



What can we learn from COVID-19? An investigation into the impact of COVID-19 measures and restrictions on young people (YP) attending alternative provision (AP).

Doctorate in Educational Psychology (DEdPsy) 2018-2022

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This doctoral thesis would not have been possible without the support of so many people.

Firstly, I would like to thank the young people, caregivers and school staff who volunteered their time and were open to sharing their views regarding their experiences of the coronavirus pandemic. Their contributions have been invaluable and are a testament to the resilience of not only the young people, but also the support networks around them. To the Principal of the Specialist School where I recruited my participants, thank you. You have made this process not only straightforward and accessible to me, but also extremely enjoyable and meaningful.

To the academic support staff involved within this research, including Jonathan Jones, who helped me through many a literature search crisis, thank you for your time and patience. To my research supervisor, Rachael Hayes, thank you for being there for me throughout this busy (and often stressful) time. You've not only offered a reflective and critical perspective when thinking about my research but have also supported me emotionally in countless ways when I have doubted myself or have struggled to juggle the academic and professional requirements of this doctorate. To my professional supervisor, Mark Close, thank you for your flexibility this year whilst I have been coordinating the demands of my placement experience and this piece of work.

To my friends, particularly my best friend Becky, who have no idea what this doctoral thesis is but have provided a listening ear, thank you! You've always motivated me to keep going and I know that you're some of my biggest cheerleaders.

To the family who have provided childcare to help me throughout this time, including my parents and my husband's parents, thank you for lightening the load and for giving me additional opportunities to focus on this piece of work.

To my husband, Dave, I need you to know that you have been my rock throughout this doctorate and that I wouldn't have been able to do all of this without your unwavering support. We knew that this process would be difficult, but we couldn't have anticipated some of the challenges thrown our way. Thank you for never letting me doubt that this was the right choice for me.

And lastly, to my son, Ben. You are my ray of sunshine (and occasional whirlwind!). I hope one day when you are older, you'll be proud of your mummy, and remember that you can do anything you can put your mind to. I love you.

SUMMARY

This thesis is split into three parts, which include a literature review, an empirical paper, and a critical review.

Part 1: Major Literature Review

The literature review contains three sections, named Parts 1A, 1B and 1C.

Part 1A considers the context of Alternative Provision (AP) both as a whole and within Wales specifically. It explores the views of children and young people (CYP) who are/have attended AP, with respect to the barriers and facilitators they have experienced whilst accessing such provisions. It also considers what psychological models and theories relate to the AP population, connecting the highlighted literature with educational psychology practice.

Part 1B explores how the social and educational lifestyle changes, implemented through government measures and restrictions as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, have affected CYP and families, and how this may relate to the AP population.

Finally, Part 1C critically reviews the available literature pertaining to Parts 1A and 1B. Specifically, it examines the methodological, ontological, and epistemological decision making within the research offered in Parts 1A and 1B, inclusive of exploring the aims of chosen studies and their participant choices.

Part 2: Empirical Paper

The empirical paper provides an overview of the key themes present in the literature review in Part 1, as well as outlining the chosen methodology and findings of the current study.

Part 2 offers readers an insight into the research process, outlining the rationale for the present study and the research paradigm adopted to explore its aims. The ontological and epistemological stances of the study are shared, in addition to highlighting the relevance of the research to the role of Educational Psychologists (EPs).

The data analysis findings are discussed and connections to the pre-existing literature are established. Subsequent implications for young people (YP), schools, and the role of EPs are also offered to the reader.

Part 3: Critical Review

The critical appraisal/review offers a reflective and reflexive account of the research undertaken, inclusive of the study rationale, methodological decision-making processes, contributions to the existing literature and additional implications of the findings.

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List of abbreviations.

CYP	Children and young people.
YP	Young people.
AP	Alternative Provision(s) / Alternative Education Provision(s).
PRU	Pupil Referral Unit(s).
EOTAS	Education Other Than At School.
ALN	Additional Learning Needs.
SEBD	Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties.
ASC	Autistic Spectrum Condition(s).
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service.
ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.
CLA	Children who are Looked After.
BAME	Black and Minority Ethnic.
FSM	Free School Meals.
SpLD	Specific Learning Disabilities.
ACEs	Adverse Childhood Experiences.
NEET	Not in Education, Employment, or Training.
SES	Socioeconomic status.
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 19.
SARS-CoV-2	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2.
EP	Educational Psychologist(s).
EPS	Educational Psychology Service.
TA	Teaching Assistant(s).
ALNCo	Additional Learning Needs Coordinator(s).

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PART 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

Word count: 10,256

1. INTRODUCTION

This doctoral research seeks to explore the impact of coronavirus measures and restrictions on young people (YP) who attend alternative provision (AP). To do this, the researcher felt that it would be important to develop an understanding of the context of AP, prior to approaching how this may have impacted AP learners during the pandemic.

A narrative review was utilised in Part 1A to accommodate for the need to explore a significant amount of 'grey' literature, relevant to the context of AP. Such information was sourced using scoping searches on Google to identify appropriate contextual information (e.g., government definitions, guidance, etc.). A qualitative evidence synthesis was conducted for Part 1B, which focused on the experiences of children, YP, and families, relevant to the pandemic (Grant & Booth, 2009). Siddaway's (2014) systematic review stages were used in support of this, inclusive of scoping, planning, identification, screening, eligibility, and research synthesis.

1.1. Presentation of the research topic: Why conduct research in AP?

1.1.1. *What is Alternative Provision (AP) and its position within Wales?*

Alternative Provision (AP) has been described as educational provision for CYP who do not attend mainstream or special schools (Department for Education [DfE], 2018). AP may include varying types of provision, including Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), specialist schools or resource bases and/or education provision outside of mainstream or special school providers, such as home-schooling (DfE, 2018). APs such as PRUs have been noted to accommodate children and young people (CYP) who have been (or are at risk of) exclusion from mainstream education, amongst other potential reasons for referral (Department for Education and Skills [DfES], 2007). Many pupils attending AP have been described as having social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) and/or additional learning needs (ALN), which act as contributing factors to their placement within AP (Department for Children, Schools and Families [DCSF], 2008). In addition to the reasons previously noted, placement in AP may also

include supporting pregnant YP whose needs may be better suited outside of mainstream schooling.

In terms of the language used to define AP in Wales, Welsh Government (2017) states that the term 'Alternative Provision' is not yet defined within Welsh Law. Instead, the provisions formerly described are referred to as 'Education Otherwise Than At School' or 'EOTAS' within Welsh education systems (although it is acknowledged that the term AP has been used alongside within policy, causing confusion within the sector; McCluskey et al., 2015). Within Wales, EOTAS is used to meet the needs of excluded and/or vulnerable learners within education systems who may be unable to attend mainstream provision (Welsh Government, 2017). EOTAS shares many similarities with AP and can consist of varying types of provision (including those described above), which are offered as either full or part-time placements, or as dual placements between mainstream provision and EOTAS settings (Welsh Government, 2017).

Whilst the researcher recognises the distinction between such terminologies, for the purposes of this study the label 'AP' will continue to be used as an umbrella term for describing provisions of these types, as this is also used within the remainder of the United Kingdom (UK). Additionally, for the purposes of this research, AP will be referred to with the respect of provisions that occur within a 'school' environment (on or off site of mainstream provision), such as PRUs, specialist schools and resource bases. This research will not consider dual AP placements as it hopes to provide clarity throughout the review and within its methodology, which may become difficult to separate when describing the context of AP and the impact of the pandemic. Lastly, when the present research refers to AP this will not include home-schooling arrangements, as the intention of the current study is to explore interruptions in school attendance as a result of coronavirus measures / restrictions.

1.1.2. Who attends AP and what makes this population unique?

CYP may attend AP for various reasons, but most notably attend due to SEBD or mental health needs that are unable to be accommodated or met in mainstream provisions (Cook, 2005). CYP with SEBD are noted to be the most likely within a mainstream school population to be excluded (or 'drop out'), with a high proportion of

such pupils attending PRUs because of such exclusions (Cooper, 2004). Mills and Thomson (2018) note that AP learners are also more likely than their mainstream counterparts to become NEET ('Not in Education, Employment or Training') after leaving AP (post-16) and that they are much less likely to gain qualifications such as GCSEs whilst attending AP.

Theoretical models relating to SEBD indicate that interactions between CYP and their environment greatly influence their behavioural and emotional wellbeing (Carroll & Hurry, 2018). For some CYP with SEBD, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) may have played a significant role within their everyday lives, and have subsequently contributed to their social, emotional, and behavioural development. ACEs are described by Public Health Wales (2015) as childhood stressors that may include exposure to familial difficulties such as domestic abuse or violence, parental separation, incarceration, mental illness, or substance misuse. Such challenges are noted to put this population at an increased risk of negative outcomes, which are inclusive of difficulties relating to emotional and physical wellbeing, as well as being at risk of being involved in criminal activity within their local communities (Pirrie et al., 2011). Whilst these outcomes are alarming, it should be noted that learner engagement is malleable and interacts with school and home factors, implying that such consequences may not be 'fixed' for all CYP in AP, particularly when in an environment in which they thrive, in school or otherwise (Reschly & Christenson, 2012). However, the reengagement of AP learners is a complicated process, and flexibility of learning approaches are needed as conventional routes are often unsuited to these CYP (Cook, 2005).

Investigative research into AP indicates that a high proportion of AP learners come from disadvantaged backgrounds, with over 40% of children being described as eligible for Free School Meals (FSMs), compared to the average of 14% in mainstream state-funded schools (Mills & Thomson, 2018). Therefore, CYP attending AP could be described as vulnerable learners due to their potential or likelihood to experience numerous and cumulative challenges within their school and/or home environments (Mills & Thomson, 2018).

Research relating to this population is reported to be less prevalent, particularly with respect to researchers gaining feedback from those who have disengaged from education (Nicholson & Putwain, 2015). Subsequently, the views of such CYP in AP are amongst those of the 'least heard' within education systems (Michael & Frederickson, 2013), which may contribute to their unique vulnerabilities, as pathways to support these learners may be less understood or established within AP.

1.1.3. Why are the views of CYP important?

Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund [UNICEF], 1989) highlights the importance of respecting the views of CYP, particularly in matters affecting them. This convention is complemented by The Children Act (HM Government, 1989), which notes the legal basis for CYP to have a right to express their views. Within Wales and England, the ongoing reforms relating to additional learning needs (ALN) also emphasise the importance of gathering and incorporating CYP's views within education systems (Welsh Government, 2018; Department for Education [DfE], 2014). When considering how CYP can be supported in education, it is important to gain the views and experiences of those directly affected and utilise information gathered from CYP to consider impactful, child-centred responses to future approaches to supporting learners.

However, while gathering the views of CYP can be described as an 'empowering' process, it is also recognised that it can be complicated to achieve authentically (Warshak, 2004). For learners attending AP, additional complications relating to the CYP's experiences could interrupt information gathering processes, such as the presence of ALN or SEBD needs which could interact with rapport building and/or communication between CYP and adults throughout data collection processes (Mills & Thomson, 2018).

Moving forward, the literature review seeks to develop an understanding of CYP's experiences in AP (pre-pandemic), to think about how CYP have been affected by the coronavirus pandemic and to consider how these two topics may interact with one another.

1.1.4. Why is this research relevant to Educational Psychologists (EPs)?

Educational Psychologists (EPs) may be described as practitioners who work with CYP, predominantly in educational settings, who present with ALN and/or other vulnerabilities (Welsh Government, 2016). EPs are well placed to support CYP and schools in a number of ways, inclusive of working with them across individual, group, and strategic levels (through individual assessment, consultation, intervention, training and research, amongst many other workplace activities; Welsh Government, 2016).

It is hoped that the findings of the current research may help inform practice specifically within AP, recognising the barriers that YP, families and schools have/may have faced, and promote preventative and inclusive means of working in such provisions to influence positive change for learners.

1.2. Information regarding the literature review process.

1.2.1. Databases, search engines and other sources used.

The literature searches were completed in August 2021. These were split into searches corresponding to Parts 1A and 1B of the review, both of which were conducted using six electronic databases; PsychINFO, Web of Science, ERIC, Scopus, British Education Index and Applied Social Sciences Index & Abstracts (ASSIA).

1.2.2. Description of search terms - Part 1A.

Variations of search terms relating to 'alternative provision' and 'pupil views' were utilised to explore the contextual background of AP, along with identification of relevant 'grey' literature pertaining to the topic. This search process is demonstrated within the Appendix (A).

1.2.3. Inclusion and exclusion criteria - Part 1A.

Literature considered for Part 1A of the review was required to:

- Be based within the UK.
- Be conducted and written in either the English or Welsh language.
- Be published within the period of 2011-2021, exclusive of grey literature which could provide useful contextual information pertaining to the topic.
- Relate to CYP's experiences of AP, inclusive of parent and/or CYP views.
- Include research pertaining to AP whereby CYP attended such provisions on a full-time basis, at an establishment outside of the home. Literature relating to AP that was not included were: home-schooling arrangements, dual placements (mainstream and AP), or alternative programmes (e.g., relating to teen pregnancy or drug use).

1.2.4. Description of search terms - Part 1B.

Variations of search terms relating to 'child' (or 'learner'), 'coronavirus', 'impact' and 'United Kingdom' were utilised to seek CYP's experiences of the coronavirus pandemic. Additionally, some 'grey' literature was utilised. This search process and an overview of the identified studies are demonstrated in Appendices B-C.

1.2.5. Inclusion and exclusion criteria - Part 1B.

Literature considered for Part 1B of the review was required to:

- Be based within the UK.
- Be conducted and written in either the English or Welsh language.
- Be published within the period of 2020-2021, due to the timing of the COVID-19 pandemic (beginning in March 2020). Grey literature that could provide useful contextual information pertaining to the topic outside of this time frame was also accepted, for the same reasons as it was in Part 1A.
- Include research pertaining to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, inclusive of effects relating to government measures and restrictions.
- Include findings from CYP as whole population, as well as AP learners.

- Include the conditions of what is considered to be AP, as noted in Part 1A, when referring to the AP population.
- Exclude additional vulnerable groups (e.g., Children who are Looked After [CLA], gender variant CYP, sexual minorities and CYP leaving care).

1.2.6. Additional information.

Both parts of the review adopted 'snowballing' methods when analysing chosen literature to identify additional relevant research pertaining to the research topics (Cresswell, 2009).

