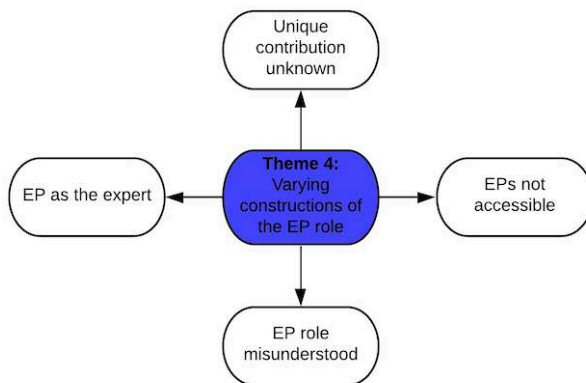
Table 60: Examples of quotes for subtheme- with staff

1. **Kate:** *“To work with the support staff that are available to the children throughout the day”*. Transcript 3: Line Number 285.

2. **Nia:** *“Maybe having someone who comes in once every half term that’s from the authority that could come in and we could go and speak to them about pupils who were struggling or members of staff who said right I said this or just having a contact that you could phone and say look this has happened today and I’ve dealt with it this way would you agree? [...] it’s almost just having someone to link up with for staff support as well”*. Transcript 6: Line Number 257-261.

#### 7.4 Theme 4: Varying constructions of the EP role

While this theme does not provide specific detail for what the EP role could look like, the researcher considered the responses detailed below to be useful for EPs, as it provides further insight into how some staff construct the role of the EP more generally, in relation to the topic of transgender. The researcher also felt that some of the quotes below provide wider considerations for practice. Figure 15 below details the subthemes included within this theme:



**Figure 15:** Thematic map for RQ3, Theme 4

#### 7.4.1 EP role misunderstood

Emily's quote (quote 1, table 61) suggests that there may be a construction that EPs work predominantly with learning needs and because challenges relating to the topic of 'transgender' are constructed as a wellbeing need, the role that EPs could have in supporting is unclear.

Although Andrew's responses in relation to the role of EP vary, his comment below suggests that he also views the EP as being a 'gatekeeper' to other services, rather than offering any direct work to pupils or staff. Quote 2 (table 61).

Table 61: Examples of quotes for subtheme – EP role misunderstood

1. **Emily:** *"Honestly the EPs are more the educational side umm where this is more of an emotional side so umm for you it would be like the barrier to learning umm (pause) that's a difficult one for you isn't it because you would um look at why they're not learning [...] and if it's because of the bullying aspect then that would be more of a wellbeing side".* Transcription 7: Line Number 54-61.
  
3. **Andrew:** *"It opens a lot of other locked doors for us if we get a recommendation from an EP that this person really does need more of that more of this".* Transcription 1: Line Number 166-165.

#### 7.4.2 EP as the expert

The need for 'expert advice' is a dominant theme in RQ2, Theme 3 and the researcher felt that comments made by participants in many of the interviews suggested that EPs may be positioned as 'experts'. The comments below provide further support for this, for example Sally (quote 1, table 62) states how EPs are more specialist than school counsellors and because of that she would rather receive advice from EPs, this links in which the desire that

participants had for information which was from trustworthy sources (RQ2, Theme 2).

Although participants had previously discussed the importance of relationships and individual approaches (RQ2, Theme 4, subtheme '*Need for positive relationships*'), quote 2 (Kate, table 62) contradicts this, as it suggests that there is a construction that because EPs are more knowledgeable, they are better placed to work with pupils and provide staff with feedback on areas of need. Additionally, quote 2 and 3 (Kate and Andrew, table 62) arguably constructs the EP role as a diagnostic one.

Table 62: Examples of quotes for subtheme – EP as the expert

- |  |
|--|
| <p><b>1. Sally:</b> <i>"[...] but it's not a specialism for them (school counsellors) so with the educational psychologist yes I would prefer to have them involved"</i>.<br/>Transcription 4: Line Number 251-251.</p> <p><b>2. Kate:</b> <i>"Whether it would be that EPs would work with pupils who are transgender would have a far greater awareness and to sort of point out the areas to look for or the little signs to look for day to day"</i>. Transcript 3: Line Number 265-271.</p> <p><b>3. Andrew:</b> <i>"We need you guys to tell us the bits we don't understand and the bits we can't work out"</i>. Transcript 1: Line Number 164-166.</p> |
|--|

#### 7.4.3 Unique contribution unknown

Where participants were unsure what services EPs could offer to support schools in relation to the topic of transgender, they were honest in stating this, for example Quote 1 (Sally, table 63) highlights that despite the EPS being a valued service, Sally was unsure what support EPs can offer.

Quotes 2 and 3 (Kate and Andrew, table 63) also highlight a lack of awareness in regards to the type of work that EPs could undertake in relation

to this topic. This potentially highlights a lack of clarity and understanding of how EPs can work to bring about positive change.

Table 63: Example quotes for subtheme – Unique contribution unknown

1. **Sally:** “[...] so with the educational psychologist yes I would prefer to have them involved it would be great if they can actually give us something but I’m not aware if there is anything they can add”. Transcript 4:251-253.
  
2. **Researcher:** “[...] do you know whether the educational psychology service that is in this authority can support with transgender?”  
**Kate:** “I’m assuming that they can I don’t know if they can”. Transcript 3: Line Number 246-249.
  
3. **Researcher:** “So ok its more kind of an individual basis because I think lots of people see us working with that group of pupils in different ways and it’s just interesting to sort of unpick it within schools to actually say what would be helpful?”  
**Andrew:** “I don’t know what it would look like”. Transcript 1: Line Number 234-237

#### 7.4.4 EPs not accessible

Quotes 1 and 2 (Andrew, table 64) suggest that despite the EP being seen as someone who could support pupils/schools on this topic, the lack of availability that schools have to EPs is a barrier to seeking support.

Additionally, quote 3 (Sally, table 64) links with RQ1, Theme 3 (subtheme ‘*Transgender not a priority*’) as it suggests that in addition to EP time being limited, other needs are prioritised within the school system.

Table 64: Example quotes for subtheme – EPs not accessible

1. **Andrew:** *“I know that there are so many pupils that we would love to be seen by EPs we haven’t got... you haven’t got the capacity in the profession to be able to support us”*. Transcript 1: Line Number 153-158.

2. **Andrew:** *“We’ve got Eye to Eye we’ve got ELSA we’ve got Thrive you’ve got those aspects for emotional mental health [...] but actually an EP is another tool which at some point I think we all under use because actually we need you for but there’s not enough people (EPs) there’s not enough time or people around”*. Transcript 1: Line Number 158-161

3. **Sally:** *“To be honest the educational psychology service we have such a limited access to them that their time is predominantly taken up with behaviour needs rather than actually dealing with anything of a pastoral nature”*. Transcript 4: Line Number 241-345.

## 8.0 Discussion

To the researcher’s knowledge there is no UK research which has explored the views of secondary school staff in regards to the challenges that they face when supporting transgender pupils, what support they feel is needed and what this means for the role of the EP.

Therefore, this research aimed to explore the following research questions:

- RQ1: What are the most prevalent issues for teachers in Wales in regards to supporting transgender pupils?
- RQ2: What types of support do teachers feel would be useful to receive?
- RQ3: What role might be appropriate for Educational Psychologists to undertake?

Within this section the main findings which were felt to be the most pertinent to each research question will be summarised and linked to previous research. Implications for school staff and EP practice will also be considered

in light of key findings. Finally, the limitations of the research and areas for possible future research will also be discussed.

## **8.1 RQ1: What are the most prevalent issues for teachers in Wales in regards to supporting transgender pupils?**

### 8.1.2 At an individual level

The theme of language (RQ1, Theme 1) was felt to be a particularly pertinent issue for participants. Responses from participants highlighted that staff were cautious about the language that they used as they were afraid to offend pupils. Staff were also conscious of not appearing discriminatory by offering support to pupils who were not openly 'out'. Concerns relating to the correct use of pronouns and uncertainty around terminology were also a dominant concern. Given how wider research, such as that of Stonewall (2017), Leonard (2019) and McGuire (2010) highlight the importance that pupils place on correct use of pronouns and gendered language, participants' concerns about wanting to get this 'right' are perhaps justified.

While research which has explored school staff's views did not highlight particular concerns with language and terminology, educators within Meyer & Leonardi's (2018) research did identify conversations with pupils in relation to complex issues as being uncomfortable. Meyer & Leonardi identified how the implication of this meant that staff were less likely to facilitate conversations with pupils in relation to the challenges that they experience. This is similar to implications identified by participants in the current research, as uncertainty about language and being 'afraid to offend' (RQ1, Theme 1) was linked to some staff feeling reluctant to offer support. When considering the importance that pupils placed on staff support in relation to supporting wellbeing and academic success (McGuire et al, 2010; Leonard, 2019; Ullman, 2017; Kosciw et al, 2013 & Stonewall, 2017a, 2017b), the researcher considered this issue and the implication relating to it to be important.

Not feeling knowledgeable was another dominant issue that was apparent in themes such as *'Language'*, *'Implications of not feeling knowledgeable'* and *'Balancing act'*. Arguably many of the key issues which are discussed within these themes stem from the issue of not feeling informed and not feeling confident. This is similar to findings in O'Donoghue & Guerin's (2017) research, whereby staff noted how not feeling knowledgeable, or confident, prevented them from addressing anti-LGBT bullying and discussing the topic of LGBT more generally within the classroom. Although similar concerns were raised in the current research in regards to participants not feeling confident to address the topic of transgender, in what was referred to as 'PSE lessons', findings from this research, located within the themes *'language'*, *'implications of not feeling knowledgeable'* and *'balancing act'*, suggest that the main implications of not feeling knowledgeable or confident centred on issues such as:

- Being reluctant to seek support from those in senior leadership positions.
- Experiencing moral dilemmas in relation to accommodating all pupils.
- Concerns for legal repercussions.
- Wanting to meet the needs of all pupils, whilst also wanting to work in a person-centred way with transgender pupils.
- Lacking belief in their own ability to support.

### 8.1.3 At a systemic level

Other key issues for staff that were discussed within the remaining three themes; *'Challenges within the school system'*, *'Challenges of transitioning'* and *'Lack of information sharing'*, were indicative of challenges at a more systemic level. When considering some of the main issues identified in these themes, there are similarities in regards to the wider systemic issues identified by pupils in the wider research. For example, lack of appropriate facilities, limited curriculum and lack of understanding amongst staff were felt to reinforce heteronormative structures and gender stereotypes, resulting in negative consequences for transgender CYP both socially, emotionally and



academically (McGuire et al, 2010; Kosciw et al, 2013; McBride & Schubotz, 2017; Dessel et al, 2017 & Stonewall, 2017).

While support from Head Teachers and their appreciation for the needs of transgender pupils is a key factor in ensuring a positive school environment (McBride & Schubotz, 2017), research which has explored pupil's views indicates that not enough is done by those who can affect change at higher levels within the school system (Stonewall, 2017). Taylor et al (2017) noted how merely recognising sexual and gender diverse students does not compel school staff to work against the heteronormative systems and develop practices which could decrease LGBT marginalisation. This was felt to be particularly relevant to findings from the current research which highlighted a need for those in senior leadership teams (SLTs) to have a better understanding of what it means to be transgender (as detailed in RQ1, Theme 3, *'Challenges within the school system'*). While the researcher is not aware of any research which has explored senior leaders views in relation to transgender to unpick why this might be, research conducted by Taylor et al (2017) noted how those in senior positions could act as a barrier to more inclusive practices, such as the discussion of LGBTQ topics in the classroom.

A lack of collaborative working with both parents and other agencies was a key issue raised within the current research, with the implications affecting not just school staff, but also pupils and parents. While research such as that of Taylor et al (2016), O'Donoghue & Guerin (2017) and Bronfenbrenner (2001) highlight the importance of different elements of the school and wider systems working together, findings from this research suggests that it can be challenging to access information and services that can help them to facilitate such working. Participants felt they lacked access to appropriate information, which prevented them from being able to work at a deeper level to support pupils and families. The need for schools to provide parents of transgender and gender variant pupils with more information and support was also acknowledged in the current research (RQ1, Theme 4) and in research conducted by Riley, Clemson, Sitharhtan & Diamon (2013).

Concerns regarding the reaction of parents whose child does not identify as transgender was noted in O'Donoghue & Guerin's (2017) research, although this was in relation to the topic of LGBT being discussed in the classroom. In comparison, concerns for parent's reactions was addressed in the current research, however this was in relation to the subtheme 'Facilities' (RQ1, Theme 3). While a lack of unisex facilities is highlighted as being a dominant issue within the wider literature, within the current research, concerns relating to facilities were due to worries relating to both parents and peers potentially feeling uncomfortable, as well as concerns for legal repercussions. What was not raised in the current or wider research however, was an equal level of concern for how transgender pupils may feel using facilities and whether they may feel equally as vulnerable, or exposed.

## **8.2 RQ2: What types of support do teachers feel would be useful to receive?**

Social constructionism highlights that individuals, groups and organisations are likely to construct many different truths and realities (Burr, 2003). In-keeping with the epistemological stance taken, the researcher felt it to be important to explicitly explore what school staff felt they needed, rather than drawing assumptions and conclusions in relation to what might be useful, based on issues highlighted in RQ1.

While four themes were identified in relation to this research question, when considering information gathered in relation to all research questions, two main global themes stand out as being useful information for professionals working with schools. These will be discussed below:

### **8.2.1 Training**

Although a lack of training for school staff has been identified as a key issue within the wider research and throughout all participant interviews, there is little research which has explored what teachers feel training should involve, in order for it to be deemed as helpful. Similarly, research conducted by

Meyer & Leonardi (2018) did conclude a need for more pre-service training on the topic of gender diversity. Participants within this research noted how the promotion of diversity and anti-oppression during professional training would have been helpful.

Within the current research the topic of training was discussed in Theme 1, ‘*A need for whole school training*’ (RQ2). As discussed in RQ1, a key issue identified was a lack of understanding in regards to: what it meant to be transgender, terminology, appropriate language and how to accommodate all pupils. Gaining information and knowledge from other services and professionals in relation to these topics was felt to be linked to increased self-efficacy (RQ1, Theme 2, subtheme ‘Impact on self-efficacy’). The table below provides a brief summary as to what participants felt would be useful for training to cover and why this was felt to be important.

Table 65: *Key areas of focus for training*

<b>What would be useful training?</b>	<b>Why this is important to teaching staff?</b>
Training at a whole school level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To build capacity and understanding for all staff so that pupils can be supported more effectively.</li> <li>- So that staff feel more informed and prepared.</li> </ul>
Information on terminology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To provide clarity in regards to what is appropriate given that there is a range of terminology used.</li> </ul>
Overview of what it means to be transgender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participants discussed wanting to be more informed in how they could offer support appropriately.</li> <li>- So that staff are better able to understand what emotions and challenges pupils may be experiencing and be better placed to support and empathise.</li> </ul>
Understanding of best practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To help staff understand what steps can be taken to facilitate transgender friendly schools that are nurturing and inclusive.</li> </ul>

Participants discussed the need to facilitate change at a whole school level and wider research, such as that of McGuire (2010), has identified training as a useful systemic practice for bringing about positive change within the school climate for transgender CYP. Within McGuire et al's research, pupils expressed a view that teachers should be required to attend training so that they are able to intervene when harassment occurs and expressed a need for local districts (local authorities) to do more to clarify the role that teachers have in preventing bullying and discrimination. This was also echoed in research reported in the Stonewall School Report (2017).