PART 1A

2. THE CONTEXT OF AP: WHAT ARE CYP'S EXPERIENCES?

As previously noted, the researcher felt that demonstrating an understanding of the position and views of AP learners, pre-pandemic, could be useful in highlighting the context of what was (or could have been) interrupted by the pandemic. It will consider what AP learners perceive to be valuable about accessing such provisions, along with the perceived barriers of their experiences. This part of the review sought to focus as much as possible on feedback from CYP themselves, however also accepted that the perspectives of the adults supporting AP learners (such as parents/caregivers and education staff), could also add value to this exploration of this topic.

2.1. Views of AP learners: Perceived benefits of attending AP.

Over time, research has been conducted to explicitly explore the views of CYP in AP. For example, Lloyd and O'Regan (1999) gathered the views of five former AP learners (all female) regarding their experiences attending AP. Key findings from the research indicated that YP valued the relationships they built with their peers and staff members in AP. It is reasoned that this may have been reinforced by them sharing smaller classes together (strengthening communication lines between pupils) and receiving educational input in a more personalised and individual way (increasing learners'

feelings of agency). Such themes have been echoed within other, more recent, research relating to YP's views of AP (Michael & Frederickson, 2013), indicating that these factors continue to be valued by AP learners.

Michael and Frederickson (2013) utilised semi-structured interviews to gain the views of 16 YP (aged between 12-16 years old), who all attended PRUs at the time of data collection. The function of the research was to explore pupils' constructions regarding the facilitators and barriers to them achieving positive outcomes within their AP. In addition to the facilitators observed by Lloyd and O'Regan (1999), additional facilitators within AP were noted to be clearer boundaries/expectations within AP, self-motivation, and self-discipline of learners. The 'opportunities' given to learners (inclusive of more individualised support and differentiation) were noted to promote academic outcomes but also were noted to increase academic 'self-concept' (Michael & Frederickson, 2013), positively influencing academic attainment.

2.2. Views of AP learners: Challenges experienced when attending AP.

Michael and Frederickson's (2013) research is perceived to be useful as it explores the thoughts and beliefs of YP who were currently being educated in AP, unlike other research which has been completed with a retrospective stance (e.g., Lloyd & O'Regan, 1999). In addition to benefits, the YP interviewed also shared aspects of attending AP that they didn't like (Michael & Frederickson, 2013). Barriers to positive outcomes were identified by the participants as disruptive behaviour (by themselves and/or peers), ineffective behaviour management systems, and unfair treatment, amongst others (Michael and Frederickson, 2013). The findings of the research highlight the complex relationships between pupils and their AP, particularly as some findings opposed the 'facilitators' noted by participants. For example, a lack of individualised learning environment was noted as a particular challenge for some YP, a factor which was previously noted to be a strength of being educated within AP by the researchers. Additionally, whilst clear boundaries were noted as a strength, these were also occasionally perceived as 'unfair treatment' when YP felt they were applied ineffectively (or to the wrong YP). Some 'ideas for change' that participants identified within the interviews included feeling understood, being listened to, and a continued need for individualised approaches (Michael & Frederickson, 2013).

2.3. Engaging learners after exclusion from mainstream education.

When exploring re-engagement factors for YP attending AP, Nicholson and Putwain (2015) noted similar findings to previous research with reference to facilitating factors within AP (Michael & Frederickson, 2013; Lloyd & O'Regan, 1999). Participants identified that smaller class sizes resulted in more readily available teaching support and greater behavioural management within the settings, which (from the perspective of the AP learners) resulted in increased levels of concentration in classes. Choice about aspects of their own learning were also noted to promote educational engagement, particularly as it promoted appropriately pitched levels of challenge for pupils, making successful engagement more attainable. More relaxed approaches to learning within a classroom (such as less strict control over noise levels), was described as resulting in lessons that were more interesting and enjoyable. YP noted that their experiences in AP differed to those in mainstream provision with the respect of them having increased levels of freedom within school, inclusive of their educational and vocational choices. The majority of participants shared that they enjoyed attending AP, and that attendance to AP had helped them place value in receiving an education, to the extent that some participants spent time outside of school extending their learning (Nicholson & Putwain, 2015).

Additionally, positive and trusting relationships with school staff and their peers were noted to result in fewer behavioural disruptions within the classroom (Nicholson & Putwain, 2015). These relationships were noted to help promote YP's feelings of being understood by those around them and helped them feel that they were respected by adults within their AP. With this in mind, pupils felt that they belonged to the school which was, again, further promoted by smaller class sizes.

2.4. The role of families.

When considering the context of AP, research indicates that factors relating to the provisions themselves are not the sole contributors to CYP's engagement with such provisions, and that the role of families significantly interacts with AP learners' experiences (Page, 2021). The role of familial engagement is not only important in AP but acts as a cyclical process whereby effective communication between home and

school assists with the re-engagement of AP learners within their education provision as well as supporting their behavioural presentation at home (Page, 2021). This is particularly helpful for school staff and parents when communicating behavioural incidents across environments and when providing updates about CYP's educational priorities (Page, 2021), and indicates how wider systemic influences can facilitate or hinder the progress of AP learners.

2.5. ALN and the role of AP.

In addition to the SEBD needs demonstrated by AP learners (Cook, 2005), a high proportion of CYP in AP have also been identified as having ALN (outside of these specific social and emotional needs) within such provisions (Mills & Thomson, 2018). The findings of research relating to AP indicates that alternative learning environments may also better suit the needs of CYP with ALN, particularly for pupils diagnosed with Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) and/or other neurodevelopmental differences (Goodall, 2019). Research exploring the views of seven autistic YP, identified that YP with ASC perceived AP to be a supportive environment with accommodating teachers (Goodall, 2019). Attendance to mainstream provision was also noted to be a negative experience for these learners, with them sharing that mainstream education was overwhelming, inflexible to their needs, and an environment where they experienced bullying. The researcher has included the role of ALN within the context of AP to highlight that, for many CYP attending, SEBD may not be the only developmental need they present with. It hopes to highlight that that AP environments are complex provisions but that their composition can be supportive of many types of vulnerabilities that CYP can present with.

3. PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY RELATING TO THE AP POPULATION

In line with promoting a reader's understanding of the context of AP, the present doctoral research seeks to root the literature review findings within psychological models / theories to assist with the understanding of AP learners needs and how they may gain value from attending such provisions. Due to the nature of AP learners' difficulties, relevant to their SEBD, models and theories relating to attachment, trauma,

belonging, and findings from the field of neuroscience will be discussed, in support of furthering the connection between the literature explored so far and its relevance within the field of educational psychology. Whilst it is acknowledged that several psychological models could be associated with this research topic, it is felt that those pertaining to relationships and emotional needs would best meet the needs of the study in its present form.

3.1. Attachment theory and its interaction with trauma and neurodevelopment.

Attachment theory has long been described as a key component involved in the development of our relationships with others (Bowlby, 1969), with our early interpersonal interactions resulting in the production of adaptive responses that we are suggested to tap into throughout our daily life experiences ('Dynamic Maturation Model'; Crittenden, 2006). It is noted that our predisposed responses will differ dependent upon the type(s) of experiences we have in our earlier years, and that these are particularly relevant when responding to stress or adversity within our environments (Perry et al., 1995). With infant and child brains being particularly malleable and dependent upon experience to develop, negative encounters during such years can have a profound effect upon later social, emotional, and behavioural responses, particularly if adverse experiences have accumulated over time (Perry et al., 1995). This research expands upon that described earlier regarding ACEs (Public Health Wales, 2015), and is also relevant to the claims that YP accessing AP usually do so due to SEBD (Cook, 2005).

In terms of YP's presentation(s) over time, research indicates that repeated or continuous exposure to childhood stressors, such as ACEs, may result in YP's brain systems staying in either hyper-aroused or dissociative, detached states that are sensitive to future or potential threats (Perry et al., 1995). Whilst these responses are reported to initially be short term, over time CYP may develop strategies to manage and respond reactively to all interactions with others (regardless of whether these interactions are threatening or not), in anticipation of further negative experiences (Perry et al., 1995). In CYP described as having 'disorganised attachment' styles, dysregulation in the brain is said to occur due to repeated over-stimulation (as a result of experiencing abuse) and under-stimulation of the brain (due to experiences of

neglect), resulting in confusion within/between the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems (Schoore, 2009). In situations like this, CYP are reported to then experience future challenges in recognising and managing individual emotions due to the disorganisation of such biological responses, which are said to be caused by either the under-development or excessive pruning of connections between the frontal cortex and limbic system (Schoore, 2009).

In terms of more generalised responses to social interactions, behaviours are uniquely individual to the CYP expressing them and are noted to differ dependent upon the adversities they have been exposed to (Perry et al., 1995). Whilst the current research vehemently stresses that not all YP attending AP may have experienced ACEs themselves, it may be true for some of the population. Additionally, negative encounters in mainstream schools could interact with the difficulties that AP learners may have / currently experience, particularly if YP have lost trust in the educational systems they previously belonged to. This may include YP developing feelings of mistrust towards the teaching staff and other children who are / have been part of these mainstream systems, particularly if they have had difficulty navigating social interactions in school or have experienced incidents of bullying (Goodall, 2019). This may be particularly relevant as research indicates that learned emotional responses may be mediated by the narratives of CYP over time, as well as being influenced by their surrounding environments (Perry et al., 1995). The impact of adverse experiences is noted to be cumulative, with threat-related responses increasing in line with the number of environmental or social difficulties encountered by individuals (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018). This, over time, is likely to make social interactions with others a challenge, impacting the development of friendships and meaningful relationships for YP in AP, particularly if they seek control in their relationships to be able to better predict the outcomes of current and future interactions (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018).

3.2. The role of belonging.

As with theories relating to attachment, the influence of belonging on psychological wellbeing has been well-researched over time. It has been established that, for the most part, individuals need to form 'lasting, positive and significant interpersonal

relationships' (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, p.497) within their everyday lives. The absence of this may result in feelings of social exclusion and has been linked to emotional dysregulation and behavioural disruption within the AP population (Baumeister, DeWall, Ciarocco & Twenge, 2005). With meaningful interpersonal relationships seemingly acting as a protective buffer for YP in AP, it seems that the presence of these promote feelings of connectedness and have been linked to positive outcomes within such settings, inclusive of increased academic attainment and effective student-teacher relationships (Furrer & Skinner, 2003).

Craggs and Kelly's (2018) research explored the views of learners who had undertaken managed moves to AP, identifying some of the precursors to, and components of, belonging in schools for the YP who participated in the research. Using individual phenomenological interviews for four 13–15-year-olds attending AP, they found that these YP placed importance upon making friends in school, working within a supportive school environment, and feeling safe, 'known', accepted, and understood. Although the sample of this study was small, the findings from this group supports the notion that humans as individuals need to have a sense of belonging in social groups and need to form effective relationships with those around them (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018). The perceived benefits and challenges of attending AP, as discussed earlier in the review, could also be reasoned to be linked to gaining/maintaining belonging (e.g., connecting via smaller class groups) and could be linked to factors that threaten feelings of belonging and social community (e.g., classroom disruption), further highlighting the importance of belonging for YP attending AP. However, having a good sense of belonging isn't the whole story in terms of successful outcomes in AP, although it may be a contributing factor to the positive experiences of AP learners.

3.3. Summary.

The organisational and social structures identified within AP appear to lend themselves as supportive of CYP who experience SEBD (Lloyd & O'Regan, 1999; Michael & Frederickson, 2013; Nicholson & Putwain, 2015). These include the flexibility of such settings, along with individualised approaches, clear expectations and boundaries, and opportunities for connection with and between pupils (Lloyd &

O'Regan, 1999; Michael & Frederickson, 2013). APs appear to provide an environment for learners that promotes their feelings of safety and security, which in turn positively impacts educational engagement (Craggs & Kelly, 2018). Such processes appear to help create connected classroom environments and strong, stable pupil-teacher relationships.

All students accessing education settings are likely to have experienced varying levels of disruption because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The second part of this review seeks to focus upon the impact of government measures and restrictions on CYP, inclusive of those attending AP, to explore how interruptions to accessing such educational systems (and other significant lifestyle changes) have affected CYP.

PART 1B

4. INTRODUCTION

4.1. What is COVID-19?

Coronavirus disease 19, or COVID-19, is a newly discovered infectious disease which is caused by a strain of coronavirus (severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 [SARS-CoV-2]; World Health Organisation [WHO], 2020). COVID-19 can result in mild to severe respiratory illnesses (dependent upon the health of those who contract the disease) and can complicate pre-existing medical conditions (WHO, 2020). Passed through the air, COVID-19 is spread through contact with others who carry the illness (WHO, 2020). The high level of 'transmissability' of COVID-19 resulted in numerous implications for communities worldwide, inclusive of changes to the way people can socialise, access local resources, travel, and attend school and workplace environments (Flynn et al., 2020). As 'COVID-19' and 'coronavirus' are both terms used interchangeably within research to describe this disease, both will be present throughout this review.

4.2. Measures and restrictions implemented within the United Kingdom (UK), as a result of COVID-19.

In March 2020, countries worldwide introduced both national and local lockdowns to manage the transmission of COVID-19 within the population (Flynn et al., 2020). In addition to this, in the UK and other countries, educational provisions were instructed to close, as were hospitality establishments and other social venues (Flynn et al., 2020). In some cases (e.g., for children of key workers, or 'vulnerable' CYP), school sites remained open for a select few to continue attending (Crawley et al., 2020). Access to health and social care services at this time were also noted to be restricted (Paulauskaite et al., 2021), with actions taken to minimise the amount of contact households were having with one another. With the reduction of social gatherings allowed within the UK, so came the implementation of social distancing measures, the use of masks/facial coverings, and the public being encouraged to regularly wash and/or sanitise their hands, particularly when out in the local community (Flynn et al., 2020).

The changes imposed by UK Government, as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, are noted to have impacted children, YP and their families in a number of ways (Paulauskaite et al., 2021). For families with children who have ALN (inclusive of developmental delay), COVID-19 measures have been said to result in additional difficulties and pressures for households, inclusive of parents having a lack of information relating to how to support children with ALN, challenges following social distancing guidance, and a disruption of access to education, health, and social care services, all of which had subsequent impacts on parental wellbeing (Paulauskaite et al., 2021). Whilst Paulauskaite et al.'s (2021) research explores the views of families with preschool-aged children, it serves as the start of a narrative relating to CYP and, perhaps, the lack of preparation children, YP and parents were given to adapt to the lifestyle changes imposed on everyone living within the UK. It also indicates that some parents felt that they were expected to 'know' how to support their children during the pandemic, at a time when guidance from other sources, such as education provisions, may have been less accessible to them.

5. EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON CYP AND FAMILIES

The following literature seeks to demonstrate the impact of COVID-19 measures and restrictions on CYP and their families, living in the UK. This is inclusive of CYP with ALN, which will be specified where relevant within the review. In terms of the impact of the pandemic upon CYP, this will be explored in relation to observed differences in CYP's access to education and health providers, changes to lifestyle, and their impact upon the wellbeing of CYP and their families.

5.1. Changes to home life, routines, and education.

5.1.1. The new 'normal' of home-schooling.

Due to changes in accessibility of education, many CYP across the UK were expected to learn from home during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, with lockdown measures commencing in March 2020 (Cahoon et al., 2021). Research indicates that parents were required to become much more involved in their children's education when they accessed learning from home, given that they were also required to stay at home with them at this time (Cahoon et al., 2021). Findings from an online survey, where 173 parents' views were gathered relating to home-schooling during the pandemic, indicated that whilst the majority of parents moderately enjoyed helping their children with home learning, many felt that they wanted additional support to assist them in approaching educational topics (Cahoon et al., 2021). 314 CYP were represented in this research (aged between 4-11 years old) and were said to have engaged in between 1 and 3 hours of home-schooling per day, a stark difference from what they could have accessed within a typical school day. For parents of children with ALN, Greenway and Eaton-Thomas (2020) noted that receiving resources and support for home learning played a significant role in their satisfaction relating to home-schooling. For the 238 parents in Greenway and Eaton-Thomas' (2020) research, a key theme identified was that they felt unprepared to assist their child with learning at home, and that home-schooling had a negative impact on familial wellbeing. They were also noted to be concerned for their children's long-term access of education and their mental health at this time. In terms of experiences of home-schooling, particularly for CYP with ALN, maternal resilience has been noted to play an important factor with

respect to the overall 'Quality of Life' of CYP during the pandemic (Benassi et al., 2021). With expectations for parents to become 'teachers' seemingly overnight, parental (in this case maternal) resilience was noted to be crucial, particularly when navigating challenges related to learning, such as 'specific learning disabilities/SpLD' (Benassi et al., 2021).

In addition to parents accessing useful information to support home learning (and adopting the mindset to do this), the findings from Cahoon et al. (2021) also highlighted the variability of families' physical resources, inclusive of stationary, paper, books, printers, and computers, all of which would have assisted parents and CYP in their learning. With families from lower socioeconomic status backgrounds being less likely to have the tools they needed to engage successfully in home learning (Couper-Kenney & Riddell, 2021), in addition to missing out on opportunities for private tuition and, in some cases, free school meals (FSMs), the literature pertaining to the pandemic draws attention to some of the educational inequalities experienced for CYP and, additionally, how attainment gaps may have been widened for such CYP during the pandemic (Andrew et al., 2020; Montacute, 2020). This is particularly relevant for the AP population, given that a high proportion of AP learners are noted to come from disadvantaged backgrounds (Mills & Thomson, 2018).

Some perceived positive outcomes of home-schooling experiences include an increased level of parental awareness relating to their children's educational preferences and abilities (Beaton et al., 2021). This was particularly relevant for families of CYP with ALN and was noted to result in more effective future communication(s) with education providers (Beaton et al., 2021). However, whilst there are certain perceived benefits in trying to promote consistency for CYP by continuing learning from home, the researcher wonders whether, during a global pandemic, the priority for CYP should have been more in favour of their social and emotional needs, as opposed to their academic progression. Canning and Robinson (2021) described a blurring of boundaries between home and school when academic expectations became part of CYP's home environment, and noted how, for families of CYP with ALN, this safe space of home was not only interrupted by prescribed learning but also by meetings with school and other agencies, disrupting the previous routines of YP and families. Canning and Robinson's (2021) interpretative, ethnographic

narrative data for the eight families interviewed suggested that time spent at home, with the expectation to learn, was a challenging experience for families to navigate. The children's everyday routines were noted to be disturbed by the changes at home, and this was described as a difficult experience for the parents to manage, particularly as they were caregivers for CYP with ASC who were said to often see their homes as a retreat from the expectations of schooling (Canning & Robinson, 2021). Canning and Robinson (2021) wondered whether learning could have been accessed more authentically for these CYP, through lived experiences and interests, as opposed to exploring pre-set materials, and suggested that the amalgamation of the two worlds (home and school) may not work for all CYP.

5.1.2. The impact of isolation upon mental health and wellbeing.

The national and local lockdowns, in response to the coronavirus pandemic, undoubtedly resulted in changes to the social behaviours of CYP and their families, due to spending extended periods of time at home and/or away from those outside of their households (Loades et al., 2020). In their rapid review of the literature, Loades et al. (2020) explored the impact of social isolation on children and adolescents through their analysis of 63 articles pertaining to the topic. Whilst they note that the studies chosen have the potential for biases relating to the topic (given their top-down nature), their findings indicate that social isolation (because of pandemic measures and restrictions) and loneliness increased the risk of depression in CYP, with the duration of feelings of loneliness having a higher correlation with depressive symptoms than the intensity of such feelings. Their findings indicate that these outcomes are likely to be exacerbated with repeated lockdowns, suggesting that CYP will demonstrate continued vulnerabilities (such as difficulties related to depression and anxiety symptoms), both during and after such restrictions have been in place. This could, in part, be due to the uncertainty of social restrictions continuing or re-surfacing over time (Loades et al., 2020).

During their longitudinal examination of CYP's mental health, Bignardi et al. (2021) utilised mental health assessments to assess the wellbeing and functioning of 168 children (aged 7.6-11.6 years old) before and during UK lockdowns (between April-June 2020). Their findings, inclusive of children, parent, and teacher reports,

demonstrated that depressive symptoms increased significantly during the first UK lockdown, indicating a clear effect of this social isolation upon CYP. During such times the literature indicates that, where accessible, CYP have relied heavily upon internet use and social media as a means of connection with others, but also for means for escapism (Fernandes et al., 2020). For CYP who indicated behaviours relating to compulsive internet and social media use and/or gaming addiction, research has also observed correlating scores of elevated depression and anxiety-related symptoms, inclusive of loneliness and a poorer quality of sleep (Fernandes et al., 2020). In these cases, stress caused as a result of the pandemic is reported to have led to maladaptive coping strategies in CYP, which may further exacerbate negative outcomes that they have / will experience because of government restrictions.

5.1.3. The role of physical health and exercise.

As previously noted, many services, inclusive of health services and facilities, largely became inaccessible during the height of the coronavirus pandemic. This not only included appointments with more specialist services (e.g., occupational therapy, physiotherapy etc.), but also included general access to gyms, soft play, fitness groups, and outdoor exercise, with a limit placed upon individual or household outdoor fitness to one hour per day (Theis et al., 2021). Given that prior research highlights the reduced level of educational activity happening within households during lockdowns (Cahoon et al., 2021), in addition to fewer opportunities to access the outdoors or to socialise outdoors with others (Theis et al., 2021), the findings related to increased internet and social media use certainly appear consistent with the narrative of CYP potentially being 'at a loss' of things to do at home (Fernandes et al., 2020). Theis et al. (2021) noted that their sample of 125 parent respondents reported a 61% reduction in their children's physical activity levels. Limited access to physical activity, sport, and exercise was noted to have a negative impact on over 90% of the children represented in the research, with parents sharing that this restriction had resulted in an increase in behavioural incidents at home, along with their children experiencing low mood and demonstrating regressions in their social and academic skills (Theis et al., 2021).

Additionally, whilst impacting all CYP in this regard, for families with a child who experience physical/mobility challenges or disabilities, Theis et al. (2021) noted that lockdown restrictions were reported to be responsible for a significant reduction in physical activity for this population, due to a lack of access to specialist facilities, equipment, and therapies during lockdown periods. When considering how CYP can 'recover' post-pandemic, Hefferon et al. (2021) highlighted that an inability to access external health services could have implications for CYP's physical health, progress, and wellbeing, and that this should be considered and prioritised for intervention when possible.

5.2. Views of CYP, relating to the pandemic.

The Children's Commissioner for Wales gained the views of approximately 23,700 CYP (aged 3-18 years) in Wales in May 2020, through the administration of the 'Coronavirus and me' survey, to gain their views about the coronavirus pandemic. This survey was simplified for younger children and included assistive symbols for CYP with ALN. The feedback was gained through survey responses and submissions of drawings, and several reports were published following this (Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2020a; Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2020b). These were categorised into specific population types (for example, 15-18 years old, disabled CYP, etc.). The findings of their research indicate some commonalities in responses between the differing populations, but also some significant differences. This overview will consider the responses of disabled CYP and 15–18-year-olds, which were chosen as disabled CYP may include YP with SEBD, and 15-18-year-olds are more representative of the intended sample population of the current study. However, it is recognised that other population groups were also presented within the research (e.g., Black and Minority Ethnic groups [BAME]), but these collectives were considered outside of the scope of this literature review at this time.

5.2.1. Feedback from disabled CYP.

Disabled CYP were reported to be disproportionately negatively affected by the pandemic than their non-disabled peers, particularly relating to worrying about COVID-19 (Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2020b). Disabled CYP were reported to be 22% more likely than non-disabled CYP to feel sad 'most of the time', and

demonstrated concerns relating to catching the virus, being unable to attend hospital appointments or being unable to gain support from external agencies/professionals (which is echoed by previous findings, e.g., Theis et al., 2021). They also felt worried if they were approaching an educational transition (e.g., from primary to secondary school). While it was shared that disabled CYP preferred learning at home (due to experiencing fewer educational and social ‘pressures’), they were reported to miss school and noted challenges accessing adjustments to their home learning when needed (e.g., signing and visual aids). It is important to note that some disabled CYP were able to attend school, and therefore this particular challenge is not representative of the views of these CYP.

5.2.2. Feedback from adolescents.

While 15–18-year-olds were not reported to be concerned about catching COVID-19, it was noted that they were worried about family members contracting the virus or becoming ill (Children’s Commissioner for Wales, 2020a). Some CYP shared that they acted as caregivers for siblings or relatives due to parents working. Older, non-disabled CYP were concerned about their future prospects due to changes to their learning and exam interruptions and missed seeing their friends and family (despite access to social media; Children’s Commissioner for Wales, 2020a, McCluskey et al., 2021). Cooper et al.’s (2021) research echoes the challenges noted in the Children’s Commissioner for Wales (2020a) survey, with respect to it highlighting associations between reduced social contact and feelings of loneliness in 11-16-year-olds (N=894). They noted that interactions between parents and their children played a key role in reducing future self-reported mental health issues during this time frame (Cooper et al., 2021), further lending support to the concept that, from the perspectives of CYP, increased feelings of loneliness corresponded with poorer wellbeing (but that positive interactions with parents helped with this). For CYP with pre-existing SEBD, these were suggested to be exacerbated by government measures and were a predictor for increased levels of mental health difficulties during follow up, highlighting the need to monitor and support vulnerable groups (Cooper et al., 2021). Loades et al. (2020) offer additional research highlighting the protective role of parents and caregivers during the pandemic, with future mental health difficulties in CYP being lessened when they were positioned within supportive family environments. Conversely, for this group of

CYP (N=443) poor outcomes, relevant to self-reported mental health difficulties, were said to be more strongly related to increased time spent on mobile devices (Loades et al., 2020) which is also noted within prior literature pertaining to the use of technology and social media during lockdown periods (Fernandes et al., 2020).

5.2.3. Perceived benefits of government measures and restrictions.

In spite of potential stressors related to the pandemic, for 15-18-year-olds, time spent at home was often viewed as a positive experience, with many YP reporting using the time to be productive and creative (Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2020a). This finding was echoed in research conducted by Southend EPS (2020) and the Children's Commissioner for England (Holt & Murray, 2021) who found that, when spending more time at home, many CYP accessed additional opportunities such as gardening, baking, making crafts, reading, and exercising, activities which they had not undertaken regularly prior to government restrictions. This finding was present across the literature explored in this review (Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2020a; Southend EPS, 2020; Holt & Murray, 2021), with the initial lockdowns often being framed as a welcomed break from the academic pressures of a school environment (McCluskey et al., 2021; Couper-Kenney & Riddell, 2021).

A main commonality between the observed groups within the 'Coronavirus and me' survey was that spending time at home with family, as a consequence of the restrictions caused by COVID-19, was largely viewed as a positive outcome. A challenge with the research previously conducted is that the views of CYP in AP have not been explicitly gathered and explored. Although some views of CYP in AP may have been gained within the research, for example within the '15-18-year-old' population group, differentiation when presenting the findings of the research to represent these CYP has not been achieved, nor have AP learners' views been purposefully gathered.

5.3. The impact of COVID-19 on YP in AP.

The literature offered so far demonstrates that CYP's experiences of the coronavirus pandemic, whilst having some commonalities, differ in many ways dependent upon

the perceived 'vulnerability' of the individuals living with such changes. This may relate to the physical resources needed to navigate the pandemic (Cahoon et al., 2021; Couper-Kenney & Riddell, 2021), the presence of ALN (Canning and Robinson, 2021; Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2020b), the frequency of social media use (Fernandes et al., 2020) and/or access to external agency support (Theis et al., 2021), amongst others. Most crucially, however, it seems to be that differences in experience(s) also appear to have been influenced by whether CYP have pre-existing mental health needs (Cooper et al., 2021). It is wondered whether the lack of access to some of the 'facilitators' of AP, because of the pandemic, such as the role of available and trusting relationships and relative educational freedoms (Michael & Frederickson, 2013), could interact with pre-existing mental health needs and wellbeing.

It has previously been noted that the AP environment may suit CYP with SEBD due to its often-structured expectations and routines (Michael & Frederickson, 2013), supporting the safety needs that these learners often experience (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018). It could be reasoned that, with this environment potentially disrupted or unavailable to AP learners (as a result of government measures and restrictions), that this may affect YP in AP as one of their safe and secure bases have been significantly altered (in terms of social movements within such provisions) or indefinitely closed during lockdown periods. Conversely, research by Hu and Qian (2021) provides conflicting findings relating to vulnerable CYP with poorer pre-pandemic mental health, which complicates the picture of how AP learners may be affected. Their longitudinal data, looking at the outcomes of a survey related to COVID-19 (N=886), indicated that adolescents with poorer pre-pandemic mental health showed a marked decrease in difficulties over time, compared to their adolescent counterparts who had little to no mental health related difficulties pre-pandemic (Hu & Qian, 2021). This research demonstrates that the findings relating to this field are complex and that it is unclear why different groups of CYP have had such varying experiences. It is wondered whether, for learners with challenges relating to SEBD, more time spent away from AP could also have been viewed as a positive experience, in line with them experiencing a break from the academic pressures of school (McCluskey et al., 2021). Alternatively, because of their identified vulnerabilities, they may have received more support when at home, to protect them from further deterioration in progress. When

working with AP learners, the chosen literature highlights that many factors interact with CYP's experiences and that very few assertions can be made confidently about the AP population at this time.