In addition, research by Jones et al, (2016) supports the need to develop staff understanding of terminology, as findings from their research highlighted that when a teacher of a transgender pupil used inappropriate pronouns, names or identity, the pupil was more likely to experience harassment from peers.

However, when schools did focus on raising awareness at a whole school level, pupils reported schools to be more supportive, safe and more inclusive for them (McGuire et al, 2010). Participants in the current research noted how they wanted to feel more confident in their everyday interactions with pupils and wanted to be able to support them more effectively. The need to increase this ability is arguably important, as pupils in McGuire et al's research identified how teachers can create positive change through their everyday interactions.

### 8.2.2 Information

The research reviewed in Part I does not provide any further detail in regards to what other forms of support teachers feel they need. However, within the current research participants all made reference to the need for more information and input from outside agencies. Information highlighted in Theme 2 (RQ2, '*Information for all*') and Theme 3 (RQ2, '*Need for expert advice*') provides some further direction for professionals and outside agencies in regards to what types of information staff may find helpful.

Responses suggested that participants wanted more information in regards to the following:

- That can be shared within the school system.
- That provides guidance for how they could work effectively with pupils to overcome the challenges they face.
- That can be shared with parents and caregivers.
- What other services are available both locally and at an organisational level, so that staff can sign-post others (e.g. parents and pupils) to more information.
- Legal responsibilities and guidelines.

Providing more education to parents was felt to be a dominant theme and participants reflected on the emotional impact it had on them when they were aware that pupils were not receiving support at home (RQ1, Theme 4). It is therefore wondered whether teachers saw it as their role to upskill parents so that the pupils can benefit from support at home, as well as school.

Participants expressed a desire for information which they could use to educate pupils (RQ2, Theme 3 and 4) and incorporate into their teaching practice. Within the wider research pupils themselves acknowledge that LGBT is not represented enough within the school curriculum, which can lead to others not understanding what it means to be transgender; research highlights how this can have negative consequences for transgender pupils (Stonewall, 2017, McGuire et al 2010). Educating pupils and creating transgender friendly schools (RQ2, Theme 4), was felt to be important in the current research and in the wider research, as peer support is identified as key protective factor (Jones et al, 2016). Furthermore, the need for information that can be used in PSE lessons and increase participants confidence was also consistent with wider research (O'Donoghue & Guerin, 2017).

Overall, training and information were felt to be linked to participants perceived ability to work effectively with pupils and those around them, arguably highlighting the value that school staff place on accessible resources

(RQ2, Theme 2 '*Information for all*'). The circular causality between resources, confidence and practice was also discussed in research conducted by Swanson & Gettinger (2016), who noted how opportunities for LGBT professional development coincided with increased teacher support for pupils who identify as LGBT.

### **8.3 RQ3: What role might be appropriate for Educational Psychologists to undertake?**

When considering the information gathered from participants in RQ3, the information presented in the table highlights how participants constructed the role of the EP in regards to working with and supporting schools. Key findings will be discussed in the table below (Table 66) in relation to literature which has already explored how EPs could work with schools at different levels.

Table 66: Considerations for how EPs can work at different levels within the school system

#### **Key considerations for EPs working at an individual level with teachers and pupils:**

While some research which has explored working with schools in relation to the topic of transgender advocates for work at systemic levels to facilitate "*widespread, lasting change*" (Bartholomeaus & Riggs, 2017. Pg 362), information gathered in RQ3 suggests that participants would value opportunities for staff to work with EPs individually to ask question, seek reassurance and discuss classroom practice.

Furthermore, in RQ2 participants highlighted the importance of acknowledging individual differences, stating how it would be useful to discuss specific concerns with an EP (RQ3). Based on these key points raised, a consultation based approach (Wagner, 2008) could be helpful to ensure that staff are able to bring their expert knowledge of the pupil and discuss their key concerns. Yavuz (2016) and Bowskill (2017) also

advocate for a consultation/joint based approach to help overcome specific challenges and to facilitate multi-agency working.

Participants in the current research discussed how they felt it would be helpful if EPs could work with individual pupils to explore the pupil voice and give direction to staff. While Yavuz (2016) and Bowskill (2017) suggests that eliciting pupil's views would only need to be done if schools were not prioritising the voice of the young person and suggest a need to explore systemic practices, participants in the current research discussed the importance of developing ways of working that were individual to the CYP. Participants saw the EP as someone who was more experienced to gather such information.

The need for specific guidance from trustworthy sources was noted in relation to key issues such as facilities, legal concerns, developing support groups and working with parents. RQ3 highlighted that participants viewed EPs as being a group of professionals who could help to provide such information. This is in-keeping with research conducted by Yavuz (2016), who referenced this as being a useful way for EPs to work to help prepare schools for pupil transitions, to meet the individual needs of pupils and to support understanding of terminology and legislation, all of which were raised as needs highlighted in RQ2.

Participants expressed a need for resource/information packs and responses suggested that staff would value this being given by EPs. Given that EPs will work as part of LA systems they are well placed to provide school with helpful information in regards to what services and charities schools can access. Yavuz (2016) suggested that it would be beneficial if EPs did so in collaboration with staff, parents and pupils themselves, to ensure that evidence based research is in line with the needs of specific schools. Findings from the current research suggest that such approaches would be well received.

**Key considerations for EPs working at a group level:**

The subtheme '*Varied role of staff (RQ1, Theme 4)*', highlights how staff are needing to support not only the pupil, but also facilitate collaborative work with those around them. EPs are arguably well placed to support schools and help them develop ways of working with the systems around the pupil.

Group consultation (Wagner, 2008) or Solution orientated approaches (Lines, 2002; Rhodes & Ajmal, 1995) may be useful ways of working for EPs to adopt, as it may provide opportunities for staff to share and reflect on their experiences. Group consultation is also a useful tool to build capacity in schools, allowing for the sharing of knowledge and space for problem solving. In RQ3 participants discussed how EPs could help to facilitate consistent ways of working, both between staff and between schools. Therefore, group consultation may be an appropriate service which EPS' could offer to schools, or school clusters, to provide staff with opportunities to reflect. Although consultation was discussed in wider research published in the UK (Yavuz, 2016 & Bowskill 2017), the consideration of group consultation was not discussed.

Despite some participants working in the same school, it was interesting to consider how different ways of working and perceptions of ability to work with parents can vary. This may provide further support for the need to work at a group level, as EPs are able to facilitate joint working and enable dialogue between key stake holders (Gameson & Rhydderch, 2008). Group working may enable the sharing of good practice and help to increase capacity to support in schools.

**Key considerations for EPs working at a systemic level:**

Meyer & Leonardi (2018) suggest that one-off training is not enough to create wider awareness and facilitate long lasting change. Although participant responses suggest that training delivered by EPs would be helpful, there was also a recognition that EPs could work more systemically



within the school (e.g. with Head Teachers and developing policies). This is in-keeping with wider research such as that of Bartholomeus & Riggs (2017) & Bowskill (2017) who advocate for working at a more systemic level, particularly focusing on leadership and policy.

In regards to the challenges of promoting diversity and challenging heteronormativity with both pupils and staff, wider research and the current research has highlighted the importance of collaboration and the need for pupils to receive one message to deconstruct heteronormativity (Steck & Perry, 2018). It may therefore be appropriate for EPs to work systemically with those in senior leadership positions to help develop transgender friendly schools, especially given the perceived lack of EP availability (RQ3).

Working at this level could also allow for the consideration and development of appropriate policies and support systems. The literature that has explored positive school experiences for transgender pupils has highlighted how Head Teachers have played a vital role in their experiences of feeling included (McBride & Schubotz, 2017).

While participants did not explicitly acknowledge their varied role, or make reference to it as an 'issue', the researcher considered it be a prominent theme. Acknowledging the varied role of staff will arguably be important for other agencies and services to be aware of, particularly EPs, when establishing training, or considering how they could best support schools.

## 8.4 Implications for practice

The table below (Table 67) highlights what some of the key implications may be for school staff, schools and EPs and what may be important to consider is regard to overcoming the key issues faced.

Table 67: Implications for practice

<b>Implications for teachers and schools</b>	<b>Implications for EPs</b>
<p>Within RQ1, Theme 1 (Subtheme <i>'Afraid to offend'</i>) responses from some staff suggested that they were reluctant to offer to support to pupils if they were not openly 'out' or due to concerns of offending them. However, when considering the implication of this, the researcher reflected on what this might mean for pupils who are unable to openly transition because of consequences that may be due to religious beliefs, or fear of rejection from family member and their community. Schools may need to create safe spaces (as discussed in research conducted by Steck &amp; Perry (2018) so that all pupils have to option to access support without needing to rely on it being offered it by teachers.</p>	<p>Research highlights how EPs are under-educated in regards to the topic of transgender (Case et al, 2009; Bowskill, 2017). When considering the ethical implications (set out by the BPS (2018), it will be important for EPs to reflect on their own competencies when working with schools on the topic of transgender, to engage in CDP and utilise opportunities for peer and individual supervision.</p>
	<p>When considering participant responses in relation to the desire for more information and training and reflecting on the terminology used by participants (e.g. 'expert advice' and 'best ways of working'), it will be important for EPs to adopt a reflexive approach and acknowledge whether schools are positing them in 'expert roles'.</p>
<p>When considering legislation discussed in Part I, schools have a legal obligation</p>	<p>Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological systems theory (2001) highlights the importance of</p>

<p>to ensure that the needs of all pupils are met. Although participants discussed the need for clarity in regards to legal guidelines it will be important that school are encouraged to recognise their responsibility to ensure that transgender pupils are safe and considered, despite any fears that staff may have in relation to others opinions and beliefs of what is 'acceptable'.</p>	<p>acknowledging all systems in relation to CYP. Furthermore, literature discussed in Part I highlighted how transgender pupils can be affected by various elements within the system, consideration of how transgender pupils may continue to be affected by such systems may be important to help EPs consider which systems they may be best placed to position themselves in and how they can offer support.</p> <p>In addition, EPs are well placed to support those around the CYP to consider the position of family in regards to gender identity and to ensure the pupil is safe both physically and emotionally (Yavuz, 2016).</p> <p>EPs are arguably well placed to encourage and challenge schools to reflect whether their policies, practices and use of strategies such as 'safe spaces' and 'designated LGBT staff', truly promote inclusion. Ainscow (1995) highlighted a conceptual distinction between inclusion and integration, with integration being defined as school making a limited number of additional arrangements, with the onus being placed upon the individual to make changes so that they can 'fit in'. Inclusion however, is the introduction of a more distinctive set of changes by the school,</p>
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	<p>whereby they restructure themselves in order to embrace all CYP.</p> <p>EPs could potentially work with schools to deconstruct gender within the school system, what it means to be transgender and help them to develop a wider understanding about the complexity of transition stages and how their transgender specific policies and practices could impact pupils who do not wish 'out themselves'. While some transgender CYP may feel comfortable accessing specific transgender resources and support, it is possible that those who do not wish to 'out themselves', may be left without access to such specific support, however it may be possible to argue that if schools were truly inclusive there would not need to be LGBT alliance groups and safe spaces, as all children would be seen and treated equally regardless of gender, or sexuality.</p>
<p>Research highlights how schools can reinforce binary stereotypes and views of gender through policies and everyday practices (McBride &amp; Schubotz, 2017). While there is arguably a role for other professionals such as EPs to encourage schools to reflect on how this may impact pupils. Schools should arguably adopt proactive steps to recognise how they could adapt systems within the school to be more</p>	<p>In LA's where guidance and resources do not currently exist, EPs could be well placed to contribute to the development and delivery of such transgender specific resources to help support both schools and parents (Yavuz, 2016).</p>

<p>inclusive, through consideration of curriculum, facilities and wider LGBT representation in the school.</p>	
	<p>Given that participants raised concerns in wanting to work consistently and to have information that is accessible to all, it may be relevant for EPs to consider with staff how relevant information shared through training etc. and can be disseminated to pupils.</p> <p>RQ3, Theme 4, highlights that there are various constructions in regards to the role of the EP. When considered alongside the need to develop inclusivity for transgender pupils, it may be important for EPs to consider how schools could be better informed about the types of work that can be offered (this may be particularly important for traded EPS').</p> <p>Clarifying the ways in which EPs can help to support schools may encourage schools to proactively seek support for pupils and staff understanding.</p>

### 8.5 Limitations and future research

The bullet points below provide a brief overview of the limitations of this research and areas for potential further research, however these will be discussed in more depth in Part III.

- Assumptions for how EPs could work systemically with schools are based on responses and constructions gained from individuals who may be more likely to work at an individual level within the school system. Therefore, issues raised in regards to challenges at a systemic level, may not be felt to be representative of key issues at this level by those such as Head Teachers. Given that many of the suggestions relating to how EPs could work are based at a systems level, future research may wish to explore the views of Head Teachers in relation to the topic of transgender and the role of the EP.
- Participants who had experience working with outside agencies, such as Umbrella Cymru, spoke about the positive impact they had on pupils and the staff in which they had worked. This research could have explored what schools valued about the types of services that are already available in order to identify additional areas of need that EPS could consider.
- Although the researcher acknowledged that findings were not considered generalisable or representational of all challenges and issues faced by school staff, this research has sought the views of a small sample of teaching staff from 3 local authorities. Therefore, further research may wish to explore similarities and differences in regards to challenges school staff face and the types of support they feel they need, as this may help to further inform EP practice at wider local authority levels.
- While this research set out to explore what role might be appropriate for EPs to undertake, due to limited sample sizes only 2 participants had experience working with EPs. It is felt that this may have limited the opportunities for reflection, in regards to evaluation and detailed exploration of what EPs could do more of. Therefore, future research may wish to explore this in more depth.
- When considering concepts around inclusion more generally, the researcher wondered whether there was a need to explore how schools construct what it means to be accepting in regards to diverse

groups and whether there is a need to support schools to develop systems and policies which are centred around this type of ethos.

## **9.0 Conclusion**

This research provides an in-depth exploration of the types of challenges that secondary school staff within Wales experience in regards to meeting the needs of transgender pupils. This research has also explored what support is felt to be needed by school staff and how EPs could work with schools in relation to the topic of transgender. Given that there is limited research in the UK which has explored this, it is felt that this research provides further considerations for the ways in which both schools and EPs could work effectively to help increase positive outcomes for transgender pupils.

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School staffs' views regarding transgender pupils and the role of the Educational Psychologist.

**PART III - Critical Appraisal**

(Word Count: 5909)

## 1.0 Introduction

The aim of this critical appraisal is to provide a reflective and reflexive account in relation to several key elements of the research process. I will begin by offering an overview of the development of the research idea, literature review and how the process and findings influenced my final research questions.