6. SUMMARY

Some of the key findings from the research pertaining to the views of YP attending AP indicates that positive staff and peer relationships, a flexibility relating to learning, smaller classes, routines, boundaries, and a consistency of teacher approaches all contributed towards positive educational experiences for AP learners (Michael & Frederickson, 2013).

During school closures, prior research suggests that there was a blurring of home-school boundaries for YP during the pandemic (Canning & Robinson, 2021), demonstrating that home-schooling may have interrupted environments which are seen as safe spaces for YP. However, for some CYP, being unable to attend school was viewed as a reprieve from the social and academic aspects of schooling and was viewed as a positive experience (McCluskey et al., 2021; Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2020b; Couper-Kenney & Riddell, 2021). For AP learners, time spent at home may not be viewed as entirely positive, particularly if there is a presence of familial stressors in the home which exacerbate YP's current SEBD.

Regardless of attendance to an AP, many CYP experienced difficulties relating to socialisation during the pandemic and relating to having access to the resources they needed to succeed educationally (Loades et al., 2020; Cahoon et al., 2021).

Part 1C

7. INTRODUCTION.

The literature review offered within this doctoral thesis consists of firstly a narrative review (Part 1A), followed by a systematic review (Part 1B). This approach was utilised to develop the reader's understanding about the context of AP for its learners, inclusive of the how this population is unique within the educational field. Secondly, it sought to explore how, when the traditional access of AP was disrupted for learners, this could potentially impact CYP.

Part 1C seeks to offer a critique of the literature shared within this review.

8. CRITIQUE OF THE LITERATURE PERTAINING TO THE REVIEW

8.1. Research aims.

Given the very specific nature of the current research topic, it was found that a story needed to be told to provide the context of AP and subsequent potential impacts, because of recent local and national events, when exploring the literature. In terms of the aims of some of the literature included within the review, the intentions of the researchers differed greatly, particularly in Part 1A, with respect to what they were seeking to explore in their studies. For example, many exemplars of gaining AP learners views were with respect to their constructs of AP pre-COVID (Lloyd & O'Regan, 1999; Michael & Frederickson, 2013, etc.), a context which may be starkly different in a post-pandemic time. Previous studies considered the views of YP upon re-integration to mainstream, or noted their views retrospectively (Lloyd & O'Regan, 1999) and, largely, the focus for such studies related to how YP engage with learning within AP, not the impact of disruption of access to their learning environment. The aims of Michael and Frederickson's (2013) research could also be considered as narrow with the respect that broader systemic influences are not considered as part of YP's experiences, however this is recognised within their reflections of their work.

The aims of the literature utilised within this review serve a purpose for offering a narrative of the AP learners' experiences, the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, and potential psychological interactions between processes. The review focuses largely upon the role of CYP's SEBD and the 'conditions' in which AP learners succeed (inclusive of classroom environments, relationships, and the role of familial influences; Michael & Frederickson, 2013; Lloyd & O'Regan, 1999; Nicholson & Putwain, 2015; Page, 2021), however recognises that this may position AP learners as passive in their experience of such provisions, when this may not be the case. For example, Michael and Frederickson (2013) highlight that YP were able to identify their own self-efficacy and academic self-concept as a result of the access to educational opportunities and flexibilities within AP. If the literature was considered through a lens of 'learning' as opposed to SEBD, the review may have explored additional avenues relating to psychological models of cognition and motivation, providing more support to the understanding that AP learners are not passive in their experiences of successful AP placements. There may have also been theories that could have joined such connections together, such as Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1971), which were not explored at this time.

8.2. Methodology and data collection techniques used.

Within Part 1A of the review the most common form of data collection was semi-structured interviewing techniques (Michael & Frederickson, 2013; Lloyd & O'Regan, 1999; Nicholson & Putwain, 2015; Goodall, 2019; Craggs & Kelly, 2018). However, additional means of collecting data included the use of rapid literature reviews (Loades et al., 2020), specific assessment tools pertaining to mental health and wellbeing (Hu & Qian, 2021; Bignardi et al., 2021; Cooper et al., 2021), and parent, YP and teacher reports (Paulauskaite et al., 2021; Theis et al., 2021; Fernandes et al., 2020; Canning & Robinson, 2021; Greenway & Eaton-Thomas, 2020). In some cases, participants were recruited through existing channels where they would have been familiar with participation in research processes (Cahoon et al., 2021). Tools such as questionnaires (Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2020a; Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2020a) could be reasoned as lacking in the depth of information needed to understand the complex needs of AP learners (and arguably of CYP as a whole population), particularly when online surveys may not offer ample opportunities for

detailed responses from participants. Additionally, whilst the views of parents and school staff arguably contribute to a picture of understanding CYP's needs, it was found that the research pertaining to the impact of COVID-19 measures and restrictions upon CYP was positioned mostly from the perspective of parents/caregivers (Paulauskaite et al., 2021; Cahoon et al., 2021; Theis et al., 2021; Canning & Robinson, 2021; Greenway & Eaton-Thomas, 2020). The presence of a larger body of research from the stance of parents/caregivers, whilst helpful, may not truly represent the experiences of CYP but instead reflect the constructs of the adults supporting them.

8.3. Sample populations.

All APs are different, so the research will never truly reflect a homogenous group of students with the respect that some may attend a specialist school, some may attend a PRU, etc. Additionally, the needs of such learners differed across the research. For example, some of the chosen research pertained to the retrospective views of female AP learners (Lloyd & O'Regan, 1999), others sourced information from both male and female respondents (Nicholson & Putwain, 2015), and others looked at the views of AP learners whose primary needs related to social communication difficulties rather than SEBD (Goodall, 2019). Additionally, variations in the ages of the CYP impacted by the coronavirus pandemic were found to differ across the literature, with the research extending from children aged as young as 30 months old (Paulauskaite et al., 2021) to 21 years old (Fernandes et al., 2020). The current review sampled findings from the breadth of the CYP population, inclusive of ages, genders, and additional vulnerabilities (inclusive of ALN and SEBD). However, it is apparent that the views of AP learners do not appear to have been explicitly gained at the time of the review, even in the most comprehensive of studies undertaken to gather CYP's views (Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2020a; Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2020b).

For occasions where CYP's constructions of AP have been sought and AP learners have actively participated in offering their views, the researcher also wonders whether these participants were truly representative of the population in which the literature has described (relative to the level of vulnerability and challenges these YP are likely

to have experienced). The researcher wonders whether, in the literature explored (namely Michael & Frederickson, 2013; Lloyd & O'Regan, 1999; and Nicholson & Putwain, 2015), YP who participated in data collection processes were more likely to come from more 'ordered' or 'stable' family systems, given that parental consent and cooperation are likely to have played a key role in the YP participating in the research. If the most 'agreeable' or 'available' YP were chosen for this purpose (namely that they were the easiest to gain views from), the researcher wonders whether the findings truly reflect the experiences of the AP population with respect of the vulnerabilities described in in this review relating to disadvantaged backgrounds and complex SEBD and family systems (Cook, 2005; Mills & Thomson, 2018).

8.4. Ontological and epistemological approaches.

In terms of the themes present in the review, it is evident that for studies with more qualitative approaches that constructivist methodologies were more frequently adopted (e.g., Michael & Frederickson, 2013; Lloyd & O'Regan, 1999; Nicholson & Putwain, 2015; Goodall, 2019; Craggs & Kelly, 2018; and Canning & Robinson, 2021). Conversely, in studies of a more quantitative nature, positivist influences appear to be present within the research (Theis et al., 2021; Hu & Qian, 2021; Bignardi et al., 2021; and Cooper et al., 2021). For example, measures for constructs such as loneliness and depression are used in several studies (Cooper et al., 2021; Fernandes et al., 2020; Hu & Qian, 2021), which suggests that the impact of the coronavirus pandemic has been grouped into specific outcomes (Loades et al., 2020). It is wondered whether these definitions, occasionally perceived as 'certainties' to a reader, may overlook some of the more intricate factors that qualitative research techniques are able to extract through alternative research methods. However, it could be also reasoned that having universal 'measures' of wellbeing could add value in their interpretation of consistencies across populations, which was why they remained in the synthesis of literature available on the research topic.

8.5. Summary of critique.

Overall, when considering the research explored so far, there could be an argument for the experiences of CYP being most commonly expressed by those around them (i.e., by parents/caregivers and school staff). Whilst these perceptions may be valid,

the research offered so far appears to be more heavily swayed in the direction of parent/caregiver responses, particularly when referencing the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on CYP (Paulauskaite et al., 2021; Cahoon et al., 2021; Theis et al., 2021; Canning & Robinson, 2021; Greenway & Eaton-Thomas, 2020). Additionally, when CYP's views have been gained, there is a question around the authenticity of responses when surveys have been utilised (Fernandes et al., 2020; Hu & Qian, 2021, Cooper et al., 2021; Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2020a; Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2020b) due to a potential for disengagement from the topic (due to a lack of researcher present), external influences (such as parent input) and, indeed, whether the YP responding to such requests are the most representative of potentially vulnerable YP such as AP learners (as previously noted within the 'Sample populations' section of this critique). Some of the literature included within the review also feels 'top down' in nature, given that researchers often appear to have clear aims with corresponding methodologies to explore these (Theis et al., 2021; Hu & Qian, 2021; Bignardi et al., 2021; and Cooper et al., 2021). The present research hopes to remain open in its aims and to avoid imposing assumptions around the impact of COVID-19 measures and restrictions upon AP learners during data collection processes.

9. RATIONALE FOR THE RESEARCH STUDY

The aim of the research is to explore the impact of COVID-19 measures and restrictions on YP who access AP. Findings from the literature review indicate that CYP's views, relative to the pandemic, have not been explored in enough depth, from the perspective of gathering rich and detailed feedback about their experiences (Fernandes et al., 2020; Hu & Qian, 2021, Cooper et al., 2021; Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2020a; Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2020b). Additionally, when CYP's views have been sought, these are not inclusive of explicit feedback from the AP population, despite some of the research having numerous sub-categories (such as disabled CYP, 15-18-year-olds, BAME, etc.) when reviewing the impact of the pandemic on CYP (Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2020a; Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2020b). It was also noted that the views of education professionals were largely absent within the literature review, and when

considering the cyclical relationship between school and home (Page, 2021), and reflecting upon the key relationships that YP have in AP that shape their experiences (Craggs & Kelly, 2018; Michael & Frederickson, 2013; Lloyd & O'Regan, 1999; Nicholson & Putwain, 2015; Goodall, 2019), the researcher felt that contributions from school staff would also add value to our understanding of how the pandemic has affected YP in AP.

As previously noted, the views of parents/caregivers are well-evidenced in the review (Paulauskaite et al., 2021; Cahoon et al., 2021; Theis et al., 2021; Canning & Robinson, 2021; Greenway & Eaton-Thomas, 2020) and continue to add value to the understanding of CYP's experiences. However, whilst the present research seeks to utilise parent voice to contribute to the overall picture of AP learners' experiences, it is also aware that these contributions will need to be balanced with those from YP and school staff to increase the likelihood of gaining feedback that considers the impact of the pandemic for AP learners in a representative way. The present research hopes to triangulate information from YP, parents/caregivers, and school staff to achieve this. Additionally, the research questions intend to be open in nature, allowing for space within the study for participants to guide outcomes, in contrast to approaching the research with pre-determined objectives (Theis et al., 2021; Hu & Qian, 2021; Bignardi et al., 2021; and Cooper et al., 2021).

10. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were developed, in response to the literature review:

- How have COVID-19 measures and restrictions affected YP who attend AP?
- How have APs responded to such measures and restrictions when supporting the YP attending AP, and how has this been received by YP and parents/caregivers?
- What are the implications for EPs and their services when supporting YP in AP who may have/are experiencing challenges as a result of COVID-19 measures and restrictions?

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What can we learn from COVID-19? An investigation into the impact of COVID-19 measures and restrictions on young people (YP) attending alternative provision (AP).

PART 2: EMPIRICAL STUDY

Word count: 15,158

ABSTRACT

The present research explored Alternative Provision (AP) learners' experiences of COVID-19 measures and restrictions, inclusive of government mandated lockdowns, disrupted access to education, and the implementation of social distancing measures. Pre-existing literature indicates that young people (YP) have been adversely affected by the coronavirus pandemic, particularly in relation to their access to socialisation, education, and external support services. However, the experiences of YP during the pandemic have been uneven, and many individuals have noted positive aspects of government measures, including spending more time with family, engaging in hobbies, and having a break from the academic expectations of traditional schooling. This research approached data collection using a systemic lens and focused on how YP attending AP interpreted their experiences of the pandemic, and sought to do this in a way which triangulated the constructs of AP learners with the adults who know them best (i.e., parents/caregivers and school staff). Interviews were carried out with nine participants, which included three YP, three parents/caregivers, and three members of school staff, with interviewees grouped into three YP-parent-staff triads. All YP attended the same specialist school for YP with social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties (SEBD), located in Wales. Interviews were individually transcribed and coded. These codes were then collated within their respective triads and explored using reflexive thematic analysis (inductive lens) and presented in thematic maps. Themes and subthemes for each case study are offered and discussed within the context of the wider literature and relevant psychological theory. Analysis indicated that all three triads shared themes related to their experiences, but that the breakdown of subthemes within these varied greatly. The systemic influences evidenced within this research highlight how complex and individualised AP learner's experiences can/may be, and how their constructs related to the pandemic may be influenced by several factors (inclusive of those related to AP factors, home factors, and additional significant life events). Implications for Educational Psychologists (EPs) and future research are discussed, relevant to the findings.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Inception of the research topic.

This study sought to explore the impact of COVID-19 measures and restrictions on young people (YP) who attend Alternative Provision (AP). Children and young people (CYP) may attend AP for a number of reasons, but most commonly attend due to social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) or mental health needs which are not able to be met within mainstream education (Cook, 2005). AP learners are noted to be more likely to come from disadvantaged backgrounds, experience poorer educational outcomes than their mainstream counterparts, become NEET ('Not in Education, Employment, or Training'), and are more likely to become involved with criminal activity in their local communities (Mills & Thomson, 2018; Pirrie et al., 2011). Re-engaging AP learners is noted to be a complex process, requiring a flexibility of approaches to suit the needs of students in such provisions (Cook, 2005). Literature related to gathering the views of YP in AP is growing but is still noted as less prevalent within research in general (Nicholson & Putwain, 2015), contributing to the vulnerabilities of such learners due to a lack of understanding of their needs as individuals (Michael & Frederickson, 2013).

1.2. The context of Alternative Provision (AP).

AP has been described as educational provision for CYP who do not attend mainstream or special schools (Department for Education [DfE], 2018). AP may include varying types of provision, including Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), specialist schools or resource bases and/or education provision such as home-schooling arrangements (DfE, 2018).

In terms of the language used to define AP in Wales, Welsh Government (2017) states that the term 'Alternative Provision' is not yet defined within Welsh Law. Instead, the provisions formerly described are referred to as 'Education Otherwise Than At School' or 'EOTAS' within Welsh education systems. Within Wales, EOTAS is used to meet the needs of excluded and/or vulnerable learners within education systems who may be unable to attend mainstream provision (Welsh Government, 2017).

For the purposes of this research, AP will be referred to as provisions that occur within a 'school' environment (on or off site of mainstream provision), such as PRUs, specialist schools and resource bases. When the present research refers to AP this will not include home-schooling arrangements, as the intention of the current study is to explore interruptions in school attendance as a result of coronavirus measures / restrictions.

2. OVERVIEW OF THE LITERATURE: THE CONTEXT OF AP

2.1. CYP's views of AP.

When considering the context of AP for those who attend, the literature indicates that YP perceive there to be a number of benefits and challenges of attending AP. Such constructs form a foundation of understanding how YP interpret their experiences in AP, inclusive of how parents and caregivers play a crucial role in the success of APs (Page, 2021), and how such provisions also accommodate CYP with needs outside of SEBD, such as those with Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC; Goodall, 2019). Table 1 offers a summary of CYP's views, relative to their experiences of AP.

Whilst some barriers to successful engagement in AP are present within the literature (namely related to behaviour management; Michael & Frederickson, 2013), these appear to be outweighed by the numerous benefits of accessing APs, inclusive of learners noting that they receive educational input in a more person-centred and individualised way, and that the combination of increased adult support within such provisions results in positive relationships between CYP, their peers, and school staff (Lloyd & O'Regan, 1999; Michael & Frederickson, 2013; Nicholson & Putwain, 2015; Craggs & Kelly, 2018).

The organisational and social structures identified within AP appear to lend themselves as supportive of CYP who experience SEBD (Lloyd & O'Regan, 1999; Michael & Frederickson, 2013). These include the flexibility of such settings, along with individualised approaches, clear expectations and boundaries, and opportunities

Table 1. Key themes in the literature: Views of AP learners.

Key themes	Relevant studies
<p><i>Facilitators of AP:</i> Trusting relationships with peers and staff members, smaller class sizes, individualised curriculum, AP learner agency, clearer boundaries and expectations of learners, self-motivation, self-discipline, differentiation, readily available support, relaxed classroom approaches, increased educational and vocational freedoms, feelings of belonging, feeling respected and understood.</p>	<p>Lloyd & O'Regan, 1999; Michael & Frederickson, 2013; Nicholson & Putwain, 2015; Craggs & Kelly, 2018.</p>
<p><i>Challenges of AP:</i> Ineffective behaviour management systems, unfair treatment, lack of individualised learning environment.</p>	<p>Michael & Frederickson, 2013.</p>
<p><i>The role of familial engagement:</i> Cyclical relationship between home and school which facilitates YP's engagement with AP.</p>	<p>Page, 2021.</p>
<p><i>ALN and the role of AP:</i> AP as a supportive environment for CYP with Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC).</p>	<p>Goodall, 2019.</p>

for connection with other AP pupils (Lloyd & O'Regan, 1999; Michael & Frederickson, 2013). APs appear to provide an environment for learners that promotes their feelings of safety and security, which in turn positively impacts educational engagement. Such processes appear to help create connected classroom environments and strong, stable pupil-teacher relationships.

2.2. Psychological theory relating to the AP population.

In line with promoting a reader's understanding of the context of AP, the present doctoral research seeks to root the literature review findings within psychological models / theories to assist with the development of understanding about AP learners

and how they may gain value from attending such provisions. Due to the nature of AP learners' difficulties, relevant to their SEBD, models and theories relating to attachment, trauma, belonging, and findings from the field of neuroscience will be offered, in support of furthering the connection between the literature explored so far and its relevance within the field of educational psychology (Table 2). Whilst it is acknowledged that several psychological models could be associated with this research topic, it is felt that those pertaining to relationships and emotional needs would best meet the needs of the research in its present form.

Table 2. Psychological theory relevant to the AP population.

Key themes	Relevant studies
<p><i>Attachment theory:</i> Dynamic Maturation Model; the role of trauma, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), and neurodevelopment and their interaction with SEBD.</p>	<p>Bowlby, 1969; Crittenden, 2006; Perry et al., 1995; Public Health Wales, 2015; Schore, 2009; Johnstone & Boyle, 2018.</p>
<p><i>The role of belonging.</i></p>	<p>Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Baumeister et al., 2005; Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Craggs & Kelly, 2018; Johnstone & Boyle, 2018.</p>

The psychological theory provided within this empirical paper focuses largely upon the role of CYP's SEBD and the 'conditions' in which AP learners succeed (inclusive of classroom environments, relationships, and the role of familial influences; Michael & Frederickson, 2013; Lloyd & O'Regan, 1999; Nicholson & Putwain, 2015; Page, 2021), however it is recognised that this may position AP learners as passive in their experience of such provisions, when this may not be the case. Michael and Frederickson (2013) highlight that YP were able to identify their own self-efficacy and academic self-concept as a result of the access to educational opportunities and flexibilities within AP. If the literature was considered through a lens of 'learning' as opposed to SEBD, the review may have explored additional avenues relating to psychological models of cognition and motivation, providing more support to the understanding that AP learners are not passive in their experiences of successful AP

placements. There may have also been theories that could have joined such connections together, such as Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1971), which were not explored at this time as part of the major literature review for this doctoral study.

2.3. Summary.

Within the research so far there is clear evidence for the importance of relationships within AP (Lloyd & O'Regan, 1999; Michael & Frederickson, 2013), with these relationships being most effective in promoting academic engagement when YP feel cared for and respected by those teaching them (Craggs & Kelly, 2018). All students accessing education settings are likely to have experienced varying levels of disruption because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and therefore the second part of this review seeks to focus upon the impact of the global pandemic on CYP (including those attending AP), to explore the effects of interruptions to accessing such educational systems.

3. OVERVIEW OF THE LITERATURE: THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 MEASURES AND RESTRICTIONS

3.1. What is COVID-19?

Coronavirus disease 19, or COVID-19, is a newly discovered infectious disease which is caused by a strain of coronavirus (severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 [SARS-CoV-2]; World Health Organisation [WHO], 2020). COVID-19 can result in mild to severe respiratory illnesses, dependent upon the health of those who contract the disease and can complicate pre-existing medical conditions (WHO, 2020). Passed through the air, COVID-19 is spread through contact with others who carry the illness (WHO, 2020). The high level of 'transmissibility' of COVID-19 resulted in numerous implications for communities worldwide, inclusive of changes to the way people can act socially, access local resources, travel, and attend school and workplace environments (Flynn et al., 2020).

3.2. Measures and restrictions implemented within the United Kingdom (UK), as a result of COVID-19.

In March 2020, countries worldwide introduced numerous measures to manage the transmission of COVID-19 within the population, inclusive of national and local lockdowns, the closing of educational provisions, hospitality establishments and social venues (Flynn et al., 2020) and restricting access to external professional support (such as health and social care support; Paulauskaite et al., 2021). In some cases (e.g., for children of key workers, or 'vulnerable' CYP), school sites remained open for a select few to continue attending (Crawley et al., 2020). With the reduction of social gatherings allowed within the UK, so came the implementation of social distancing measures, the use of masks/facial coverings and the public were encouraged to regularly wash and/or sanitise their hands, particularly when out in the local community (Flynn et al., 2020).

3.3. Exploring the impact of the pandemic on children and families.

The changes imposed by UK Government, because of the coronavirus pandemic, have impacted children, YP and their families in a number of ways (Paulauskaite et al., 2021). For families with children who have ALN, COVID-19 measures have been said to result in additional difficulties and pressures for households, inclusive of parents having a lack of information relating to how to support children with ALN, challenges following social distancing guidance, and a disruption of access to education, health, and social care services, all of which had subsequent impacts on parental wellbeing (Paulauskaite et al., 2021). Additionally, research indicates that the educational and social changes imposed as a result of the pandemic have significantly impacted CYP, relative to how they learn, socialise, and manage the unpredictability of the pandemic (Cahoon et al., 2021; Fernandes et al., 2020; Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2020a; Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2020b). Table 3 indicates a summary of the findings, relative to CYP's experiences.

Table 3. Key themes in the literature: The impact of COVID-19 on CYP.

Key themes	Relevant studies
<p><i>The new 'normal' of home schooling:</i> Differences in access to 'resources', widening of attainment gaps; benefits of increased parental awareness of CYP's needs; blurring of boundaries between home and school.</p>	<p>Cahoon et al., 2021; Greenway & Eaton-Thomas, 2020; Benassi et al., 2021; Couper-Kenney & Riddell, 2021; Andrew et al., 2020; Montacute, 2020; Beaton, 2021; Canning & Robinson, 2021.</p>
<p><i>Isolation on mental health and wellbeing:</i> Increase in depressive symptoms; increase in internet and social media use; need for connection and escapism.</p>	<p>Loades et al., 2020; Bignardi et al., 2021; Fernandes et al., 2020.</p>
<p><i>The role of physical health and exercise:</i> Lack of access to health services; restrictions on physical activity; lack of access to specialist health professionals and equipment.</p>	<p>Theis et al., 2021; Hefferon et al., 2021.</p>
<p><i>CYP's views of the pandemic:</i> Disabled CYP disproportionately affected; concerns when approaching educational transitions; fewer academic and social expectations; worries about relatives; caregiving roles; exam interruptions; missing seeing friends; loneliness; increased social media use; more time for hobbies and creativity.</p>	<p>Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2020a; Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2020b; Cooper et al., 2021; Loades et al., 2020; Fernandes et al., 2020; Southend EPS, 2020; Holt & Murray, 2021; McCluskey et al., 2021.</p>
<p><i>Relevance to AP population:</i> The role of pre-existing mental health needs during the pandemic; interrupted access to stable school relationships; lack of a secure base, change in expectations; potential positives.</p>	<p>Cooper et al., 2021; Michael & Frederickson, 2013; Johnstone & Boyle, 2018; Hu & Qian, 2021.</p>

The overview of the research indicates that a lack of access to schooling resulted in a blurring of boundaries between home and school environments, which has not been received positively by CYP and their parents during a time of great change (Canning

& Robinson, 2021). A lack of typical socialisation with peers was found to impact CYP's wellbeing (Loades et al., 2020; Bignardi et al., 2021) and an increased use of technology and social media was prevalent during the pandemic as a means of managing such difficulties (Fernandes et al., 2020). The impact of the pandemic on CYP was noted to vary, particularly if a child or YP had pre-existing mental health needs (Cooper et al., 2021; Hu & Qian, 2021). For some CYP, changes to their lifestyle (particularly relating to their receipt of education) were welcomed, and they liked spending more time at home (Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2020a; Holt & Murray, 2021; Southend EPS, 2020). However, with AP learners benefitting from clear structures, routines, and utilising AP as one of their secure bases (Michael & Frederickson, 2013), it is wondered whether they would perceive time spent at home in the same way.

3.4. Summary.

The research highlights that the experiences of CYP, both within AP and outside of such provisions, are complex and individualised dependent upon the circumstances of individuals, inclusive of YP's unique needs and presentation, family composition and access to resources (Cahoon et al., 2021; Greenway & Eaton-Thomas, 2020; Cooper et al., 2021; Hu & Qian, 2021; Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2020b).

4. RATIONALE FOR THE RESEARCH STUDY

The aim of the study is to explore the impact of COVID-19 measures and restrictions on YP who access AP. Constraints within the previous research, such as a lack of face-to-face consultation and the digital distributions of surveys, highlight an opportunity to explore the views of YP in more depth and in person, as opposed to online (Fernandes et al., 2020; Hu & Qian, 2021, Cooper et al., 2021; Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2020a; Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2020b). Some of the key findings from the existing research indicate that positive staff and peer relationships, a flexibility relating to learning, smaller classes, routines, boundaries, and consistency all contributed towards a positive educational experience for AP learners (Michael & Frederickson, 2013). In addition to familial stressors potentially

impacting YP, conversely YP's behavioural difficulties may exacerbate current challenges within the home during national and local lockdowns and therefore may not be viewed as positively as other CYP's experiences (Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2020a) or as reprieve from the demands of schooling (McCluskey et al., 2021). Prior research highlights the blurring of home-school boundaries for YP during the pandemic (Canning & Robinson, 2021), demonstrating that home schooling may have interrupted home environments which may be seen as safe spaces for YP. Furthermore, regardless of attendance to an AP, many CYP experienced difficulties relating to socialisation during the pandemic and relating to having access to the resources they needed to succeed educationally (Loades et al., 2020; Cahoon et al., 2021).

The benefits AP learners experience from attending AP may have been disrupted during the coronavirus pandemic (e.g., by lockdowns), and prior SEBD may interact with such processes (e.g., feelings of disconnect and an absence of belonging may be exacerbated due to having a lack of access to one of their 'secure bases'). Additionally, the responses of the systems around YP, inclusive of the actions of families and schools to manage the uncertainties of a pandemic, are likely to be partly responsible for how YP manage lifestyle changes themselves during such times.

Whilst the views of parents/caregivers are evident within the literature review (Paulauskaite et al., 2021; Cahoon et al., 2021; Theis et al., 2021; Canning & Robinson, 2021; Greenway & Eaton-Thomas, 2020), feedback from education professionals supporting CYP is lacking. Given the cyclical relationship between school and home (Page, 2021) and the role of such professionals in AP learners experiences (Craggs & Kelly, 2018; Michael & Frederickson, 2013; Lloyd & O'Regan, 1999; Nicholson & Putwain, 2015; Goodall, 2019) the researcher felt that contributions from school staff would also add value to our understanding of how the pandemic has affected YP in AP.

5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were developed, in response to the literature review:

- How have COVID-19 measures and restrictions affected YP who attend AP?
- How have APs responded to such measures and restrictions when supporting the YP attending AP, and how has this been received by YP and parents/caregivers?
- What are the implications for EPs and their services when supporting YP in AP who may have/are experiencing challenges as a result of COVID-19 measures and restrictions?