I will reflect on the decisions taken throughout and provide a critical account of the methodology, the research paradigm and design. Data analysis will also be discussed along with reflections relating to ethical issues.

Consideration will be given to implications of the study, limitations, future research and relevance to wider EP practice. Finally, I will give a brief personal reflection on the research process and how this has impacted on my professional development. This critical review has been written in the first person to aid the reflective and reflexive account.

## 2.0 Research Development

### 2.1 Inception of research topic

My interest in pursuing transgender as a topic for my doctoral thesis initially stemmed from a university assignment. The assignment aimed to explore frameworks for practice and I decided to explore frameworks that could be used to underpin Educational Psychologists (EPs) work with schools to support pupils who identify as transgender. A brief exploration of the literature during this academic assignment highlighted a lack of research that investigated the role of the EP with transgender pupils. I felt this to be surprising given that EPs are more likely than ever to encounter such situations through their work with schools due to increasing numbers of children and young people (CYP) expressing concerns regarding their gender identity (Butler, Graaf, Wren & Carmichael, 2018; Yavuz, 2016).



Further research in relation to the school experiences for transgender pupils highlighted that education environments remained largely hostile for transgender pupils who experienced more marginalisation and bullying in comparison to their peers (McGuire et al, 2010; Stonewall 2017; Ullman 2017). Initial research also implicated teachers in the marginalisation of transgender pupils (Stonewall, 2017; Jones et al, 2016; McBride & Schubotz, 2017) and over the course of this assignment I was left with numerous unanswered questions around this.

Furthermore, as a trainee, who is currently developing their practice and conscious of making sure that advice and work undertaken with schools is informed and reasoned, I was unsure what research I would use to inform my practice as my initial literature searches suggested that there were only two papers (Yavuz, 2016; Bowskill 2017) which linked the role of the EP to the topic of transgender.

During this assignment, I became interested in the discourse around 'transgender'. In my initial reflections regarding implications for pupils in school, I wondered what it was about transgender that made it more controversial, or difficult for teachers to support with. It seemed that the topic of 'transgender' was frequently being discussed and debated within news articles, broadcast as part of television series and appeared to elicit polarised opinions particularly in regards to children and young people (CYP), the process of transitioning and being able to present as a different gender. It was during these early stages that I found myself talking to other EPs and TEPs about this and I was surprised by the variety of responses as to whether supporting schools with concerns and issues relating to the topic transgender was part of our remit as EPs. This in turn led me to question whether schools considered EPs as a professional group who could support them on this topic.

On a personal level, I found it difficult to reason why it would be any different to any other work we undertake; EPs are well placed to support schools to improve the outcomes for transgender pupils given that we are able to work in a variety of ways and at different levels to facilitate change (Yavuz, 2016).

However, there was a dearth of research outlining what our work could look like within schools, and more specifically what support schools felt they needed; it was from these beginnings that my thesis topic developed.

## 2.2 Gaps in the literature

A more robust review of the literature highlighted that much has been written about the negative school environments for transgender pupils (Ullman, 2017) and how it impacts them both socially, emotional and academically (Kosciw et al, 2013). While some findings highlighted the important role that teachers played in facilitating inclusivity and being a key adult for support (McBride & Schubotz 2017, Leonard 2019), research generally implicated teachers in the construction of marginalising schooling environments due to inaction in regards to bullying, discussion of LGBT related issues, the incorrect use correct pronouns and a perceived lack of knowledge in relation to transgender (Sausa, 2005; Jones et al, 2016; McGuire et al 2010; Stonewall, 2017).

Having reviewed the literature I questioned what contributed to the inconsistency of teacher support for this group. Why were some teachers less reluctant to support this group of pupils in comparison to others? Searches for literature which addressed these questions revealed that there is limited research on teachers' perspectives and experiences working with, and supporting, transgender pupils within the UK, although research had been conducted in the USA, Canada and Australia. Within the wider research some of the more prevalent concerns raised by teaching staff included concerns relating to lack of confidence in regards to challenging transphobia, a lack of policy, skills, training and fear of repercussions from parents and senior leaders (Taylor et al, 2016; O'Donoghue & Guerin, 2017; Meyer & Leonardi, 2018).

Consideration of the wider research highlighted a dissonance between what pupils were wanting staff to do; which was to be better allies (challenge

systemic heteronormativity and peer marginalisation) and what teachers felt they could do given their lack of perceived knowledge on the topic and concerns relating to others (including transgender pupils). It felt that there was a role for EPs in regards to supporting teachers to overcome the challenges they face in order to meet the needs of pupils, however further literary searches suggested that the two papers identified during my academic assignment were the only two research papers within the UK which provided direction for how EPs could potentially work with schools (Yavuz, 2016 & Bowskill, 2017).

Although these research papers do provide suggestions for the ways in which EPs could work across three levels of individual/ family, school and educational/council authority, the representation of teachers' views within this research is limited, only Bowskill's (2017) research incorporated the views of teachers, with the sample being limited to 3 Teachers, and 1 Teaching Assistant. Furthermore, neither of these research papers specifically explored what challenges teachers faced day to day, what support they felt would be helpful to receive, or what role they felt EPs could undertake, therefore the current research sought to explore:

- What the most prevalent issues for teachers were in Wales in regards to supporting transgender pupils?
- What types of support teachers felt would be useful to receive and specifically what role might be appropriate for Educational Psychologists to undertake?

Given that within the wider research teachers identified a number of barriers, at various levels within the school system which impacted their ability to develop trans-affirming schools and support pupils effectively, it was unclear at what level, or with which systems EPs could work to facilitate positive change. The following sections will explore the theoretical underpinnings for this research, why the need for 'staff voice' was important and how this impacted my research design.

### 3.0 Research Paradigm

Although the word paradigm means ‘a philosophical way of thinking’ (Kuhn, 1965), Guba and Lincoln (1994) define a paradigm as a basic set of beliefs or worldview that guides research action or an investigation. Furthermore, according to Lincoln and Guba a paradigm comprises four elements:

- Ontology
- Epistemology
- Methodology
- Axiology

My decisions and reflections for each of these will be discussed in turn below.

#### 3.1 Ontology and Epistemology

There were times throughout this research where I found myself thinking ‘who am I’, as a heterosexual, cisgender female, and also as a TEP, to try and understand the journey that transgender pupils experience within education? How could I truly understand that? I also found myself overthinking the language I was using and questioning whether my interpretation of concepts, research, experiences and theory might be construed as offensive to members of the transgender community. However, reading widely around the topic of transgender helped to position this research within a relativist ontology. The reason for this was that the literature highlighted how different ‘realities’ for transgender pupils exist across different settings and countries, suggesting that there was not one ‘truth’ that I should have been aiming to portray.

A relativist ontology acknowledges that there are multiple constructed realities rather than one, pre-social reality. Braun and Clarke (2013) acknowledge that there is not one truth that is more dominant than another, as what we can know reflects where, and how knowledge is generated. This was helpful to me

as a researcher as it took away some of the pressure to portray the education experiences of transgender pupils in one 'correct' way.

When I started this training program the terminology for epistemology and ontology were new and at times confusing, however as part of my training I have been encouraged to use The Constructionist Model of Informed and Reasoned Action (COMOIRA) (Gameson & Rhydderch, 2008) to inform my practice. COMOIRA (Gameson & Rhydderch) puts Social Constructionism at the core of my practice and there were times when I questioned whether my research was positioned within a Social Constructionist stance because that is what I believe, or whether that was what I was comfortable and more familiar with. However, having taken the time to reflect on this I stand by my decision to adopt a Social Constructionist epistemological stance because I wanted to use interviews with school staff as an opportunity to hear how staff were constructing both their role and the role of the EP, in relation to the challenges that they face when supporting transgender pupils within the school context.

Although Yavuz (2016) and Bowskill (2017) provide a theoretical underpinning for a variety of ways in which EPs can work with schools, it is unclear what ways of working, or what types of support, teachers feel would be beneficial. Arguably if EPs privilege certain ways of working without understanding and co-constructing what may be beneficial for schools, there may be potential risk that we as TEP/ EPs position ourselves as 'experts'.

## **4.0 Methodology**

### **4.1 Design**

#### **4.1.1 Online Questionnaire**

Kivunja & Kuyini (2017) highlight the important relationship that exists between paradigm and methodology because the methodological implications of paradigm choice permeate throughout the research. I was conscious at

times of whether it would have been more appropriate to adopt a critical realist stance for my epistemology, thinking about what counts as 'legitimate' knowledge. However, as part of this reflective process it feels appropriate to justify and explain how I made sense of my choices for both the paradigm and its link to my methodology.

While a purely qualitative methodology (semi-structured interviews) would have been in-keeping with the epistemology and would have enabled me to explore 'meaning' and the constructions of teaching staff in relation to my research questions, I feel that a mixed-methods design did enable me to generate more meaningful data.

If I had chosen to develop an interview schedule based on the wider research, which had explored teacher's views, I would have been basing my questions and areas of focus on data mostly obtained in Canada, America and Australia. However, having taken a Social Constructionist stance it felt important to acknowledge that the data captured within these research papers was likely to have been socially, politically and contextually specific and I wondered whether teachers in the UK may perceive there to be different challenges or key areas of focus. As a result, I felt it was important to explore the prevalent issues for teachers within a Welsh context.

Having completed the research, I feel the decision taken to conduct online research to inform my semi-structured interviews (Phase 1) was a positive one. It enabled me to reflect on the findings in comparison to existing literature and provided a rationale of key areas of focus, relevant to school staff in the UK. In addition, the data obtained through the online questionnaire provided a rationale for interviewing secondary school teachers, given that data suggested that they had the most experience working with transgender pupils and with EPs.

While I feel that the aim of Phase 1 was clearly outlined, I have reflected on whether more consideration should have been given to the data obtained as the responses provided offer useful insights when compared to the literature

discussed in Part I. However, the semi-structured interviews yielded a large volume of data and I feel it would have limited the findings of the current study if less focus was given to the interview data in order to explore Phase 1 in more depth. Furthermore, given that the initial aim of this research was to explore the role of the EP in relation to the concerns and views of school staff, I feel that appropriate time and space was dedicated to phase 2, as the role of the EP is arguably not explored in enough depth in Phase 1 to conclude practical suggestions for practice.

Although I am content with the decision to adopt a mixed methods design having completed the research, my confidence in this as an approach and my rationale for doing so wavered during the development of the online questionnaire. It was during this time that I questioned the compatibility of my epistemological and ontological stance in relation to my methodology.

I was concerned that use of an online questionnaire would suggest I was wanting to claim some authentic reality which exists, in order to produce knowledge (through interviews) that might make a difference (Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers, 1997). However, through personal reflection and supervision I came to the conclusion that the rationale for conducting an initial online questionnaire was not to add validity to past findings, but to aid a collaborative inquiry (Gergen, 1999). The online questionnaire did not seek to make claim to any particular truths, or create generalisable knowledge, but was used to inform the methodology in Phase 2 (interview questions, participants and school setting), given the limited UK based research.

In addition to personal reflection and supervision, I found reading around the 'purist' perspective (Greene, 2007) helped to develop my understanding that constructivism is not the only legitimate stance for qualitative research. Chapter 1 'Epistemologies for Qualitative research' (Soini et al, 2011), helped me to understand that quantitative and qualitative methods are not 'tied' to specific sets of ontological and epistemological assumptions (Maxwell, 2011). In addition, this chapter helped to reframe my thinking as to whether my epistemological and ontological stances 'fitted' with a mixed-method

approach, as both Maxwell and Greene argue that using 'contradictory' epistemologies can be an advantage, as it can help to deepen our understanding if paradigm differences are intentionally used together to engage meaningfully with the data discovered. Maxwell suggests that the goal is not to determine the correct position but to generate "*fruitful interaction*" (p. 11).

When considering this in relation to my decision to utilise a mixed-methods, I believe I was able to generate better discussions during the interviews, as I was able to reflect on data gathered in the online questionnaires and consider it in relation to the wider research and my own personal aims for the research. I feel this process helped me to become more familiar with my data and as a result, I believe my interview schedule was more considered and focused in relation to my overall research questions.

#### 4.1.2 Semi-structured interviews and the process

As the epistemological stance taken was that of a social constructionist paradigm, semi-structured interviews were felt to be appropriate as Burr (2015) highlights the role and importance of language in how people co-construct meaning within specific and complex contexts.

While it is recognised that there a number of different styles for qualitative interviewing, the style adopted in this research was one of a 'professional conversation' (Kvalve, 2007), as the goal was to encourage participants to discuss their experiences and perspectives through reciprocal dialogue.

In addition, semi-structured interviews were also chosen because they enabled me to explore some of the key areas of interest that had arisen from Phase 1 without preventing participants from discussing: their views and constructions in regards to the challenges they faced, why they felt specific aspects were more challenging and what effective support from EPs might look like to them.



Prior to beginning this research journey, I had read and acknowledged how interviews were a form of social interaction, whereby both the interviewer and interviewee influence the data that is produced (King & Hugh-Jones, 2019). However, it was not until the interview process began that I truly understood what this meant and how my aims for the research and areas of interest could influence the direction and content obtained. Reflecting on the process, I am pleased that I did become consciously aware of this as I was able to take steps to recognise when I may have been 'steering' conversations to explore key areas of interest. For example, if I felt a participant had discussed something personal and complex I would repeat key phrases back to make sure I understood what they were communicating and took time to check with them that I had understood correctly. I also offered opportunities at the end for participants to raise any key points which they felt had not been addressed.

In hind-sight it may have been useful to conduct a pilot interview so that I could have reflected on the style of my interviewing, the degree to which I was exploring participants narratives and whether I was using enough follow up questions to unpick participants views and constructions effectively.

#### 4.2 Participants and recruitment

Through purposive sampling, seven participants were recruited. Participants were recruited from two different local authorities and three secondary schools within South Wales. The table below details the participant demographic that was recruited.

Table 68: *Participant demographics*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Local Authority</b>
1	Deputy Head, Teacher and Head of Wellbeing	A	1
2	Subject Teacher	B	2
3	Subject Head, Teacher and Head of staff wellbeing	B	2
4	Wellbeing Officer (Non-teaching role)	B	2
5	SENCo (Non-teaching role)	B	2
6	Subject Teacher	C	1
7	SENCo and Subject Teacher	C	1

Challenges with recruitment in one particular authority, led to a revision of the initial ethics proposal and a request to obtain permission to specifically contact one Secondary School (School B), in a different Local Authority (Local Authority 2), following an email request from a staff member who had taken part in the online questionnaire in Phase 1. Following gatekeeper consent from School B, three other participants were obtained.

Recruitment is an area that I feel should have been given more consideration in the early stages of the research design. In the early stages of the research I considered whether participants who completed the online questionnaire should be given the option to participate in follow up interviews, however because the online interview was open to school staff across the UK, there was a logistical concern for interviewing participants who were not geographically accessible and to not interview participants because they were not 'accessible' felt unethical.