6. RELEVANCE TO THE EP PROFESSION

This research was completed to satisfy the requirements for the Doctorate in Educational Psychology at Cardiff University. During the research process the relevance of this study, when positioned within the field of Educational Psychology, was reflected upon throughout, from the inception of the initial research aims, through to data analysis and write up.

6.1. The role of EPs in schools.

EPs' roles are multi-faceted, and they can work in a number of ways, including undertaking consultation, assessment, research, and delivering training (Farrell et al., 2006). It is also increasingly recognised that EPs can work in a broader way, applying psychology to support children, YP and families by working across individual, group, systemic, and organisational levels (Welsh Government, 2016). Additionally, it is increasingly recognised that EPs are being encouraged to work within the wider socio-political context of ALN and education, making them well-placed to consider CYP's needs holistically and to support them during times of challenge, such as a global pandemic (BPS, 2017).

6.2. Psychological lenses within EP practice.

EPs may utilise numerous psychological theories and lenses within their practice (BPS, 2017). The researcher felt that, in keeping with the works of EPs, the present study should also be considered through psychological lenses (where appropriate) to demonstrate the thinking behind the researcher's approaches to the study and its aims. From unpicking the literature pertaining to the experiences of CYP and families during the pandemic, it is evident that the perspectives offered by the YP within this study will benefit from triangulation of information with those who know them best within their home and education environments, given that holistic approaches to understanding the needs of CYP during the pandemic were rarely observed in the literature review, with parents largely influencing the feedback gathered (Paulauskaite et al., 2021; Cahoon et al., 2021; Theis et al., 2021; Canning & Robinson, 2021; Greenway & Eaton-Thomas, 2020). This triangulation is not to question individual constructs pertaining to events that took place during the last year but will occur to ensure the accuracy of any given 'facts' about participants (such as family compositions, time out of school, etc.), and therefore will be explored from the perspectives of three elements of the YP's systems (the YP, home and school). Triangulation may also serve to offer a richer information than gathering YP views alone and could both strengthen the information gathered from AP learners and offer alternative perspectives. In line with this approach, the research has chosen to adopt systemic and social constructionist lenses when gathering and analysing data.

6.2.1. The role of systems theories.

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory serves as a useful tool to help identify how the systems around AP learners may interact with participants' experiences (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2013). Bronfenbrenner's (1979) bioecological model acknowledges that individual child development is shaped by its connections with immediate relationships, such as those with parents/caregivers, peers, and teachers (microsystem), the relationships between such relevant people (mesosystem), the external systems in which the individual lives, such as their local community (exosystem), and factors such as cultural identity and socioeconomic status

(macrosystem). It also references how CYP's individual characteristics, at the centre of this model, are shaped over time (chronosystem).

Cultural influences at the exosystem level, inclusive of community attitudes and behaviours in response to the pandemic are likely to play a key role within a child or YP's construction(s) of government measures and restrictions, if considered using this model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This is inclusive of the AP of which participants attend and how they choose to respond to the pandemic and provide support or guidance to YP and families. Roberts (1994) work, within an organisational context, highlights the role of the 'primary task' and how this may differ between those within and outside of systems (in this case, APs and homes). During the pandemic, a YP's AP may adopt very different approaches to the management of the challenges imposed by government measures, than perhaps that of the YP's parents. Agreement or discordance between systems (e.g., home and school) relating to what the priorities should be for AP learners could result in differing outcomes for the YP identified in the research and could form an important part of their experience of the pandemic.

Additionally, the observed responses of adults to the pandemic could also influence how AP learners navigate or adapt to the difficulties of such lifestyle changes, if considering the research from a systems perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Hu and Qian (2021) identified that the way in which family members experienced COVID-19 influenced the social relationships of adolescents, particularly when adults' beliefs about the pandemic resulted in strict levels of self-isolation and social distancing. Again, if considering this response from a systems lens, such behaviours could be interpreted as the family systems seeking to maintain 'equilibrium' (that is, attempting to return to the point prior to the presented 'problem') through a means of homeostasis; a self-regulatory process which helps maintain the status-quo of a system (Dowling & Osborne, 2002). Subsequently, parents may act in response to what they believe takes highest priority at that point in time, which may be in relation to avoiding transmission of the virus as much as possible, at the expense of social interaction outside of the home with others. If the adults that CYP live with respond/have responded maladaptively to government restrictions, this may have a subsequent impact on the YP who resides with them (Hu & Qian, 2021). It is hoped that the responses of both school and home can be sought indirectly during the data collection

process to help inform this thinking and to determine whether any overarching links or themes may present themselves in support of this systemic model.

6.2.2. The role of social constructionism.

In terms of how individuals arrive at their chosen constructs about their significant lifestyle changes, or indeed, any event they experience, models such as social constructionism can support the explanation of the development of such thoughts and beliefs (Burr, 2015).

Within this research it is important to acknowledge that applying a lens which endorses constructionist ways of thinking results in the utilisation of a perspective that does not prescribe to any 'absolute truths' about others' perceptions of events. In essence, all views gained in this research serve a purpose for the person who shared them, and these discourses are time-specific, changeable, and will interact with the relationships around them and previous experiences that they have had (Burr, 2015). Consequently, and potentially most importantly, whilst the research will not be able to draw and generalise 'facts' about AP learners' constructs related to government measures and restrictions, it will accept that these are considered 'truths' for the individuals involved in the research and these viewpoints will be treated as such and managed sensitively. Additionally, it should be acknowledged that the researcher's constructs and views will also need to be reflected upon in this way. With the researcher as an active part of the processes within the study, a reflexive approach will need to be taken to check the researcher's assumptions and biases, and to reflect upon how the researcher is experiencing the pandemic herself and if this is interacting with any part of the study's processes.

6.3. Intended contribution to knowledge and implications for practice.

It is hoped that the findings of the research may help inform practice specifically within AP, recognising the barriers that YP, families and schools have/may have faced, and will promote preventative and inclusive means of working in such provisions to influence positive change for learners.

The research intends to contribute to the understanding of AP learners' experiences of the pandemic from exploring these constructions using systemic and social constructionist lenses, considering how the adults supporting YP also interact with such processes and events related to the pandemic.

7. RESEARCH PARADIGM

The ontological stance of the research was from the perspective of critical realism, with an interpretivist epistemological viewpoint.

7.1. Ontological stance – critical realist perspective.

A critical realist lens was used within the study (Bhaskar et al., 2017) and was chosen as it met the needs of the researcher with respect to the data analysis approach adopted (reflexive thematic analysis; Braun & Clarke, 2021). Critical realism allows for the researcher to acknowledge that there are no truly objective findings available within the data analysis process, given that what is provided by the respondents are their interpretations of what they perceive the impact COVID-19 measures and restrictions have had on AP learners (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Critical realism acknowledges that as researchers we will never be able to gain a full measure of how YP experienced COVID-19 measures, because the information gathered during data collection processes will always be secondary in nature and not a true lived experience (Bhaskar et al., 2017). When conducting interviews to gather information about others, we will be receiving views that are an interpretation of lived events (Bhaskar et al., 2017), and these will also be presented from the perspectives of three parts of that YP's system (YP, parent/caregiver, and school staff member). 'True' experiences may now be altered by time and individual biases placed upon participants' reflection of their memories about the time-period discussed during interviews. However, in spite of these reflections, using critical realism as a lens in this research acknowledges that the pandemic, and its accompanying measures, restrictions, and impact on YP and their families was very real for them, even if offered to us to understand in a secondary way.

7.2. Epistemological stance – interpretivist perspective.

An interpretivist viewpoint being taken within the research allows social influences to be considered when exploring people's subjective realities (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). This viewpoint also incorporates the additional interpretation taken by researchers when analysing the shared interpretation from others and assumes that the analysis of the data will be combined with the subjective realities of participants and the knowledge they share during the interview process, being mindful that the 'truths' held by participants may differ from one another but that all are valid and meaningful.

8. METHOD

8.1. Contextual information.

Participants for the research were recruited from a single AP, which was a specialist school for YP with SEBD, located in Wales. In line with government definitions, this school can be categorised as an AP as it is a school outside of mainstream education which serves to meet the needs of CYP with SEBD who previously attended mainstream schooling (but is also not deemed to be a 'special school' in its most traditional sense; DfE, 2018).

8.2. Data collection.

Individual semi-structured interviews were held with YP, school staff and parents/caregivers. The YP and Staff interviews were administered in person, and the Parent/Caregiver interviews via a telephone call. Such differences occurred because of varying levels of accessibility of participants due to travel restrictions. The interview questions can be found in the appendices (Appendix D). The duration of interviews varied from 11 minutes to 46 minutes. The YP interviews were the shortest (averaging at 16 minutes), parent/caregiver interviews (on average) took 30 minutes, and staff interviews averaged at 40 minutes long. All interviews were recording using 'Voice Memo' software on the researcher's MacBook.

8.3. Participants and recruitment.

8.3.1. Recruitment.

An introductory email was sent out to several APs in Wales to explore recruitment options. After consideration of follow up responses, a virtual meeting was held with the Principal of one AP, a specialist school located within Wales, to explore the aims of the research and the expectations of participating in the study. This discussion resulted in the recruitment of participants from this AP.

8.3.2. Inclusion/exclusion criteria.

The inclusion and exclusion criteria for the research are detailed below (Table 4).

Table 4. Inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Participant type	Inclusion/exclusion criteria
YP	YP were required to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Be attending an AP at the time of data collection.▪ Have accessed this provision for at least two school terms prior to the commencement of the research.▪ Be between 11 and 19 years old.
Staff	School staff were required to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Have a relationship with the YP being interviewed.▪ Work with the identified YP on a daily/very frequent basis.▪ School staff could hold any professional position within the AP (e.g., Teaching Assistant, Teacher, Caretaker) and participate, if they met the criteria regarding contact with the YP being interviewed.
Parent / caregiver	Parents/caregivers were required to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Be the legal guardians for the YP interviewed (biological or non-biological guardians).▪ Reside with the YP in the study.

8.3.3. Participant characteristics.

After consideration of the inclusion/exclusion criteria, participants recruited for the research included:

- 3 YP, two males and one female, aged 14, 19 and 14 years old, respectively.
- 3 parents/caregivers of the above YP, consisting of two biological parents (one father and one mother) and one maternal grandmother.
- 3 school staff members who were all teachers of YP in the study.

In total, 9 participants were interviewed.

In terms of viewing participants as three separate 'triads', the following groupings were formed (the names of individuals are pseudonyms, some chosen by participants):

Table 5. Participant characteristics.

Participant Information	Case Study A	Case Study B	Case Study C
Young Person	Male (14) - Tom	Male (19) - Finn	Female (14) - Athena
Parent/Caregiver	Biological Father – Hank	Biological Mother – Willow	Maternal Grandmother – Saturn
School Staff	Male Teacher – Wilson	Male Teacher – Gilly	Female Teacher – Venus

8.4. Procedure.

8.4.1. Chronology of work completed.

Table 6 represents the steps taken in the study, from the initial scoping meeting with the gatekeeper of the AP, through to transcription of data.

Table 6. Steps of procedure.

Step 1	Following the initial scoping meeting to discuss research aims and recruitment, a gatekeeper letter (Appendix E) was sent to the Principal of the AP identified by the researcher (after ethical approval for the research was obtained). The gatekeeper was asked to source participants from their provision, keeping in mind the noted inclusion and exclusion criteria for the research (prompts for this were also included within the gatekeeper letter).
Step 2	Once identified, School Staff were informed of the research intentions by the Gatekeeper and were asked to verbally explore consent with the chosen YP and their parents/caregivers.
Step 3	Prior to the commencement of interviews, information and consent forms ('Assent Form' for the YP) were sent to the participants (Appendices F-K). Participants were required to indicate their consent before contact was able to be made with the participants or the interviews could proceed.
Step 4	A 'Getting to know you' session was undertaken at the AP, prior to data collection, for the researcher to introduce herself to the YP and staff participating within the research. During this time, the researcher made herself available to talk to the YP and staff chosen for the study, in an outside area of the AP where individuals could see who they would be talking to, ask questions about the study and the researcher, and clarify preferences for the data collection process (e.g., where the interviews would be held). The introductory session took place over approximately two hours, where all YP and staff chosen were able to meet with the researcher in an informal way.
Step 5	The interviews took between 11 and 46 minutes to complete, with YP interviews being of a much shorter duration. As previously noted, YP and Staff interviews were undertaken in person, with Parent/Caregiver interviews conducted via telephone. These interviews, and the introductory session at the school, were coordinated by the Personal Assistant to the Gatekeeper of the AP, who held information relating to participants until consent/assent forms had been physically seen by the researcher.
Step 6	Debrief sheets (Appendices L-N) were shared with participants following the interviews. Additionally, a post-interview checklist (Appendix O) was completed with school staff to explore the YP's emotional state following participation in the interviews. This contained follow up actions, should the YP be experiencing emotional distress as a result of sharing their experiences (however, this was not needed during this research).
Step 7	Interviews were recorded (audio only) using 'Voice Memo' software on the researcher's MacBook and transcribed verbatim post-data collection.

8.4.2. Additional interview information.

Participants were interviewed in the following order: Staff, YP and Parent/Caregiver. The order of interviews was identified as important during this research for the following reasons:

1. YP were asked to be chaperoned by a member of school staff to their interviews for safeguarding and confidentiality purposes. The YP's chaperones remained in the room whilst their interviews took place. While the member of staff was not required to be the same person as who was being interviewed within that YP's 'triad', there was a chance that this could occur, or that information given by a YP might be shared by the accompanying chaperone to other staff members post-interview. Because of this, staff members within the research were interviewed first to control for any information they may hear during YP interviews (directly or indirectly) that could influence their answers. The chaperones were asked to try to remain silent during the YP interviews.
2. To reduce any potential anxieties for YP having to wait between meeting the researcher and being interviewed, they were prioritised as being interviewed next, and this was undertaken as early as was practical (the following day).
3. Some differences in ability to access the Parent/Caregiver interviews in person resulted in the decision to conduct all of these interviews by telephone, to promote consistency across the data collection for these participants. This flexibility in contacting Parents/Caregivers meant that they could be contacted after the in-person interviews (YP and Staff) had been prioritised.

A pilot project was not included within this research. The researcher felt that this was not necessary to include as, firstly, this would result in three new triads of information that could bias the interviewer and the data collection process when conducting interviews post-pilot. Secondly, it was felt that a pilot project which took place within

the same AP could bias future participants, as there may be a possibility for the YP, staff, or parents/caregivers from the pilot project to discuss their experiences with others in the school. Additionally, school staff interviewed in the pilot could have been the most appropriate school staff member to represent a future YP participating, meaning that they could end up being interviewed for the same research twice.