Furthermore, Willig (2013) makes reference to epistemological reflexivity, which is the consideration of how the values and assumptions that are based in the researchers' methodological and theoretical commitments shape the

knowledge produced and given the epistemological stance taken, I did not feel comfortable giving privilege to some participants narratives, views and constructions because they were more accessible.

While I did consider the possibility of conducting online interviews to overcome this, research into the limitations of online interviews led me to consider what I may be 'losing' by removing the face to face element of the research. For example, Braun and Clark (2013) highlight how virtual interviews can result in a lack of direct observation of participant emotion and other visual cues. Braun and Clarke also state how this has implications for responding to any emotional distress and can make building rapport with participants more challenging for inexperienced researchers. While it was not anticipated that the interviews would cause emotional distress, I felt that not being able to pick up on these non-verbal cues would limit my understanding of their experiences, potentially limit the analysis and risk ethical implications. Based on these considerations, I decided to recruit separately for semi-structured interviews and did so locally. While the outcome of this meant that participants were generally based in the same settings, this research did not aim to generalise findings as being relevant for all staff working with and supporting transgender pupils in Wales.

Having completed the research and reflecting on the sample size and limited variety of school settings, I do not feel that participants being from the same school limited the variety of responses. For example, in the case of school B, constructions of challenges both within the system, and with individual pupils and parents do vary and this is reflected on in the findings and discussion.

## **5.0 Axiology**

Braun and Clark (2013) encourage researchers to reflect on what may motivate or discourage participants from taking part in the research, and it is acknowledged that the challenges with recruitment in the current research study may be due to a number of factors. Firstly, when I initially devised the

information and consent form, I considered the possibility that the topic could be controversial, or potentially emotive for some staff and that there was a risk of some participants discussing their views in a discriminatory way. To try and mitigate against this, the information and consent form made reference to the Equality Act (2004) to remind participants of the importance of being respectful during interviews.

While I believe this to have been an important issue to raise in the consent and information forms, given the key themes which have been highlighted in the current research study in relation to fear of offending and concerns with using the correct language, it is wondered whether the reminder of the Equality Act (2004) may have deterred some from participating due to fear of saying the wrong thing.

While confidentiality was also emphasised in the consent and information forms, having completed the process I now wonder whether more emphasis on how confidentiality was being addressed should have been communicated in the information and consent forms. It was not until the last interview, when a participant checked that the interview was anonymous before discussing challenging experiences with the Head Teacher, that I considered whether I had communicated this effectively and whether this too may have prevented participants from volunteering for the research.

## **6.0 Data Analysis: Thematic Analysis**

The process of data analysis was a pertinent part of the research journey for me both in terms of the time it took and the knowledge I gained as a researcher. While additional time spent analysing data is likely to be one of the contributing factors to the delayed timescale of this research, I feel that the process and time taken were beneficial for the following reasons. Firstly, coding the data in-depth enabled me to become more familiar with the data and provided opportunities for more in-depth reflection on what participants responses could mean for EP practice and what the implications of their

reflections were for school systems and pupils more generally. Secondly, coding the data for the first time felt uncomfortable as I was conscious of wanting to stay close to content of data due to concerns of misinterpreting, under-representing or losing the participants original constructions. While the flexibility of TA is arguably one of its strengths as a method, part of me in these early stages was hoping for more direction, or permission to start deconstructing the transcriptions. During this time, I felt my process for analysis became circular, rather than linear. However, having spent time reading around thematic analysis, its links with social constructionism and the importance placed on language, I realised that my role as the researcher was to interpret and move data into patterns and themes in order to tell a story about it. I found it helpful to go back to the rationale of analysis needing to be driven by the research question, or the 'so what'. This helped me to contextualise my thinking. It was from this that I began to engage with the data at a more latent level, in comparison to the start whereby I felt my analysis was arguably more essentialist or semantic.

King & Hughes-Jones (2019) emphasise the importance of the researcher acknowledging the dyadic role that they have in research process, and once I began to engage with the data at a deeper level, I came to value the information that I had obtained through the interview process as being more than just audio transcriptions. For example, I began to understand how my knowledge of the space that was created during the interview and how my observations of non-verbal responses, facial expressions and emotion enabled me to interpret the data in ways that researchers who were not actually present at the interview would be unable to do.

I feel that this reflection was a key point in the analysis process for me, as I think the additional time taken to code the data was driven by a desire of wanting to interpret the data in the 'right' way. While I acknowledge that is contradictory to the epistemological and ontological stances taken, I think I was conscious of getting it wrong. However, the acknowledgement that others may interpret the data differently because they were not part of the dyadic interview process gave me the confidence to analyse the data in a circular

manner more confidently; I acknowledged that there was not one truth that I should have been aiming for and that the process of selection, naming and reporting themes is very much an active process and on reflection is one that I came to enjoy.

## 7.0 Value of the study

### 7.1 Implications and considerations for EP practice

This research builds on the limited literature which has explored the role of the EP in relation to supporting schools on the topic of transgender in the UK (Yavuz, 2016; Bowskill, 2017). In addition, this research arguably provides further insight into some of the challenges for school staff and the barriers to inclusive practice in a Welsh context.

While many of the key issues raised by participants were similar to those noted in the wider literature (O'Donoghue & Guerin; 2017, Jones et al, 2016; Bartholomeaus & Riggs, 2017; Steck & Perry, 2018), a potential strength of the current research was the in-depth exploration of why such issues were perceived to be more challenging for school staff, and what needs to be done to overcome them. As a result, it is felt that this research provides practical considerations for what EPs and school staff can do, to facilitate positive change in the school system for transgender pupils. Practical examples for what training could include, how EPs could work with school staff at various levels and why that is felt to be needed are explored within the current research and hopefully provide useful considerations for practice.

A key concern for participants was not feeling knowledgeable, however when considered in relation to the lack of available information, I have considered whether other agencies (including EPS') are doing enough to communicate what services are available for schools to access. Participants within the current research expressed a desire for more information and to know where appropriate information is accessible from, particularly in regards to the local

authority (LA). EPs are arguably well placed to bring the most recent research and recommendations, given that we aim to work in evidenced based ways and work within services/systems in which relevant information for schools is located or developed. Furthermore, as EPs generally work within the LA, we are well placed to facilitate dialogue between relevant services and signpost staff/pupils, which was felt to be important to participants.

Although this research aimed to unpick what support school staff felt would be helpful to receive, some participant responses led me to reflect on whether there is a need to reframe the role of the EP, as some responses were felt to position EPs as experts, or gatekeepers. In addition, when considering the unique contribution of the EP role, some participants stated how they were not sure what support EPs could provide in relation to transgender, while others suggested that our role was restricted to working with behaviour and learning needs. This led me to consider whether there is a need to clarify the remit of our role and promote the variety of ways in which we can work, specifically in relation to emotional wellbeing. Considering that wider research highlighted how transgender pupils can experience higher levels of poor mental health (McGuire et al 2010, Stonewall 2017), it will be important that schools are aware that this is something we can support with.

At times during the interview and analysis process, participant responses highlighted a lack of belief in their own ability to support pupils, despite them acknowledging the positive relationships that they have with the CYP they work with. Based on this, I wondered whether the application of positive psychology could be a useful way to encourage staff to move away from fixed mind-sets in relation to their own ability to facilitate change.

Although numerous suggestions were raised in regards to how EPs could work to support schools, it could be argued that both individual and group consultation based approaches (Wagner, 2000) might be an effective way to facilitate change. This is based on staff reporting the need to be upskilled in supporting pupils themselves, and wanting to work more collaboratively with parents. Additionally, at a group level, participants discussed the need for

consistency in teacher practice, a desire to know more about how other schools may be addressing common issues (e.g. facilities) and wanting space to reflect on the challenges they face and approaches taken to support. Given that a lack of EP time was raised, a group consultation approach could be a useful model of practice, as it could enable the sharing of information between school staff (both in the same school and between cluster schools), provide opportunities for reflection and peer learning.

## 7.2 Areas for future research

In light of findings discussed in the current research I feel that there is scope for several paths of research in addition to suggestions made in Part II:

- Given that participants raised concerns in regards to systemic issues, future research could explore the views and constructions of Head Teachers in regards to the topic of transgender, or inclusivity more generally.
- Although only raised by one participant, the view that Male – Female transition is more challenging in the school context was interesting. Future research may wish to explore in more depth whether this is a common concern and why this might be.
- The important role that parents have in supporting their children was highlighted in this research. Future research may wish to explore parent's views and what support may be helpful for them.
- Although participants in this research have provided useful reflections in regards to the role of the EP, given the limited research regarding the role of the EP, the topic of transgender and school settings more generally, continued research in this area could be considered useful.



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

At the beginning of this journey I felt both excited and daunted at the possibility of conducting research at this level. However, I approached this research with the aim of developing a better understanding of how I, as a TEP/EP, could work to support schools in regards to the topic of transgender. My best hopes for this research were that I would be able to produce a research report that was worthy of the DEdPsy award, develop my skills as a researcher and develop my own practice and understanding in relation to transgender.

Reflecting on the process I now feel more confident about the topic of transgender and through collecting and analysing data, I now feel more informed and competent to support colleagues, school staff and pupils in relation to this topic.

A key learning point for me during this process was furthering my understanding of epistemology and ontology. Prior to this research I did not feel confident drawing links between these concepts and research methodology. I now feel able to justify the stances I have taken and can appreciate how these informed the research process and the decisions that I have made. I feel that my social constructionist stance gave me permission to explore participants responses at a deeper level. I found the initial process of analysing my data challenging as I felt pressured to accurately reflect the participants constructions, however further reflection of my epistemological stance allowed me to recognise that my own social constructions of the data were valid and that there was not one valid truth.

In addition to this, this process has highlighted to me, the important role that the researcher has in telling the story of the data. Having reflected on this during supervision, I became comfortable with the knowledge that there were multiple ways of telling the story of the data. I found that returning to the

original research aims, which were partially derived from the literature helped me to structure and organise my interpretations and analysis.

Whilst I felt confident gathering the data and conducting the interviews, I underestimated the time it would take to make sense of the data. This included time spent reflecting and refining my analysis and reviewing my interpretations. Braun and Clarke (2013) make reference to the importance of 'letting things go' during the analysis process. If I was to repeat this research, I would give myself more time for periods for reflections and allow myself to let go of certain findings, as having completed the research I now realise that it is not possible, or relevant to include all of the data gathered.

Before embarking on this process, I was not prepared for the emotional impact this journey would have. There have been times when I have found the process both stimulating and challenging. Although I feel I have developed my skillset as a researcher, the overall process has felt all consuming and at times overwhelming. However, I have learnt more about what I need both professionally and personally to overcome feeling of self-doubt. Engaging in regular professional and peer supervision has been vital to this process and it is something that I will continue to do in my practice as an EP.

Finally, if given the opportunity to work with schools in relation to the topic of transgender I would now feel informed about the misconceptions that can exist and feel skilled in supporting others as part of my role. One area that I would like to expand my knowledge on is how to best support families to understand and support transgender CYP, as this was a group that I did not engage with in this research.

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## Appendices

### **Appendix 1: Search terms**

The process of searching was not linear, frequent adjustments to search terms were made using advance search options. Adjustments to terms used were made following a search and review of relevant abstracts. Adjustments were made up until the point of saturation and no new additional articles were being generated.

**Table 1: Search terms and articles generated**

Search Number	Search Terms	Articles generated
Search 3	'Experiences' AND 'Teachers' AND 'Transgender/or gender identity/ or LGBTQ/'	26
	'Secondary education/ or education/ or high school education/ or high schools/' AND 'experiences' AND 'Transgender/or gender identity/ or LGBTQ/'.	53
	'Transgender/' AND 'Schools' AND 'Psychologists/ or school psychologists/ or Educational Psychologists'	5
Search 2	'Gender identity/or gender non-conforming/or LGBTQ/or transgender/or transsexualism/ or gender dysphoria/or sexual orientation' AND 'Educational psychologists/or school psychologists'	23
	'Educational personnel/or teachers' AND 'Transgender/or transgender students'	79
	'Teachers/ or education personnel' AND 'Transgender/or LGBTQ'	94
	'Teacher attitudes/' AND 'Transgender/or LGBTQ'	29
	'Education/or academic settings/ or high school education/ or middle school education/ or	171

	secondary education/' AND 'Gender identity/ or gender nonconforming/ or LGBT/ or transsexualism/ or gender dysphoria/ or sexual orientation/'	
Search 1/ Initial scoping searches	Transgender/or gender identity/ or LGBTQ/ or 'transgender (attitudes towards)' AND 'Teacher attitudes/ or teacher expectations/'	48
	'Gender identity/ or gender nonconforming/ or LGBTQ/or transgender/ or transsexualism/ or gender dysphoria/ or sexual orientation' AND 'Teacher attitudes/ or teacher expectations'	63
	'Transgender/ or gender identity/or LGBTQ/or transgender (attitudes toward)' AND 'Education/ or academic settings/ or high school education/ or middle school education/ or secondary education/'	131



## **Appendix 2: Additional information in relation to Phase 1- Online Questionnaire**

### **Design**

An electronic questionnaire was developed using the online Qualtrics application via Cardiff University. The online questionnaire consisted of 22 questions which consisted of a combination of closed (multiple choice and Likert style) questions which explored demographics, geographical location, job role, confidence in regards to supporting transgender CYP, challenges faced in schools and experience working with EPs. Three open-ended/narrative questions enabled participants to discuss resources that were available to them and enabled them to discuss their views regarding training, inclusivity and safety. (See *Online questionnaire responses detailed below*). The development of the questionnaire, in regards to the questions asked, was influenced by the research explored in Part I.

### **Procedure and Participants**

A broad-based recruitment strategy was used to secure participants with an online link (to the questionnaire) being made available across various social media forums such as Facebook, and across professional forums such as EPNET (a forum accessed by Educational Psychologist). The questionnaire was also circulated throughout the Local Authority in which the researcher was working. The only inclusion criteria was for respondents to be working within education currently.

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 were geographical location and job role. Personal information was deliberately restricted as it was hoped that this would reassure participants that there the questionnaire was confidential.

134 people completed the questionnaire, however once the data parameters were adjusted to include only the responses of those who had experience working with transgender pupils, 54 valid responses remained. It is these responses which are discussed below.

### **Ethical considerations**

Prior to beginning this research ethical approval was sought from Cardiff University ethics committee. Key ethical considerations in relation to this online questionnaire are detailed in the table below.