8.5. Data analysis.

Following data collection, reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021) was used to analyse the responses. Figure 1 details the steps within the reflexive thematic analysis process. The researcher used NVivo12 software for Phases 1-3, and hand wrote and mapped information pertaining to Phases 4 and 5.

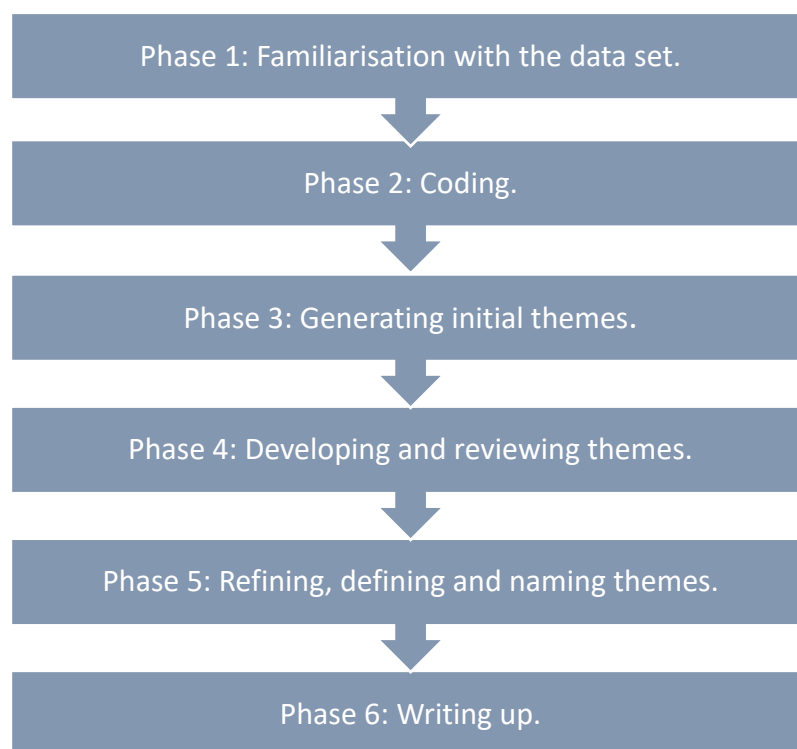


Figure 1. Reflexive thematic analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Thematic analysis was chosen to represent the researcher's active engagement with the data, inclusive of their how their interpretation of the data results in the generation of themes and how prior biases and constructs may interact with research findings.

8.6. Ethical considerations.

The proposal for the study was examined by Cardiff University's Ethics Committee, prior to commencement. The proposal contained information regarding the intentions of the research and corresponding ethical considerations, such as those listed below (Table 7). This research was approved in March 2021.

Table 7. Ethical considerations.

Ethical consideration.	Information corresponding to study.
Informed consent	<p>Participants were given information relating to the study prior to consenting to completing the interview (Appendices F-H).</p> <p>Participants were unable to continue to the interview process unless they had given consent to complete the study (Appendices G-I). For the YP participating in the study, the assent form and purpose of the research was reiterated in person prior to the commencement of interviews.</p>
Anonymity and confidentiality	<p>The assent and consent forms did not request any personal or identifying information from participants for them to be able to access the research.</p> <p>The interviews were recorded (audio only) and then stored on an encrypted USB. Once transcribed the recordings stored on the USB were permanently deleted. Participants' interview responses were treated anonymously once they were transcribed, with participants being given pseudonyms, making them unidentifiable to others post-transcription.</p> <p>As the researcher ensured the anonymity of interview responses, the data obtained can be retained and stored for an indefinite period, however, it can be kept for a minimum of 10 years by Cardiff University following submission of the thesis (as recommended by the Medical Research Council).</p>
Right to withdraw	<p>Participants were informed that participation within the study was entirely voluntary and that they were able to withdraw from completing the interview at any time without giving a reason. Participants were also informed that it would not be possible to withdraw responses after the transcription of interviews, due to anonymisation of responses.</p>
Debriefing participants	<p>Participants were provided with a debrief sheet following completion of the interview(s). This included a brief summary of the project and the contact details of the researcher and the research supervisor. As previously noted, the emotional wellbeing of the YP within the research was explored post-interview, with measures pre-emptively in place to offer additional support if needed.</p>

9. FINDINGS

9.1. Introduction.

The data was explored with respect to the three YP-Parent/Caregiver-Staff triads identified within the research, and therefore will be presented in the same way. An example set of interview transcripts and the reflexive thematic analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2021) can be found in the Appendices (P-S).

9.2. Case Study A – Tom’s experience of COVID-19 measures and restrictions.

Tom is a 14-year-old male who is described by those who know him well as a YP who has SEBD specifically relating to his emotional regulation skills and anxiety management. He has accessed AP for a number of years, moving from a mainstream provision prior to Key Stage 3, and is noted to have made significant progress within AP. He is described as knowledgeable, helpful, and responsible, although he is also described as ‘impressionable’ (which can make him more vulnerable than other learners). Tom has a preference for the outdoors and enjoys practical activities like bike riding and crafting. Tom lives with his parents and has four brothers and a younger sister. His father, Hank, participated in this research, as did his Teacher, Wilson.

Figure 2. Introducing the reader to Tom, Hank, and Wilson.

Tom’s experience of the pandemic can be summarised by considering three main themes, inclusive of ‘Negative outcomes from measures and restrictions’, ‘Management of the pandemic’, and ‘Positive factors’ (Figure 3).

9.2.1. Theme 1 – Negative outcomes from measures and restrictions.

The first theme within Tom’s story relates to how he has been negatively impacted by COVID-19 measures and restrictions, including how his experiences of the pandemic have impacted his daily routines, SEBD presentation, his access to support systems, and how this combination of difficulties have interacted with additional priorities and events in Tom’s life.

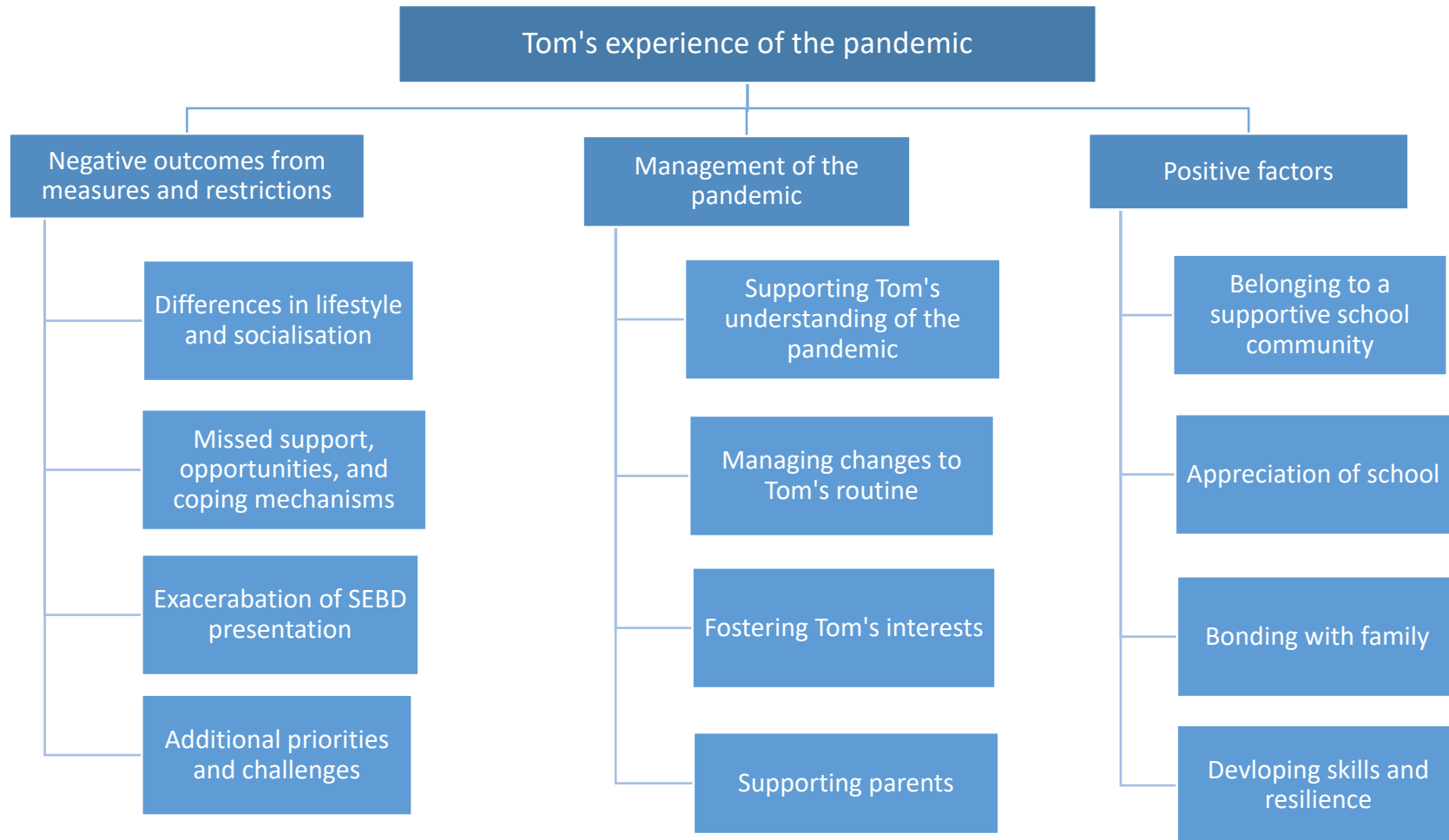


Figure 3. Tom's thematic map.

9.2.1.1. Subtheme – Differences in lifestyle and socialisation.

Government measures and restrictions resulted in Tom and his family spending significant periods of time at home, particularly during the first government lockdown in March 2020. During this time Tom's school was closed, however reopened shortly after the lockdown began, and additionally offered outreach services to YP and families. Due to Tom having very few friendships in his local area, national and local lockdowns resulted in increased periods of isolation for him, with respect to him being unable to socialise with friends from school or family members outside of his home. Tom's father described this lack of access to Tom's social systems as a 'big knock' for him (line 200, Appendix R). When the researcher asked how Tom would describe COVID-19, he immediately responded that coronavirus (to him) meant to 'stay away from everybody' (line 9, Appendix Q). He felt that there weren't any positives to lockdowns, and this construction was echoed by his father, who felt that restricting Tom's access to school meant that his 'security blanket' of trusted people and places was taken away, leaving Tom alone and with little purpose. Initially, Tom spent a lot of time during the first lockdown playing alone on his XBOX, something which he very rarely does now as he prefers more practical activities and being outside.

"Yeah and that got taken away by COVID, the security blanket. Obviously kids with issues, they have people they trust. They go to places, and those people there they trust, you take that away, the kids are left on their own."

Hank (lines 203-205, Appendix R)

In terms of adjusting to the distancing measures put in place, Tom shared that it's taken some time for him to adjust to wearing a mask and that he often forgets that he has it on when talking to other people. Tom's father felt that the pandemic has changed the way that YP communicate, with respect to people's wariness around physical touch and proximity to others. In school however, Wilson felt that social distancing measures often would be forgotten by Tom, with him and his friends playing and socialising together as they usually would (although he shared that Tom is more

mindful of this when out in his local community). Tom shared that he now sees COVID-19 as a 'normal' part of his life.

9.2.1.2. Subtheme – Missed support, opportunities, and coping mechanisms.

Several missed opportunities were noted by Tom, Hank, and Wilson, inclusive of a lack of access to school and its individualised activities, a loss of connectedness and support, and difficulties accessing specific external services and resources. Some of the key themes discussed related to feelings of disruption between home and school relationships. Hank noted that he is usually very involved with school processes, occasionally helping at school with practical activities and remaining in the local area during the school day so he is available, should Tom need him (which used to be very comforting for Tom). Tom also used to value his parents being able to come into school and was proud to show them his work and the progress he was making.

Since the pandemic began, Tom is reported to have lost confidence in himself with respect to him engaging in independent tasks in his local community (e.g., going to the shops by himself). With government measures interrupting his routine, Hank described the restrictions as 'severing the artery' of Tom's safety blanket (line 97, Appendix R). In addition to the losses already mentioned, Hank shared that buying the resources and items that Tom enjoys (e.g., sensory toys) was also difficult during lockdowns, which contributed to additional stress in the family home. Wilson noted that he wished he could have done more for Tom during this time and shared that Tom's parents found it difficult to access the support they were hoping for, particularly as CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service) was 'overstretched' during the height of the pandemic. Tom's family have also been trying to explore an Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) diagnosis for Tom and made little progress with this.

9.2.1.3. Subtheme – Exacerbation of SEBD presentation.

In terms of how the recent lifestyle changes have affected Tom's emotional wellbeing, most notably participants shared how confinement at home negatively impacted his mental health. As previously noted, Tom doesn't like being indoors and is much happier when spending time outside. During his interview, Tom shared that there is

‘something about indoors’ that he hates (line 64, Appendix Q). His father felt that Tom had less autonomy at home, due to missing out on the opportunities he has in school to be stimulated and engaged with learning. He also felt that government restrictions have impacted a generation of children, but that AP learners are disproportionately affected by a lack of access to school as school is the place where they learn the skills to communicate effectively and socialise with others. Hank implied that time spent away from school environments will be less impactful for children who already have social skills as they will be able to meet their needs themselves in other ways and will have a wider circle of friends outside of school. Tom is also described as an individual who is ‘actively searching’ for ‘connection’ (lines 336-337, Appendix P) and the disruption of this inevitably had consequences for his wellbeing.

“Yeah, like if your kid’s having a tantrum because he wants some kind of squishy. And you know that squishy will settle him down but you can’t go to the shop to get that. Cos you look at Tom he’s a bit sensory with what he eats. It’s like you can’t go out and get it, you go to a shop you could be there queuing for God knows how long, meanwhile someone else is back at the house having to deal with an issue going on. That’s all been mixed up in it as well. So that little kid is trying to deal with I want this but I can’t get that and he’s stopping me getting it and they’re stopping me getting it and I’ve been told I can’t do this and I can’t do that. There’s so many mixed things going on in that child’s head –”

Hank (lines 374-382, Appendix R)

Hank noted that lockdowns ‘spiked’ things for Tom (line 185, Appendix R), with respect to his emotional regulation and wellbeing. Tom is described as an individual who doesn’t feel safe indoors and finds confinement inside as restrictive, resulting in him feeling overwhelmed. Tom shared that he preferred his own space in the house during lockdown periods. Wilson felt that the individual they see in school is markedly different than what his family experience at home, with Tom functioning relatively well in school and finding his home environment more difficult to navigate. Wilson reflected upon this in the context that home is a safe space for Tom and that he often seems to hold in his frustrations until he is back in this environment. This was echoed, in part, by Tom himself, who felt that he has different personas for home and school, and that he communicates with different people in different ways, dependent upon the context.