**Table 2: Ethical Considerations for Phase 1: Online Questionnaire**

<b>Ethical Considerations</b>	<b>How this was addressed</b>
Informed consent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information and research objectives were clearly explained on the information section of the questionnaire (<b>Appendix 3</b>). As were contact details of the researcher, the university research supervisor and the ethics committee secretary in additional information was needed.</li> <li>• Prior to beginning the questionnaire participants were asked to submit their consent electronically. The questionnaire was designed specifically for informed consent to be obtained, as participants would not be able to proceed to the questions without submitting their consent first.</li> <li>• The only personal details that were required were geographical location and the sector/role in which participants worked.</li> </ul>
Risk of harm and Debrief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Although it was not anticipated that the questions asked would result in any distress, or cause negative emotions, the contact details of the researcher/university were provided to all participants in case.</li> <li>• A debriefing message was presented at the end of the questionnaire reminding participants of the research aims and objectives and providing contact details should they require further information.</li> <li>• The debriefing message also reassured participants that their responses would be confidential and anonymous, and because of this, no specific feedback could be given following response submission.</li> </ul>
Anonymity and Confidentiality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anonymity - no participants were asked to submit any personal details that would allow responses to be traced back to them.</li> <li>• Confidentiality – all data was kept securely on a password protected file and computer which can only be accessed by the researcher.</li> </ul>
Right to withdraw	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All participants were made aware of their right to withdraw at any point during the questionnaire process and were reassured that doing so would have no negative consequences.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants were informed that they were able to retract their responses at any point during the questionnaire up until the point of final submission.</li> <li>• Participants were not required to answer every question as it was recognised that some questions may result in participants reflecting on experiences which they may not have felt comfortable with. It was also acknowledged that some participants may not have wished to provide a response for all questions.</li> </ul>
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### Findings and Analysis

The aim of Phase 1 was to gain a better understanding of the following:

1. Who might be the most relevant and accessible group of staff to try and recruit for semi-structured interviews and;
2. What topics might be most appropriate to explore within the interviews.

For this reason, the online responses were not intended to be the main source of data, as a result, responses were analysed using descriptive statistics, with percentages presented in table format.

The following tables show the questions verbatim as they were presented online and the responses of the 54 participants who had experience working with transgender pupils. Percentages, or choice count (the number of participants who selected that answer) have been highlighted for all questions and a short synopsis is given for the most responses deemed the most relevant to the overall research aims

### Online questionnaire responses

<b>Q1. Please select which statement best describes your job role:</b>		
<b>Role</b>	<b>Choice count</b>	<b>Total responses for each setting</b>
<b>Head/Deputy Head Teacher – secondary school</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Secondary school: 31</b>
<b>Classroom teacher in a secondary school</b>	<b>21</b>	
<b>Teaching assistant in a secondary school</b>	<b>4</b>	
<b>Secondary school SENCo/ALNCo</b>	<b>4</b>	
<b>Head/Deputy Head Teacher- primary school</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Primary school: 13</b>
<b>Classroom teacher in a primary school</b>	<b>7</b>	

Teaching assistant in a primary school	4	Specialist setting: 6
Primary school SENCo/ALNCo	1	
Head/Deputy Head Teacher-specialist setting	1	
Classroom teacher in a specialist setting	1	
Teaching assistant in a specialist setting	4	
Other	4	Other: 4
<b>Total</b>		<b>54</b>

Results show that the majority of the participants who had experience working with transgender pupils were classroom teachers, who worked within secondary schools.

**Q2. Please indicate how long you have been in your current role**

Time in role	Choice count
10 + years	24
6-10 years	7
1-5 years	19
Less than 12 months	4
Mean average of time spent in role was 2 years, 9 months	

**Q3. Please select the statement which best describes the area that you work in:**

Area	Choice count	Percentage
Town	42	78%
Rural	7	13%
City	4	7%
Other	1	2%

**Q4. Do you have any experience working with transgender pupils?**

Experience working with transgender pupil?	Choice count	Percentage
Yes	54	40%
Total respondents overall	134	

**Q5. Did any of the issues listed below concern you when you found out that you would be teaching, supporting or working with a transgender pupil? (Multiple choice available, please select most relevant)**

<b>Areas of concern</b>	<b>Choice count</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Homophobic bullying</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19%</b>
<b>Questions related to gender identity</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22%</b>
<b>Gender school facilities/resources</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22%</b>
<b>Views of other students/ their families</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>29%</b>
<b>Your own personal beliefs</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6%</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3%</b>

Results show that overall the majority of participants were concerned with the views of other students and their families, the availability of appropriate resources and facilities, as well as questions related to gender.

The choice count for 'questions related to gender identity' were of particular interest to the researcher as it posed a question of whether this could perhaps highlight a lack of confidence or knowledge in regards to the topic of gender identity.

**Q6. Have you previously received any training specifically related to gender identity?**

<b>Experiences with training</b>	<b>Choice count</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Yes</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>17%</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>83%</b>

Results above indicate that training opportunities available to schools who have transgender pupils is low. When thinking about the role of the EP, this may highlight an area in which EPs could potentially contribute too.

**Q7. If possible, could you provide details of who delivered this training in the box below:**

<b>Responses given verbatim</b>
<b>ALNCo</b>
<b>Local Authority</b>
<b>School</b>
<b>Stonewall</b>
<b>Umbrella Cymru</b>

Results indicate that some training was provided specifically from LGBT charities. The 'local authority' response were of interest to the researcher, although it is unclear which sector of the local authority training was administered.

**Q8. Are you aware of a policy within your school that prohibits any form of discrimination on the basis of gender?**

Awareness of policy	Choice count	Percentage
Yes	33	62%
No	8	15%
Not Sure	12	23%

**Q9. Do you believe that your school provides a safe environment for transgender pupils?**

Safe environment	Choice count	Percentage
Yes	35	66%
No	0	-
Maybe	18	34%

**Q10. In your opinion what factors enable your school to provide a safe environment for transgender pupils? (Please give a brief description in the box below)**

Number of responses - 35				
Key themes				
Valuing children for their individuality	Caring staff who take time to listen to pupil's views	Close home/school relationship	School ethos that reinforces respect, individuality and inclusivity	Range of PSHE programme content
Culture where staff are trained and informed to create an open culture	Bullying policies	Supportive staff (teachers, pastoral team and wellbeing officers)	Appropriate facilities	Wide recognition of LGBTQ: groups, celebrate Pride, assemblies, safe spaces
Being child led	Approachable staff	Accepting peers	Receiving advice from LGBT specific charities	

**Q11. Do you believe that your school provides an inclusive environment for transgender pupils? (Please select one of the following statements)**

Inclusive Environment	Choice count	Percentage
Yes	29	58%
No	2	4%
Maybe	19	38%

**Q12. In your opinion what factors enable your school to provide an inclusive environment for transgender pupils? (Please give a brief description in the box below)**

Number of responses - 22				
Key themes				
Close home/school relationship	Pupils given autonomy over decisions which impact them	Equality for all	Friendly and open ethos	Inclusive facilities
Recognition of chosen pronouns	Flexible policies (uniform, sports, toilets)	Promotion of wider school awareness (LGBT clubs, assemblies)	Support available in school (counselling, sign-posting)	Information sharing (parents, pupils and staff)
Supportive staff				

**Q13. Is name calling, or harassment on the basis of gender identity an issue at your school?**

Options	Choice count	Percentage
Yes	1	2%
No	21	46%
Sometimes	20	43%
Not sure	4	9%

Considering that the majority of participants had said 'yes' to their school being safe for transgender pupils (question 9), it was interesting that a large proportion (43%) stated that name calling and harassment was 'sometimes' an issue for transgender pupils. This was interesting to the researcher as it may indicate that there are other, more significant factors, which are seen to contribute to a safe environment which were not explored in this questionnaire.

**Q14. Would you feel comfortable confronting a pupil who harasses another pupil because of their gender identity? (Please select from the statements below)**

Options	Choice count	Percentage
Yes	45	98%
No	0	-

<b>Not sure</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2%</b>
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**Q15. How confident do you feel about addressing the topic of 'transgender' in the classroom?**

Scale of 0-10 (10 being extremely confident, 0 being not at all)	Choice count	Percentage	Mean Average (scale of 1-10)
10	8	17%	<b>6.7</b>
9	4	9%	
8	7	15%	
7	10	22%	
6	2	4%	
5	6	13%	
4	4	9%	
3	2	4%	
2	1	2%	
1	0	-	
0	2	4%	

A mean average of 6.7 suggests that staff feel somewhat confident addressing the topic of transgender in the classroom, however there is a discrepancy between this result and the response given in question 5 (Q5) which suggests that 21% of respondents were concerned with questions related to gender when they found out they would be supporting, or working with a transgender pupil.

**Q16. Does your school have adequate resources available that could help you to meet the needs of a transgender pupil in your classroom or school?**

Is there adequate resources?	Choice count	Percentage
<b>Yes</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>28%</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Not sure</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>52%</b>

Results indicate that the majority of participants felt that there was a lack of adequate resources available and were not aware of what was available to access in their settings.

**Q17. If possible please provide some examples of the resources that are available in your school in the box below:**

<b>Responses -10</b>				
<b>Key Themes</b>				
<b>Pastoral and counselling support</b>	<b>Unisex facilities</b>	<b>PSE lessons</b>	<b>Internet resources</b>	<b>LGBT Pride group</b>



<b>'In house' training for staff</b>	
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**Q18. If you had a question about how to best support a transgender pupil, are there members of staff that you could seek advice from at your school?**

Able to seek advice from colleagues?	Choice count	Percentage
Yes	31	72%
No	3	7%
Not sure	9	21%

**Q19. Do you know what types of support are available in your Local Authority to help support schools to meet the needs of transgender pupils?**

Aware of support available?	Choice count	Percentage
Yes	7	16%
No	18	42%
Not sure	18	42%

The majority of participants were unaware of what support is available to access within the Local Authority and the researcher initially questioned whether this was due to a lack of information sharing and sign posting within the school system, or whether there were more systemic issues regarding local authority resources and a lack of communication with schools.

**Q20. Have you previously received support from an Educational Psychologist (EP), or the Educational Psychology Service in regards to a transgender pupil or the topic of gender identity?**

Able	Choice count	Percentage
Yes	6	14%
No	37	86%

A large majority of participants had not received support from an EP in relation to supporting transgender pupils, this result helped to inform the inclusion and exclusion criteria for semi-structured interviews. See summary below for further details.

**Q21. How prepared would you feel if a pupil shared a concern relating to their gender identity with you? Please select using the slider (0 being not at all, 10 being extremely)**

Scale of 0-10	Choice count	Percentage	Mean Average (scale of 1-10)
10	7	16%	
9	2	5%	

8	7	16%	<b>6.4%</b>
7	7	16%	
6	4	9%	
5	8	19%	
4	1	2%	
3	3	7%	
2	0	-	
1	4	9%	
0	0	-	

A mean average of 6.4% for preparedness to support a pupil who disclosed concerns relating to gender identity suggests that staff feel somewhat confident to support. However, this response encouraged the researcher to reflect on the usefulness of exploring what could help staff to feel more prepared to address these issues. This also provided a rationale for exploring whether staff see EPs as someone who could support them with this.

**Q22. At school teachers are the right people to support pupils who may have questions regarding their gender identity (Please select from the following statements below)**

Able	Choice count	Percentage
Strongly agree	3	7%
Somewhat agree	21	49%
Agree	9	21%
Neither agree nor disagree	7	16%
Disagree	0	-
Somewhat disagree	3	7%
Strongly disagree	0	-

Although no respondents felt that teachers were not the most suitable people to support transgender pupils, the majority of responses (somewhat agree) indicate some reservations in relation to this issue. When reflecting on the lack of perceived support, resources and training, it was wondered whether these were influencing factors which led to staff to not feel fully equipped to support pupils who may have questions about their gender identity.

**Appendix 3: Informed Consent as presented to respondents for the online questionnaire (Phase 1)**

If you are happy to continue with this questionnaire please read the following statements and select YES below, alternately if you do not wish to take part please select NO:

- I understand that participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study before I submit my answers by selecting NO below.
- Once submitted the data will become unidentifiable to any one person. I also understand that I can withdraw without giving a reason and that this will not have any further implications.
- I understand that I am free to ask questions at any time and that I can discuss my concerns with the researcher, Lowri Charlton, or any of the following individuals listed below.
- I understand that the information provided by me will be held anonymously.
- I understand that this information may be used as part of academic research write-ups, presentations etc.
- I understand that by submitting my answers I am unable to withdraw my consent.

If you have any further questions please contact any of the following:

- Lowri Charlton (researcher)- [charltonl@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:charltonl@cardiff.ac.uk)
- Dr Rachael Hayes (supervisor)- [Hayesr4@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:Hayesr4@cardiff.ac.uk)
- Ethics Committee- [psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk)

If you are happy to continue with the questionnaire, please select YES from the options below:

#### **Appendix 4: Interview schedule for Phase 2- Semi-structured interviews**

1. Could you describe what your experience has been like working with/or supporting transgender pupils?
2. What are some of the challenges that you/other staff members have faced when supporting/meeting the needs of transgender pupils?
  - What are your thoughts/experiences like in regards to discussing the topic of gender more widely within the school/with other pupils?
  - Do you feel that there is adequate support available for schools in relation to these challenges?
  - Who have you sought advice from?
3. Has your school received any training in regards to the topic of 'transgender'?
  - If yes, who delivered the training, was it helpful? And why/why not?
  - What about it was helpful/unhelpful?
  - What would have made it better/more useful?
  - Did the training help you/the school to overcome some of the challenges you previously discussed?
  - If no what would it be useful to receive training on?
4. Are you aware of a policy within your school which considers the needs of transgender pupils?
  - In your opinion, what impact does the policy have? Are other staff members aware of this policy?
  - How necessary is the policy in helping to create a safer/more inclusive environment for transgender pupils?
5. On a scale of 1-10 (1 being not at all and 10 being very) how confident do you feel about supporting students who are trans?
  - What is it that prevents you from rating this higher?
  - What factors do you think impact/contribute to those feelings?
  - What could other agencies/ EPs do more of to support?

6. What are your thoughts on the types of support available within the local authority for schools in regards to the topic of transgender?

- What resources/support would be useful for schools to have?

7. Are you aware of whether or not the local Educational Psychology Service provides support with this and have you received any input from them previously?

- What types of support might be useful to receive from an Educational Psychologist and why?

## **Appendix 5: Gatekeeper Email- sent to the Director of Education (Phase 2)**

Dear [Name]

My name is Lowri Charlton and I am a third-year trainee Educational Psychologist (EP) studying at Cardiff University and currently on placement in [Name]. For my doctorate thesis, I am aiming to explore some of the issues that teachers within secondary schools are concerned with (or have experienced) in regards to supporting transgender pupils.

I am writing to ask your permission to contact secondary school Head Teachers within this local authority. I hope to invite teaching staff who have experience supporting, and working with transgender pupils to take part in a semi-structured interview to discuss the following:

- What the most prevalent issues for teachers are in regards to supporting transgender pupils;
- What types of support teachers feel might be useful to receive and specifically what role might be appropriate for Educational Psychologists to undertake.

This research has been approved by the Cardiff University Ethics Committee and I am writing in the hope that you will be able to provide permission for me to contact this group. I would appreciate your permission in time to begin the research in October 2019.

Please respond to the following email if you are happy for me to contact secondary school headteachers with an invitation letter for their teaching staff – charltonl@cardiff.ac.uk

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

Lowri Charlton,  
Researcher/Trainee Educational Psychologist.

### Contact Details:

Student Name- Lowri Charlton- Trainee Educational Psychologist/  
Researcher

Telephone Number – [contact details]

E-mail- charltonl@cardiff.ac.uk

Research supervisor – Dr Rachael Hayes (Cardiff University)

Telephone Number- 029208 75493

E-mail- hayesr4@cardiff.ac.uk

## **Appendix 6: Information and consent forms for staff: Sent to Head Teachers (Phase 2)**

### **Information and consent letters for teaching staff**

My name is Lowri Charlton and I am a third-year trainee Educational Psychologist (EP) studying at Cardiff University. For my doctoral thesis, I am aiming to explore some of the issues that teaching staff are concerned with, or have experienced in regards to supporting transgender pupils within schools.

If you have experience of working with, or supporting a transgender pupil and you are happy to take part in a short interview to discuss the following:

- What the most prevalent issues for teachers are in regards to supporting transgender pupils;
- What types of support teachers feel might be useful to receive and specifically what role might be appropriate for Educational Psychologists to undertake.

If you wish to participate, an interview will be arranged at your school at a time that is the most suitable for you. The interview would last about 40 minutes and will be recorded using a digital audio recorder. Audio recordings will be stored confidentially on a secure, password protected computer following the interview. All responses will be anonymised and transcribed within 2 weeks of the interview. Once transcribed the information provided will no longer be identifiable to any specific individual. The anonymised data gathered may be later used for academic purposes.

There are no right or wrong answers, participation in this research is completely voluntary and you can choose to withdraw from the research, up until the point of transcription. Additionally, you do not have to answer any questions that you do not feel comfortable answering and there will be no negative consequences if they chose to withdraw.

Details will not be passed to any organisation or company however it is important that all are aware of the Equality Act (2010) which outlines that:

*“Schools cannot unlawfully discriminate against pupils because of their sex, race, disability, religion or belief or sexual orientation”.*

It is therefore important that any responses given do not name any pupils directly and that responses do not discriminate against any pupils who are transgender.

If you have any further questions or concerns regarding this research, please contact the researcher, Lowri Charlton (Trainee Educational Psychologist, Cardiff University).

**If you would like to take part please complete the consent form below** and email to [charltonl@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:charltonl@cardiff.ac.uk). However, if it is more convenient you can

simply confirm via telephone [**contact details**], or email and I can collect the consent form prior to our interview.

Please note that due to time constraints the first 8 respondents will be selected to take part and will be responded to within 1 working day to confirm that consent has been received.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration,

Lowri Charlton  
Researcher and Trainee Educational Psychologist (Cardiff University).

**For further details please contact:**

**Dr Rachael Hayes-** Cardiff University Research Supervisor:  
[hayesr4@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:hayesr4@cardiff.ac.uk) OR 029208 75493

**OR**

**Secretary of the Ethics Committee**

School of Psychology  
Cardiff University  
Tower Building  
Park Place  
Cardiff  
CF10 3ATTel: 029 2087 0360 OR Email: [psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk)

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**Consent form to be completed**

I understand that my participation in this project will involve taking part in an interview to discuss the following:

- What the most prevalent issues for teachers are in regards to supporting transgender pupils.
- What additional support might be useful to receive and from whom to support you/your school to overcome some of the barriers faced when supporting transgender pupils.

I understand that participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study up until the point of transcription, at which point the data will become unidentifiable to any one person. I also understand that I can withdraw without giving a reason and that this will not have any further implications.

I understand that I am free to ask any questions at any time and that I discuss my concerns with the researcher, Lowri Charlton or any of the following individuals listed below.



I understand that at the end of the study I will be provided with additional information and feedback about the purpose of the study.

I understand that the information provided will be held totally anonymously and once the interview has been transcribed the information provided will be held totally anonymously and will be impossible to trace back to me individually.

I understand that this information may be used as part of academic research write-ups, presentations etc.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (NAME) consent to participate in the study conducted by Lowri Charlton (School of Psychology, Cardiff University) with the supervision of Dr Rachael Hayes (Cardiff University research supervisor).

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Privacy Notice:**

*The information provided on the consent form will be held in compliance with GDPR regulations. Cardiff University is the data controller and Matt Cooper is the data protection officer ([inforequest@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:inforequest@cardiff.ac.uk)). This information is being collected by Lowri Charlton. This information will be held securely and separately from the research information you provide. Only the researcher will have access to this form and it will be destroyed after 7 years. The lawful basis for processing this information is public interest.*

## **Appendix 7: Debrief forms following semi-structured interviews**

Dear participant,

Thank you for taking the time to participate in an interview which aimed to explore school staffs' views in regards to transgender pupils and the role of the EP.

As stated previously this research project aims to:

- Establish what the most prevalent issues are for schools in regards to supporting transgender pupils.
- Establish the types of support that staff feel would be beneficial to their schools and more specifically what role might be appropriate for EPs to undertake.
- This project aims to be completed by 2020. If you have any further questions or concerns following your participation in this research, please contact either:

Lowri Charlton (Researcher and Trainee Educational Psychologist) Email: [charlonl@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:charlonl@cardiff.ac.uk)

Or

Dr Rachel Hayes (Cardiff University Research Supervisor) Email: [hayesr4@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:hayesr4@cardiff.ac.uk) or 029208 75493

However, if you have any further concerns and you would like to speak with an individual separate from this research please contact Secretary of the Ethics Committee (see details below).

Contact Details: School of Psychology Cardiff University Tower Building Park Place Cardiff CF10 3AT Tel: 029 2087 0360 or Email: [psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk)

## **Appendix 8: Research and Analysis Activity Timeline**

**Table 6:** Research activity timeline and details of *data analysis based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach*.

<b><i>Research Activity Timeline and Process of Data Analysis</i></b>	
<b>Month/Year</b>	<b>Activity Undertaken</b>
March 2017	<p>The researcher undertook a university academic assignment which aimed to explore frameworks for EP practice in relation to the topic of transgender. During this assignment, the researcher found there to be a lack of relevant literature which could help to guide EP practice in regards to supporting schools in relation to the topic of transgender. There was also a lack of literature which had explored the views of school staff and what their primary needs were.</p> <p>This resulted in a personal reflection and a consideration of how practice could be informed and reasoned when there was a limited volume of research for EPs to consider when working with transgender pupils and supporting schools.</p>
April 2017	<p>Following the academic assignment, the researcher conducted further exploratory literature searches to ascertain what wider research was available for both schools and other professionals, including EPs.</p> <p>Although some Local Authority (LA) guidance was available for some LA's in England (with some guidance being provided by Educational Psychology Services'), it was not clear what research had informed the guidance and whether schools felt that this to be useful.</p> <p>Furthermore, there appeared to be no guidance for EPs in Wales (specifically in relation to transgender) and limited research regarding transgender pupil's experiences in Welsh schools, beyond that of Stonewall reports.</p> <p>The researcher was unable to find any research in Wales which had explored school staff's views in relation to this topic and it was unclear whether school staff saw EP's as professionals who could support them.</p>
April-May 2019	<p>Based on exploratory searches and wider reading, the researcher decided to explore Welsh school staff's views in relation to the topic transgender and the role of the EP for their thesis. This decision was based on the limited research available and the researcher's own desire to feel to feel more informed about this topic.</p>

	<p>An ethical application for this research was presented to Cardiff University Ethics Committee and was approved.</p>
June 2019	<p>The researcher met with the departmental librarian to discuss how to conduct formal literature searches. Although wider literature had been found as part of the academic assignment, the researcher wanted to ensure that they had not missed any key papers.</p> <p>Following this session, the researcher conducted their own formal literature searches as part of the thesis literature review, with support of a librarian to ensure effective searches were carried out.</p> <p>It was agreed that the researcher would schedule a second session following a period of independent searching.</p> <p>Searches were conducted by the researcher using PsychINFO, ERIC, ASSIA and Google Scholar.</p> <p>Effective searches were expanded on using 'pearl growing' methods.</p>
June 2019	<p>Following formal literature searches it appeared that the majority of the research which had explored school staff's views in relation to the topic of transgender had been conducted in countries outside of the UK. Available research suggested that this was a controversial issue for schools. However, given the lack of UK research, it was unclear whether this was a topic of contention in the UK also.</p> <p>It was unclear which staff members in UK schools would have the most insight into the challenges of working with transgender pupils and whether primary or secondary staff encountered transgender pupils more frequently. It was also unclear as to whether EPs were supporting schools on this topic.</p> <p>Therefore, the researcher decided to conduct an Online Questionnaire, (Phase 1) to explore whether the issues raised in the wider research were: <b>1)</b> Relevant points to explore in semi-structured interviews with school staff in the UK. <b>2)</b> To explore which staff members would be the most informative to interview. <b>3)</b> To explore how EPs were supporting schools in relation to this topic.</p>

<p>June-July 2019</p>	<p>Following further review of appropriate literature, the Online Questionnaire for Phase 1 was developed.</p> <p>The completed Online Questionnaire was discussed and reviewed with the researcher's supervisor.</p> <p>The Online Questionnaire was amended following supervision. Amendments included changes to phrasing, options available for participant response's and the addition of questions which explored whether other agencies, as well as EPs were involved with schools in relation to this topic.</p>
<p>July 2019- August 2019</p>	<p>The Online Questionnaire was circulated via online forums and social media platforms.</p> <p>During this time, the researcher received E-mails from some respondents, who commented on the topic and the process of reflection which had occurred during completion of the questionnaire. One participant volunteered to be contacted if necessary, as part of further research.</p>
<p>August 2019- September 2019</p>	<p>The researcher read through the 154 online responses that were obtained from Phase 1. During this process, the researcher made note of patterns, similar responses, differences and points of interest in relation to the wider research.</p> <p>Following the analysis of the Online Questionnaire responses and reflection of the research aims and questions, the researcher decided to filter responses to include only those which had come from school staff who had experience working with transgender pupils. This resulted in 54 responses, each of which was read through a second time, with key areas of interest being noted (similar to that of above).</p> <p>The researcher also filtered responses to those who had selected 'Yes' to working with transgender pupils and those who had experience of working with EPs in relation to the topic of transgender. Responses were read and considered in relation to information gathered above. However, this provided a limited response rate of 7.</p> <p>As the aim of Phase 1 was to provide direction for Phase 2 of the research; it was decided that filtering responses to include only those who had experience working with transgender pupils and those had experience working with EPs in the relation to the topic was too limiting, given the lack of responses and information provided. Therefore, next steps for Phase 2 were based on</p>

	<p>information obtained from the 54 responses of those who had experience working with transgender pupils.</p> <p>Based on the information obtained, inclusion and exclusions for the interviews and an interview schedule were developed.</p>
September 2019	The interview schedule was discussed with the researcher's supervisor. Following which, some adjustments were made to phrasing.
September 2019- October 2019	<p>A third and fourth formal literature search was conducted as part of the thesis literature review, with support of a librarian to ensure all relevant literature had been found.</p> <p>These two sessions were spent exploring literature in relation to the overall thesis topic and areas of interest highlighted following the online questionnaire (phase 1). Research was selected based on inclusion and exclusion criteria discussed previously (See <b>Part I: Section 1.2 'Search Terms and Sources'</b> and <b>Appendix 1, Table 1'</b> for further details).</p>
October 2019	<p><b>Phase 2:</b> A request for gatekeeper consent was sent to the appropriate personnel in Local Authority 1.</p> <p>Following the acquisition of gate keeper consent, an E-mail was sent to all Head Teachers in Local Authority 1. 3 participants were recruited from two different secondary schools (School A and B).</p> <p>Due to limited participant uptake, an application was made to Cardiff University Ethics Committee to contact the Head Teacher of school C. This was based on a staff member volunteering to take part in further research during Phase 1 (as discussed above).</p> <p>Following ethical approval, a request for gate keeper consent was made to the Head Teacher of school C in Local Authority B. Once gate keeper consent was gained, 4 participants were obtained.</p> <p>Interviews were scheduled with all 7 participants.</p>
December 2019	Semi-structured interviews are conducted.
December 2019-January 2020	<p><b>Thematic Analysis:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Following Braun and Clarke's (2013) <b>six stage</b> process for analysis, interviews were transcribed verbatim (<b>Stage 1</b>).</li> </ul>
January 2020-February 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Stage 2:</b> Following analysis, the researcher read through and familiarised themselves with the transcripts, taking note of items of potential interest.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This process is repeated multiple times to help the researcher become familiar with the data gathered.</li> <li>• ‘Noticings’ and reflections were also noted during the reading and re-reading of transcripts.</li> </ul>
February 2020- March 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Stage 3:</b> The researcher begins the coding process as detailed by Braun and Clarke (2013).</li> <li>• Coding was initially undertaken at a semantic level.</li> </ul>
March 2020	Supervision regarding the coding process, initial analysis of the data and patterns identified were discussed with the researcher supervisor. Consideration was also given as to whether some conclusions being drawn from the data suggested that the researcher had analysed the data at a more latent level, but had recorded semantic level codes.
March 2020	<p>Following supervision, the researcher reflected on their epistemological position and an initial desire to ‘stay close to the data’ and considered whether a second analysis of the transcripts through a latent lens was more appropriate.</p> <p>Given the importance placed on language in relation to social constructionism (Burr, 2015) and discussions with the research supervisor, the researcher decided to code/analyse the transcripts a second time at a latent level.</p>
April 2020- May 2020	<p><b>Stage 3 repeated:</b> Codes were refined, redefined and reconfigured during the second coding process.</p> <p><b>Examples of stages 2 and 3 are detailed in Appendix 9, Table 7.</b></p> <p><b>Stage 4:</b> All relevant codes are grouped together in candidate theme tables to assist with theme development and themes are given colour codes. <b>(See Appendix 10, Table 8-9 as an example of candidate theme tables for RQ1, theme 1 and 3).</b></p> <p>Once final themes and organising codes were established. Themes, codes and relevant data extracts were collated into colour coded theme tables (See <b>Appendix 11, Table 10</b> as an example).</p> <p><b>Stage 5:</b> Themes and subthemes were reviewed in relation to the entire data-set and were checked to ensure that they ‘fitted’ with the coded data and original transcripts.</p>

	<p>In-keeping with steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2013) an initial thematic map was created based on analysis to date. Reflective notes, initial ‘noticings’, patterns and relationships between themes were depicted onto the map.</p> <p><b>Stage 6:</b> Appropriate changes were made to the phrasing of some codes and new themes emerged following second review. The names of themes were finalised.</p> <p>As recommended by Braun and Clark (2013), all transcripts were re-read to ensure that final themes captured the ‘true meaning’ of the data-set and were considered in relation to the overall research aims and questions. Following which, further adjustments were made and some themes/codes, which did not fit were ‘let go of’, as suggested by Braun and Clark (2013).</p>
June-July 2020	<p>Analysing and interpretation of the data: ‘The write-up’:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before writing the findings and discussion section of Part II, the researcher wrote definitions for each theme to help define what the focus and boundaries were for each theme. This helped the researcher to construct and clarify the essence of each theme.</li> <li>• The analysis narrative is written. In accordance with earlier coding, the analysis was written at a latent level, the aim of the analysis was to provide a more in-depth interpretation of patterns and themes.</li> </ul>
July 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Following the completion of the ‘write-up’ and analysis, new connections and relationships which had been identified and reflected upon through the writing process were added to the overall thematic map (<b>Appendix 12</b>).</li> </ul>



**Appendix 9- Example of analysis: Stages 2-3 (Pages 1-5 of interview with participant 2)**

**Table 7:** Transcript and coding example.

<p><b>Transcript</b></p>	<p><b><u>Stage 2: Initial ‘noticings’, notes relating to points of interest and researcher reflections</u></b></p>	<p><b>Stage 3: Semantic codes derived from the data (Initial analysis)</b></p>	<p><b>Stage 3: Latent codes drawn from the data (second analysis)</b></p>
<p>Researcher: So, the first question is could you describe your experiences or what your experiences have been like either working with or supporting transgender children?</p> <p>Participant 2: Yeah umm well we’ve got one or two umm transgender children in the school that I have taught the <u>one uhh oh I don’t like saying the one</u> but uh <u>the ones that I have taught have been transitioning from female to male it hasn’t been a difficult experience</u> um it’s just um <u>it’s just about knowing what to say really and things like that really</u>...it’s just in the general capacity of teaching, <u>we do have one who he uh takes part in a lot of preforming arts activities he’s in the school production at the moment actually and um so yeah I mean its experience not just in the classroom but also that way as well in the extra-curricular stuff which is quite uh its quite nice actually I suppose...</u></p> <p>Researcher: Yeah its diverse it seems, I guess what that says is that it’s within the diversity of the school and we don’t treat it any differently to any other pupils umm so I suppose what do you think are some of the factors and maybe not speaking about yourself but with the other staff members and you may or may not know that but</p>	<p><u>Participant was conscious of using the right terminology in the interview.</u></p> <p><u>F-M not challenging for a specific reason? Compare with other interviews.</u></p>	<p>Unsure what to say.</p> <p>Felt to be positive that ‘trans’ pupils in the school are able to join in with extra-curricular activities.</p>	<p><u>Need for support in regards to language- Conscious of using the correct language. Not knowing what to say to pupils.</u></p>

<p>do you think that there some factors which impact on staff working with those pupils or supporting them?</p>			
<p>Participant 2: I um yeah <u>I think there are a few things personally from my point of view and I know a few others as it does come up in conversation.</u></p>	<p><u>Topic discussed amongst staff, could this suggest it is a topic of contention?</u></p>	<p>Topic of contention amongst staff.</p>	<p>Uncertainty amongst staff.</p>
<p>Researcher: Yeah of course.</p>			
<p>Participant 2: <u>It's that use of the pronoun then is the biggest sort of issue I think</u> I mean we all make mistakes and I still make mistakes with one person now who's in the show and <u>now and then I will still say um she or and he still does bother with a group of girls so sort of like oh girls and then it's like oh no sorry but then it's like how do you address that when you do forget and that one of the things that has come up a lot</u> because I called this person she today or her <u>I mean to be fair this person doesn't bat an eyelid so he's fine with it we have actually it's not just two I can think of another person actually who's in a different year group actually there is one who kinds of will make a bit of an issue understandably because if we're not using it correctly that you can understand that they would be a bit well you know I have told you this in the past and bit um and um its um the big um we don't know how to deal with it when we do make a mistake...</u></p>	<p><u>Pronouns are big concerns, is this the same in other interviews?</u></p>	<p>Pronouns are a key issue.</p>	<p>Concerns regarding the correct use of pronouns</p>
<p>because I called this person she today or her <u>I mean to be fair this person doesn't bat an eyelid so he's fine with it we have actually it's not just two I can think of another person actually who's in a different year group actually there is one who kinds of will make a bit of an issue understandably because if we're not using it correctly that you can understand that they would be a bit well you know I have told you this in the past and bit um and um its um the big um we don't know how to deal with it when we do make a mistake...</u></p>	<p><u>Is use of gendered language challenging? How do transgender pupils feel about these types of mistakes?</u></p>	<p>Unsure how to address mistakes with pupils. Pronouns = Common issue.</p>	<p>Automatic use of gendered language.</p>
<p>because I called this person she today or her <u>I mean to be fair this person doesn't bat an eyelid so he's fine with it we have actually it's not just two I can think of another person actually who's in a different year group actually there is one who kinds of will make a bit of an issue understandably because if we're not using it correctly that you can understand that they would be a bit well you know I have told you this in the past and bit um and um its um the big um we don't know how to deal with it when we do make a mistake...</u></p>	<p><u>Are staff generally unsure how to correct mistakes?</u></p>	<p>Pupils reactions to incorrect pronouns can differ.</p>	<p>Need for support with language- Uncertainty regarding how to address wrong use of pronouns.</p>
<p>because I called this person she today or her <u>I mean to be fair this person doesn't bat an eyelid so he's fine with it we have actually it's not just two I can think of another person actually who's in a different year group actually there is one who kinds of will make a bit of an issue understandably because if we're not using it correctly that you can understand that they would be a bit well you know I have told you this in the past and bit um and um its um the big um we don't know how to deal with it when we do make a mistake...</u></p>	<p><u>Individual differences amongst pupils in relation to teacher's incorrect use of pronouns.</u></p>	<p>Staff are accepting.</p>	<p>Language as a common concern.</p>
<p>Researcher: Yeah</p>	<p><u>Inclusive school: Would interview be different if participant was from a</u></p>		<p>Concerns around facilitating restorative response when</p>
<p>Participant 2: um but <u>um the whole transgender thing we do really well as a whole staff and we kind of accept and nobody is</u></p>			

<p><u>kind of gone um well I don't think it's right we should still do it the traditional way we have all gone ok well yeah this person wants to identify as male and we will do our best but we all feel awkward when we make a mistake so I think that's the biggest issue I think and umm I will be honest we haven't had much in way of training we haven't had any kind of training I don't know if there is training that is available</u> but we haven't had anything in the way of that we just get an email to say by the way this person I'm trying so hard not to use their names (laughs)...</p> <p>Researcher: (Laughing) I know it's hard isn't it its ok though if you want to make up a name if it's easier but I can understand where you're coming from and being able to rectify when we make a mistake can feel awkward and I think there are lots of staff who find that challenging lots of the research shows that its ok actually to um just say I'm really sorry and not make a big deal about it and move on and I think that what from some of the conversations and information from the transgender pupils that I have seen or heard speak say it's fine as long as people acknowledge the mistake and move past it um ok yeah so could you describe if you can what some of the challenges and benefits are do you think for staff in supporting this group? I know we've touched on the pronouns but then maybe do you think there are also some broader challenges that school staff might face or what you have experienced and also what some of the benefits are of supporting those pupils?</p> <p>Participant 2: Yeah umm (pause) <u>I think the benefit wise is quite a lot</u> because I mean uh especially I mean personally myself there's I'm um I'm quite used to it I've got a massive diverse range of</p>	<p><u>school that was not inclusive?</u></p> <p><u>Knowledge on training is low. Lack of training: Is this the same for other LA's/schools?</u></p> <p><u>Diversity of pupils seen as beneficial.</u></p>	<p>Negative feelings triggered by mistakes.</p> <p>Language is a key concern.</p> <p>Lack of training. Not aware of training opportunities.</p> <p>Transgender pupils are valued.</p>	<p>pupils are upset due to incorrect pronouns. Concern for pupils who are not in inclusive schools- commitment to support.</p> <p>Afraid to offend.</p> <p>Lack of training.</p> <p>Lack of awareness in regards to what is available to support staff- Need to make training more accessible.</p>
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<p>friends I don't mean I've got loads of friends (laughs) but you know what I mean.</p> <p>Researcher: (Laughing) Yeah, I know what you mean</p> <p>Participant 2: A diverse range a people I know I mean <u>I'm gay myself right you know so it's easy for me to go yeah that's fine its acceptable</u> and what ok I think for <u>without wanting to stereotype the older generations of teachers it's like I'm not so sure so the benefit of that is that it would kind of forces them in a sense to acknowledge and become more open minded about things</u> so it's sort of allows them to look at themselves a bit more and I know <u>even though I am used to a lot of diverse people it's still it has made me look at myself a bit more</u> and go well actually I did there's one person individually <u>I did question well actually this person wants to be identified as male and has said you know and has changed their name and said I want to be called him and he and that sort of thing but then appearance wise nothing has changed and um and um mannerisms haven't changes and um so personally I don't get it I don't understand</u> it and then umm and I had another conversation with a pupil who's left now another boy who was head of sixth form and <u>he was openly gay himself so it was kind of um you know sort of conversation and I was like I don't understand I don't get it and he had to explain to me</u> well just because they identify as male doesn't mean they have to look like a male and you know they just um they just feel they are a male and that made me think open my mind a bit more and go well actually ok <u>I sort of get it now.</u></p>	<p><u>Will staff, who are part of the LGBT community be more accepting?</u></p> <p><u>Is acceptance seen as being positively correlated to age of staff? Is this observation shared by other participants? Is there a role for EPs in developing wider understanding?</u></p> <p><u>Supporting transgender pupils encourages self-reflection.</u></p> <p><u>Does a person need to 'visually' fit with a gender before others can accept their chosen identity? How important is visual presentation to our acceptance of others?</u></p> <p><u>Assumption that if you identify as LGB, you will have better understanding? Are sexuality and gender seen as the same?</u></p>	<p><b>Understanding linked to acceptance.</b></p> <p><b>Acceptance of generational.</b></p> <p><b>Trans pupils are vehicle for change.</b></p> <p><b>Confusion between identity and appearance.</b></p> <p><b>Pupils as a source of information.</b></p> <p><b>Not understanding 'transgender'.</b></p>	<p><b>Acceptance of generational. Acceptance linked to experience.</b></p> <p><b>Exposure linked to understanding.</b></p> <p><b>Dissonance between identity and gendered presentation. Lack of understanding in regards to gender identity.</b></p> <p><b>LGB pupils positioned as experts- LGB and T seen as the same- not understanding</b></p>
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<p>Researcher: So, it's kind of teaching you about what it means to kind of identify as different gender and um I think that really important because what staff have said is that they don't always understand this difference between gender and sexuality and seeing them as two different things...</p> <p>Participant 2: Yeah exactly.</p> <p>Researcher: So actually, that's a really good lesson to get from our interactions, the interactions that we have with them...</p> <p>Participant 2: <b>Yeah don't get me wrong I still don't get the whole kind of spectrum of it because it's a massive spectrum</b></p> <p>Researcher: Yes, the whole terminology is confusing</p> <p>Participant 2: It is and um but um I mean <b>we still have a lot to learn about everything and that's one of the main benefits</b> but um challenge wise <b>the biggest challenge and I don't know because I haven't spoken to anyone about it is the P.E department with changing rooms</b> and that kind of thing because and um I'm talking about this one person in particular because I know them from the show and things</p> <p>Researcher: Yeah, no that's fine go from your own experiences</p> <p>Participant 2: because of what I just said <b>the fact that he identifies as a male but then everything else looks wise and mannerism wise is you know is female how does that fair with going to the boys changing rooms girls changing rooms</b> you know and you</p>	<p><b><u>Participant is still unsure about what it means to be 'trans', is this evident in responses which follow?</u></b></p> <p><b><u>Is the topic seen as daunting? Is this linked to variety of terminology? Is there a role for EPs to deconstruct 'myths', fears, uncertainties?</u></b></p> <p><b><u>Are transgender pupils seen as 'vehicle for change'? Does this link with Meyer &amp; Leonardi's research?</u></b></p> <p><b><u>Are they challenging because of visual presentation?</u></b></p>	<p><b>Feeling daunted by wide spectrum of terminology.</b></p> <p><b>P.E facilities are challenging.</b></p> <p><b>Concerns regarding gendered presentation and</b></p>	<p><b>what it means to be 'trans' (gender + sexuality). Pupils as more informed- lack of staff support.</b></p> <p><b>Terminology is confusing.</b></p> <p><b>Mis-conceptions in regards to what 'transgender' means.</b></p> <p><b>Need for support to develop understanding.</b></p> <p><b>Issues regarding changing facilities.</b></p> <p><b>Dissonance between appearance of</b></p>
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<p>know <u>I suppose technically they should be going into the boys changing rooms but then how do the boys feel about that do they have to go into a separate changing room but then that's isolating them or singling them out</u> and obviously I don't have to deal with that but I can imagine that that is one of the challenges.</p> <p>Researcher: Yeah I mean I think this idea of the P.E department is a challenging aspect um and I suppose we touched on gender a little bit then but just thinking about the concept of gender has it been discussed widely as a school? Or do you think that this is still um people don't see it or don't have clarity on it I suppose?</p> <p>Participant 2: <u>Yeah I don't think we have ever discussed it as a school or been brought up in inset days</u> and I might be wrong by <u>the most we get is an email to say look this person has changed their name to such and such and we are going to call them him or her or this person doesn't identify as any gender at the moment so if your splitting or if you're doing a boy girl seating plan please be aware of that and um that's all we get</u> really <u>we don't get if you want to discuss this</u> (pause) actually they may have said if you want to talk more about this come and see us but <u>it's just to the head of year and I don't think that they have had the amount of training that they need</u> so it's just umm</p> <p>Researcher: So, do you think then that training is something, do you think there is adequate support and training available for staff if you did have a question, or have questions?</p> <p>Participant 2: <u>Personally I don't think there is,</u> because (pause) and um understandably I do um get it, there's so many issues in the school that if we went to the um the additional learning co-ordinator</p>	<p><u>Concerns for others feelings</u></p> <p><u>Logistical concerns</u></p> <p><u>Not spoken about in school - is this the same for other interviews?</u></p> <p><u>Is this based on limited understanding, concerns for confidentiality?</u></p> <p><u>What are the implications of staff in senior positions not being seen as knowledgeable? Do other participants share this concern? EP role at systemic level?</u></p> <p><u>Not enough training</u></p>	<p><u>conflict with facilities.</u></p> <p><u>P.E and concerns for other pupil's privacy.</u></p> <p><u>Moral conflict.</u></p> <p><u>Topic not spoken widely about.</u></p> <p><u>Limited information given to staff.</u></p> <p><u>Not invited to talk to SLT about topic.</u></p> <p><u>SLT not felt to have adequate understanding.</u></p> <p><u>Lack of training.</u></p>	<p><u>gender identity-creates sense of uncertainty.</u></p> <p><u>Questions regarding how to approach topic.</u></p> <p><u>Moral conflict.</u></p> <p><u>Concerns for others feelings.</u></p> <p><u>To support one is to take from another.</u></p> <p><u>Not spoken about by SLT.</u></p> <p><u>Staff waiting for SLT to initiate conversation.</u></p> <p><u>Lack of information sharing.</u></p> <p><u>SLT not seen as a source of information.</u></p> <p><u>Need for more training.</u></p>
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<p>or someone like that he's dealing with a whole range of issues and the wellbeing person is dealing with thousands of issues all the time so I mean you kind of get it in that <b>we have only 4 or 5 students identifying as transgender or gender fluid or whatever whereas we've got fifty students suffering with other issues not suffering</b> but with other issues you kind of get that but then at the same time we should be supporting everyone so <b>I wouldn't know who to go to in school anyway to talk to or discuss it or ask questions about um other than the pupils themselves</b> in all fairness the one person is quite you know he's very quiet, but if you ask him what about this is this ok I think he would go actually this is what...</p>	<p><b><u>Not priority in comparison to other 'needs'.</u></b>  <b><u>Conscious of language again.</u></b></p> <p><b><u>Is there a lack of support for staff more generally? – Role for EPs to support? Is there a need to build capacity in schools?</u></b></p>	<p><b>Transgender pupils are a minority.</b></p> <p><b>Lack of support for staff.</b></p> <p><b>Pupils seen as a source of information.</b></p>	<p><b>Transgender seen as minority group.</b></p> <p><b>Not a priority.</b></p> <p><b>Lack of support at different levels within the system.</b>  <b>Support systems unclear.</b>  <b>Lack of info sharing.</b>  <b>Pupils seen as more informed.</b></p>
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**Appendix 10: Examples of candidate theme tables (Stage 4 of analysis) for RQ1 Theme 1 and 3.**

**Table 8:** Example of candidate theme table for RQ1, Theme 1.

<b>Theme 1. Language (Overarching theme)</b>		
<b>1.1 Afraid to offend</b>	<b>1.2 Pronouns</b>	<b>1.3 Terminology</b>
Conscious of using correct language	Concerns regarding correct use of pronoun	Terminology is confusing
Uncertain of correct language to use	Concerns about pronouns.	
Conscious of saying the right things.	Automatic use of gendered language	
Uncomfortable with mistakes	Concerns regarding the impact of using the wrong pronouns.	
Afraid to offend		
Not knowing what to say to pupils.		



**Table 9:** Example of candidate theme table for RQ1, Theme 3.

<b>Theme 3. Challenges within school system (Overarching theme)</b>					
<b>3.1. Senior leadership team (SLT)</b>	<b>3.2. Facilities</b>	<b>3.3. Lack of information sharing within the system</b>	<b>3.4. Lack of time</b>	<b>3.5. Transgender not a priority.</b>	
SLT not seen as source of information.	Challenges of toilet facilities.	Lack of information sharing.	Not enough time allocated to discuss LGBT topic with pupils.	Transgender seen as minority group.	
View that SLT do not have adequate knowledge.	Issues regarding changing facilities.	Lack of information shared by SLT regarding transition.	Time restrictions impacts ability to support	Not a priority.	
Not spoken about widely by SLT.		Lack of information shared by SLT regarding transition.	Challenges of time and logistics to put support in place.	Lack of discussion around transgender.	
Challenge of facilitating systemic change.		Lack of information given from SENCo.	CPD needs to be priority	Not a priority for EP involvement.	
Staff in SLT positions not understanding.				Need for PSE to be prioritised.	
Systemic challenges.					

**Appendix 11: Example of complete Theme Table for RQ1, Theme 1 ‘Language’ (Stage 4 of analysis)**

*All theme tables include overarching theme, subthemes with all relevant codes, extracts and line numbers for referencing to original transcript.*

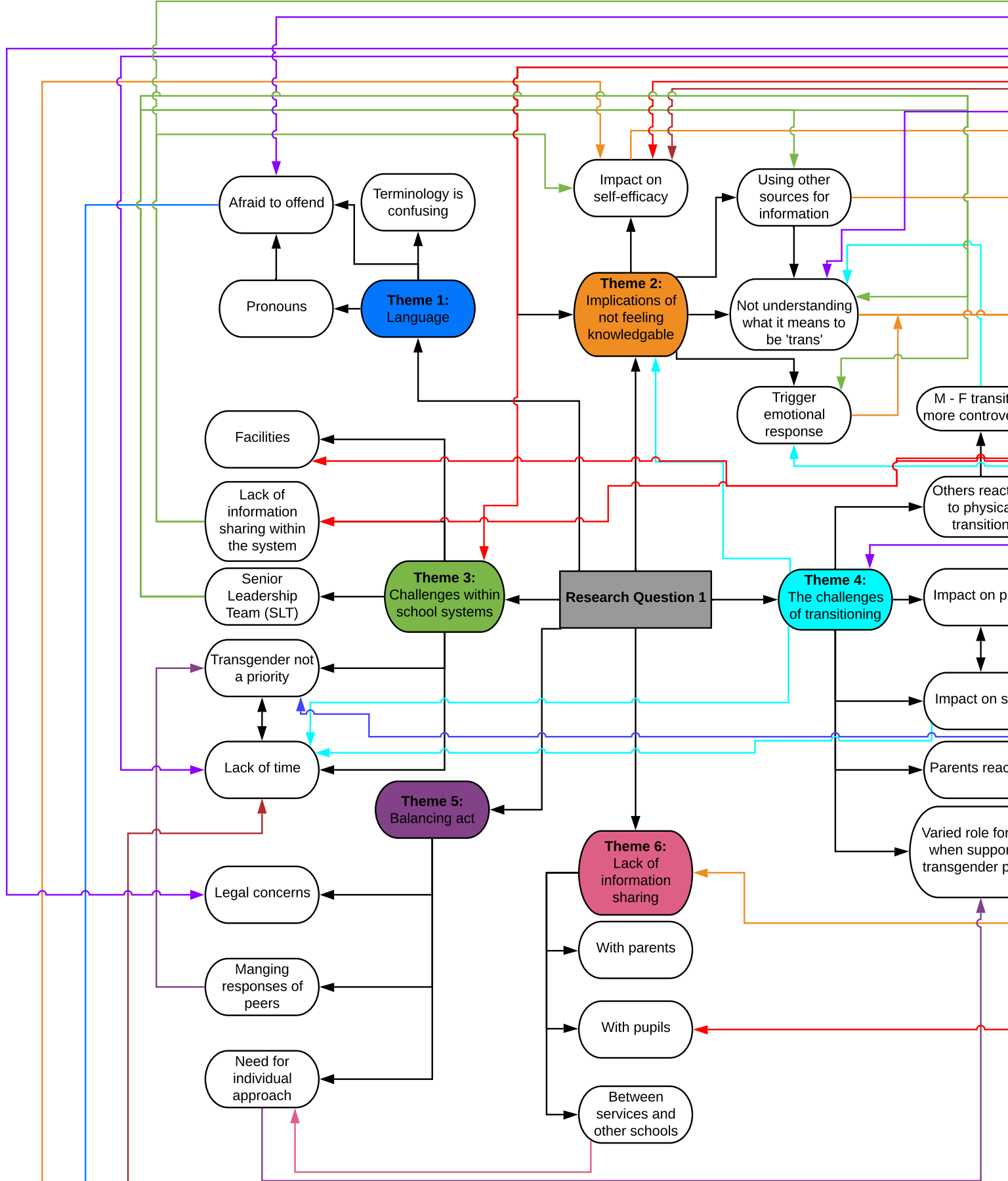
**Table 10: Theme Table example for RQ1, Theme 1 (Language)**

<b>1. Overarching theme: Language</b>		
<b>Subtheme 1.1: Afraid to offend</b>		
Code	Relevant quote	Transcription: Line Number
Conscious of using correct language	<p>Well we’ve got one or two umm transgender children in the school that I have taught the one uhh oh I don’t like saying the one but uh the ones that I have taught.</p> <p>I’ll say to someone else can you help him or her but with transgender pupils I’ll say can you help and then their name but that’s because I don’t want to make a mistake rather than the fact it’s not that I’m not acknowledging it it’s just I’m trying not to say the wrong thing.</p> <p>What questions would be safe to discuss with a child if the child wanted to talk about them and not just question them?</p> <p>...He then moved to X school and that’s when he transitioned so when he was an absolutely a new ball game for a lot of the teaching staff so he would say...I actually feel better saying she so I’m going to say she is that ok?</p>	<p>2: 3-5</p> <p>3:76-79</p> <p>3:167-168</p> <p>7:5-7.</p>
Uncertain of correct language to use	<p>But it’s almost like I don’t know whether taboo is the right word but I wouldn’t feel comfortable saying to the child is there any way that I could support you because you wouldn’t want to point out to that child that there is an issue in the first place.</p> <p>Umm I don’t know if there was a grey area of what is appropriate to say I don’t know.</p>	<p>3:61-64</p> <p>3:187-188.</p>
Conscious of saying the right things.	<p>You can reassure them as much as you do sometimes it’s a little bit false and I try and say the right things but I don’t know if I am.</p>	<p>6:238-239.</p>
Uncomfortable with mistakes	<p>We all feel awkward when we make a mistake so I think that’s the biggest issue.</p> <p>Let’s face it people do slip up and it’s not intentional and I generally do believe that it is not malicious you know I’ve done it with the young</p>	<p>2:34-35</p> <p>6:60-62</p>

	<p>person I have been working with and I do feel guilt ridden.</p> <p>I've had that conversation and said look I'm really sorry but I'm able to do that but with other people they can't because they feel so embarrassed that they feel they have let the person down</p> <p>I think staff need to be aware that we can make mistakes and that the transgender pupils are generally fine because they are learning as well.</p> <p>The biggest thing for staff is and I've had to tell themselves is not to be embarrassed or ashamed or anything we all do it you just have to recognise it be very open with and move on.</p>	<p>6:66-69</p> <p>7:45-47.</p> <p>4:111-113</p>
Afraid to offend	I'd hate to think that the child thought I wasn't supportive of them.	3:81-82
Not knowing what to say to pupils.	<p>It's just about knowing what to say really and things like that really.</p> <p>A lot of people don't umm what's the word were not expecting I suppose in a sense and initially taken aback about the openness of some of our pupils you know.</p> <p>How to support them without addressing them directly or whether it's ok to address them directly.</p> <p>In terms of day to day lessons I think it's no issue at all I think it's if a child wanted specific support or if um wanted to talk to me about things I wouldn't know if there was a right or wrong answer.</p> <p>I do feel that sometimes I feel that I'm a little bit out of my depth in the sense of I don't know what to say.</p>	<p>2:6-7</p> <p>2:313-315</p> <p>3:65-66.</p> <p>3:184-186.</p> <p>6:231-232.</p>
<b>Subtheme 1.2: Pronouns</b>		
Concerns regarding correct use of pronoun.	<p>It's that use of the pronoun then is the biggest sort of issue I think.</p> <p>They've (pupils) kind of had the same issues as us with the pronouns and that's been it.</p> <p>My biggest worry is that I will accidently say he instead of she and vice-versa.</p> <p>I almost try to avoid it it's just I try to avoid pronouns and I'll just call the child by their name.</p>	<p>2:19</p> <p>2:137-138</p> <p>3:25-26</p> <p>3:75</p>
Concerns about pronouns.	I still think the biggest issue is the use of the pronouns at the moment but yeah that's it.	2:324-325.

	<p>There is still time when I revert back to the wrong pronoun and again it's not intention it's just I've taught that young person since year x you know? But I would say that's the biggest issue.</p> <p>We have a gender-fluid girl in the school I shouldn't say girl because she is fluid gender but you know she's here and um again that's a very very difficult one because you know she doesn't want to be her or she and that's pronouns and I find that quite difficult to use the correct terminology.</p>	<p>6:84-86.</p> <p>7:229-232.</p>
Automatic use of gendered language	<p>I still make mistakes with one person now who's in the show and now and then I will still say um she or and he still does bother with a group of girls so sort of like oh girls and then it's like oh no sorry.</p> <p>I am very aware that I say morning girls you know morning girls and morning boys and I'm really trying to change you know by just saying you know, morning, why do I have to put the label on you know?</p>	<p>2:20-22.</p> <p>7:42-44.</p>
Concerns regarding the impact of using the wrong pronouns.	<p>There is still time when I revert back to the wrong pronoun and again it's not intention it's just I've taught that young person since year x you know? But I would say that's the biggest issue because I want them to feel as included as possible and I would never want them to feel that they have taken ten steps backwards either and I wouldn't want to put them backwards and I'm always concerned that even though it might seem minor something that might seem really trivial to someone who is perhaps not going through it that they don't go home then and that means they do something silly and I'm really mindful of that.</p> <p>I'd hate to think that the child thought I wasn't supportive of them and for that reason not a fear of the situation.</p>	<p>6:84-90</p> <p>3:81-82</p>
<b>Subtheme: 1.3. Terminology is confusing</b>		
Terminology is confusing.	<p>um because um I mean there is a lot I think because we don't know enough about it.</p> <p>In my office, I've got the dictionary of terminology and stuff like that and a lot of staff are still quite naive towards these things.</p> <p>There was someone fighting about gender fluidity and saying actually if you count them there is actually 60 different gender types and then there is someone else who is trans saying but actually I find this insulting as a trans women you know, ok I get you might not be one or the other but saying</p>	<p>2:171-172</p> <p>4:134-135</p> <p>2:407-411.</p>

	<p>like there's 50 is all that as an example all this stuff that goes around.</p> <p>Even my terminology can sometimes... I'm X years old I didn't grow up in a society with this terminology it wasn't around when I was younger so I'm trying to learn it as I'm going.</p> <p>You've got fluid, neutral you've got everybody they are really really confused not necessarily the pupil but everybody else is confused and I think because there are so many different labels coming out now.</p>	<p>4:184-186.</p> <p>7:82-84.</p>
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**Appendix 12: Overarching Thematic Map**

**Overarching Thematic Map: Detailing Themes and Relationships between RQ's 1,2 and 3**

*Note: Arrow colour represent from-to relationships*

### **Example of interpretative layers depicted in the thematic map**

Within RQ1, the first theme of 'Language' highlights the importance of language; the power of words and the fear of making mistakes when engaging in conversation with, or around transgender pupils. The importance placed upon language is a concept that transcends throughout all interviews. The overarching theme of 'Language' contains three subthemes; '*Afraid to offend*', '*Pronouns*' and '*Terminology is confusing*' as when the participants discussed their concerns in relation to language, common concerns centred around these three issues.

As an example of connections within the thematic map, '*Pronouns*' is linked to '*Afraid to Offend*' because a common concern relating to the overarching theme 'Language', was the correct use of pronouns. Participants spoke about their concerns in relation to pronouns, noting how they worried that using incorrect pronouns would offend pupils, cause them to feel embarrassed, or feel unsupported. Participants responses in regards to the incorrect use of pronouns suggested to the researcher that ultimately, the main concerns relating to pronouns was fear of offending, which for some participants, led them to overthink the most basic of conversations within the classroom.

For this reason, '*Afraid to Offend*' is linked with RQ2, theme 3 'Need for expert advice', because the fear of offending appeared to be linked to the need for clarity in regards to whether there is a right way to engage with and work with transgender pupils. Some participants responses, particularly in relation to the theme of 'Language, 'pronouns' and 'Afraid to Offend', suggested that staff were seeking more direction in this area. At times during the interviews, it felt to the researcher that staff were torn between doing what they would instinctively do to be supportive and letting the concept of 'transgender' become a barrier to their interactions, as they were unsure whether they needed to do something less or something more. Furthermore, when asked what would be useful support to receive some participants explicitly stated that help with terminology would enable them to feel more prepared and supported, which links with the three subthemes depicted in RQ2, Theme 3 above and links back to concerns regarding 'pronouns' and how to address mistakes made in relation to them when pupils are offended.