However, it is more than how he communicates that is different, with Tom's Teacher sharing that he can become destructive at home and/or physically aggressive towards others, seemingly with no trigger for the behaviour(s). For a YP who is described as 'hypervigilant' (line 244, Appendix P), the removal of one of his safe spaces (school) was noted to be extremely challenging, as it resulted in the heightening of Tom's anxiety-related responses. Prolonged periods of time at home (with a reduced number of personal freedoms) were negative experiences for Tom, due to being unable to spend extended periods outside, which could be, in part, the cause of the increased number of behavioural incidents then being observed at home.

9.2.1.4. Subtheme – Additional priorities and challenges.

As well as navigating the changes observed from the coronavirus pandemic, data analysis identified additional factors that interacted with Tom's recent experiences, namely relating to the family moving home and consideration of the needs of his siblings and parents during lockdown periods. Tom identified that they moved house around the time of the very first lockdown in March 2020. Hank shared that Tom was heavily involved in helping with the moving process and that, although he coped with it well, this was a stressful time for all family members. In terms of their needs as a household, Hank also identified that some of Tom's siblings have ALN and/or other vulnerabilities, which complicates caregiving processes. Additionally, he identified that his freedom as a parent was taken away because of lockdown measures and that this created some discomfort for him as an individual, noting that school was a welcome break for both him and Tom.

9.2.2. Theme 2 – Management of the pandemic.

The second theme within Tom's story relates to how he and his family have been supported throughout the pandemic.

9.2.2.1. Subtheme – Supporting Tom's understanding of the pandemic.

In support of Tom's management of the pandemic, Hank and Wilson shared how they helped prepare and reassure Tom about the lifestyle changes happening as a result

of the pandemic. Both adults within the interviews identified that they supported Tom to understand the context of the information he was seeing on media outlets and helped him to think more flexibly about the information he had access to. For Tom, who can be quite literal in thinking, approaches to supporting him meant building up his knowledge and understanding of new measures and preparing him for changes in his lifestyle (e.g., distancing and masks), providing rationales for such modifications, (e.g., to protect the vulnerable). We reflected upon how it is important to Tom to know what is coming next and wondered whether all members of society following the same 'rules' (when out in the local community) could be comforting for him, despite his lifestyle drastically changing.

9.2.2.2. Subtheme – Managing changes to Tom's routine.

Wilson shared that school staff sat down as a team towards the beginning of the pandemic, shortly after government measures had been rolled out, and planned for how they would respond as an AP. He shared that they called parents and asked them what their preferences were (that is, if there was a possibility for learners to come to school, would parents accept). During the times that school was closed, Tom was sent work packs to complete at home, however Wilson noted that there was little pressure for him to complete these. When unable to attend AP, school staff offered outreach support to Tom whereby they took him bike riding once a week. Tom appeared to respond best when he was able to come back into school and did so for approximately 3-4 days per week during lockdown periods. Hank shared that he felt this continuity of attending AP helped Tom stay in a productive routine at home, and that the response from the school was well-managed. Tom seemed to appreciate being able to spend time with friends again and returning to a routine.

9.2.2.3. Subtheme – Fostering Tom's interests.

To keep Tom happy, motivated, and engaged throughout the pandemic, the adults supporting him shared that they sought to give Tom opportunities to pursue his interests and to work in a strengths-based way, perhaps even more so than usual during this time of change. The school developed an outside animal enclosure during the first lockdown, which Tom was invited to become involved with. Wilson shared that Tom feels that this has been a positive addition to his school day, and that

incorporating time in the enclosure as a part of his routine has helped 'calm him down' and that he now likes animals more. Hank shared that they are fortunate enough to have a field, woods, and river near where they live, meaning that they can access the outdoors relatively easily at home. Hank and Tom both shared that they regularly engage in practical activities such as fishing, camping, bush crafting and bike riding, and that the outdoors is where Tom is most regulated. Hank mentioned struggling with only being allowed outside for one hour per day (when lockdown measures were at their most restrictive), sharing that it wasn't enough time for Tom and as soon as he was back indoors that his demeanour would change back to seeming frustrated and bored. Tom shared that he and his father often participate in practical activities together (like building and fixing items), and that they are getting a workshop soon which he is looking forward to.

"And I said to him you know like, what do you think is happening, he said 'oh, the animals', I said what do you mean by that and he said, 'oh well, it wasn't for the animals then I wouldn't be able to do this', so I said okay that's really interesting and I said, what was it about the animals and he said 'oh they just kind of helped me calm me down and kind of chill me out and give you a focus on the purpose'."

Wilson (lines 262-267, Appendix P)

9.2.2.4. Subtheme – Supporting parents.

A notable subtheme within analysis relates to how Tom has indirectly been supported by school via their approach with parents. From speaking to Hank, it was evident that Tom's parents felt they had a good relationship with school and that school staff were approachable when parents encountered issues. The communication between home and school was noted by both adults (Hank and Wilson) to be frequent and effective, and this continued throughout the pandemic. Wilson identified that school staff see themselves as working collaboratively with parents in their role as 'problem solvers', and it was evident during analysis that Wilson empathised with the experiences of Hank and his wife. He felt that the family would benefit from additional support at home, with respect to having access to respite and family therapy-related services.

9.2.3. Theme 3 – Positive factors.

The final theme within Tom's story relates to the positive outcomes from his experience of COVID-19 measures and restrictions.

9.2.3.1. Subtheme – Belonging to supportive school community.

In spite of the numerous challenges Tom experienced during periods of COVID-19 measures, data analysis identified that his belonging to an inclusive school community acted as a protective buffer during this time of significant change. Wilson's understanding that Tom needs to experience control over the events in his life meant that the messages Tom received about the level of support available to him were consistent and effective. Wilson shared that Tom is wanted in AP, that he benefits from having friends in school who share similar challenges relating to their ALN and SEBD needs, and that he loves attending school. All participants noted that AP is a place where Tom feels safe and that he can be 'himself'.

The flexibility demonstrated by school, both prior to and during government restrictions, meant that Tom's education and wellbeing was approached in a person-centred and inclusive way. His individualised approaches to learning, such as the focus on working outside and having readily available adult support, has resulted in Tom experiencing a sense of community in school, whereas mainstream was described as an isolating experience for him. The relationships between home and school are considered to be strong, as are those between Tom and teaching staff.

Wilson felt that Tom's time in AP has prevented family breakdown in the home. School staff are aware of Tom's needs and provide him opportunities to experience success, to be praised and validated, and to explore his emotional regulation without him resorting to physical means of communication.

“Yeah it hasn’t changed, no matter if his behaviour has been great, or his behaviour has been quite high risk and quite violent and quite abusive and quite aggressive. It’s not changed in that way at all ... if someone’s kind of escalating you don’t wanna kind of poke the beast and everything like that so sometimes we do withdraw, you know, but then say to him, look, you know, I can see you’re really frustrated, really angry about that, well I’m just going to be over here when you’re ready to come talk or whatever, you know just let him know that we’re not abandoning you, you know and sometimes with him what he says and what he actually needs are totally different, you know he saying f off and then really he wants you to be close to him...”

“You know, we want him here.”

Wilson (lines 325-336 and 465, Appendix P)

9.2.3.2. Subtheme – Appreciation of school.

Tom noted an appreciation of school as a result of spending time away from AP. He appeared to acknowledge that he is settled within AP and that he is making progress there. Periods of government lockdowns appeared to give Tom opportunities to reflect upon what he has, and that school is valuable to him.

“...You weren’t allowed to be in school. And that was when I started to like school more. So, think COVID changed it, definitely.”

Tom (lines 77-78, Appendix Q)

9.2.3.3. Subtheme – Bonding with family.

Another perceived benefit for Tom during government restrictions was time spent with family. Whilst it was recognised to be a period of difficulty, having more bonding time with his father in particular was seen as a positive of Tom’s pandemic experience. Hank seems to inspire Tom, with respect to his practical skills and abilities, and Tom seems to place a lot of value in the projects they do together. When at school, Hank is part of Tom’s ‘safety net’, and remains nearby should Tom need him. It is evident that Tom has a very supportive and loving family.

9.2.3.4. Subtheme – Building skills and resilience.

Some key positives noted during analysis related to how Tom has developed as an individual since the beginning of the pandemic. It was shared that he is developing in curiosity and resilience, and that his emotional regulation skills are progressing, whereby he is now better able to label his feelings and express these to others. Additionally, whilst his confidence in the community has decreased, his independence and autonomy in school seems to have increased, and his engagement in school is noted to be very consistent (with Tom seemingly recognising this too). Tom's interaction with both internal staff and external visitors in school has been noted to strengthen his confidence in socialising and school staff have sought opportunities to help Tom recognise this in himself.

9.3. Case Study B – Finn's experience of COVID-19 measures and restrictions.

Finn is a 19-year-old male who has also attended AP for a significant period of time (approximately 9 years). Finn is described as an individual who is developing in maturity and becoming a 'young man'. Whilst he continues to demonstrate some instances of impulsivity, his progress since the commencement of his placement within AP is noted to be striking. He aspires to join the fire service and is due to begin attending college next year. He lives with his mother, Willow, who participated in this research, and enjoys spending time with his older brother during the weekends. His Teacher, Gilly, was also interviewed.

Figure 4. Introducing the reader to Finn, Willow, and Gilly.

Finn's experience of the pandemic can be summarised by considering three main themes, inclusive of 'Negative outcomes from measures and restrictions', 'Management of the pandemic', and 'Positive factors' (Figure 5).

9.3.1. Theme 1 – Negative outcomes from measures and restrictions.

The first theme within Finn's story relates to how he has been negatively impacted as an individual by government measures, related to COVID-19.

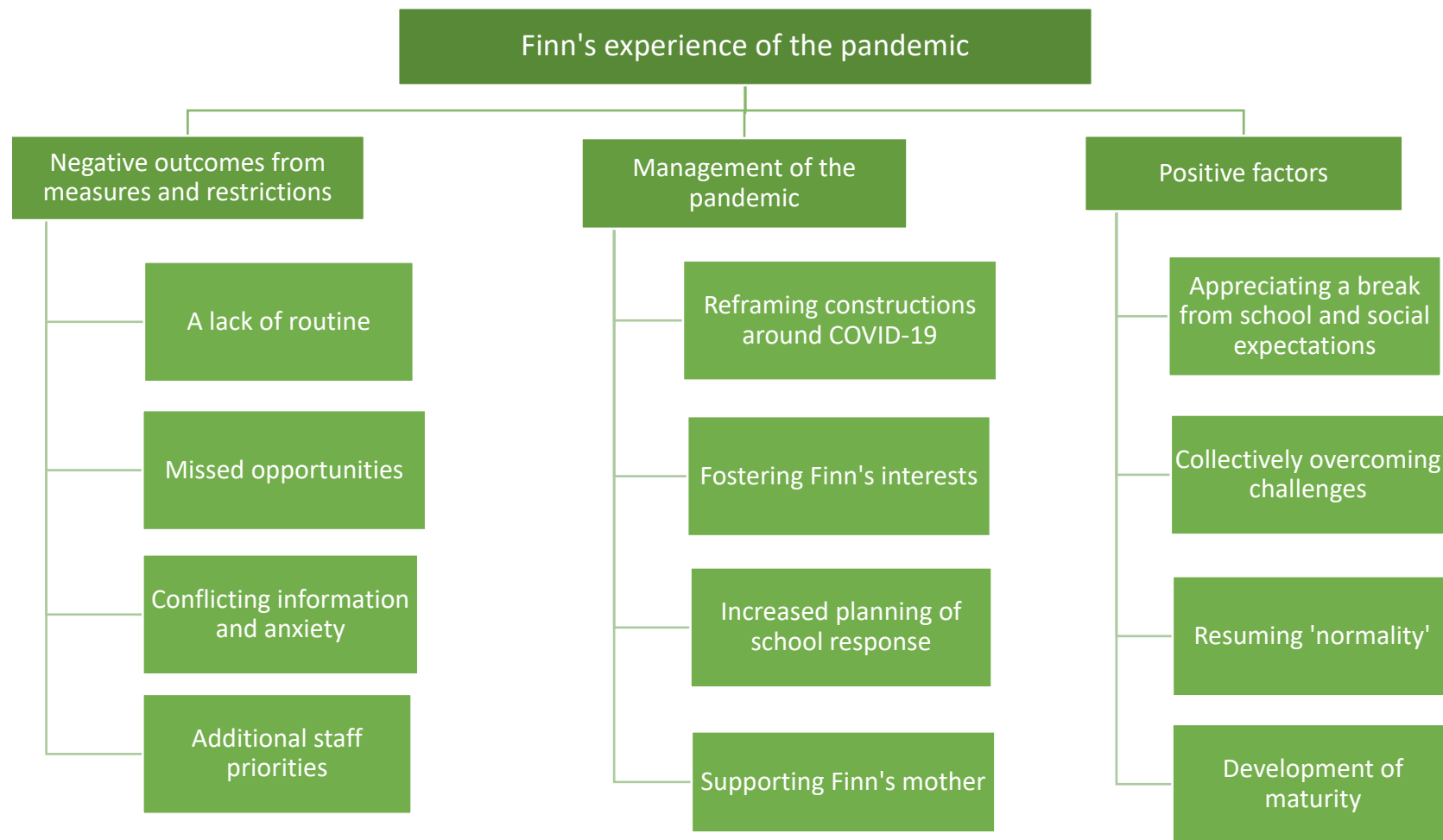


Figure 5. Finn's thematic map.

9.3.1.1. Subtheme – A lack of routine.

Finn's mother, Willow, described his routine as 'out of sorts' during lockdown periods and times spent away from school. She shared that he spent most of his time gaming and would do this at all hours of the day and night. Subsequently, both Finn's eating and sleeping habits were significantly disrupted during lockdown periods. She also shared that when Finn was in mainstream provision they always kept home and school as separate environments, and therefore he would not engage in online learning at home, in spite of school sending the required resources for him to do this. In terms of Finn's organisational skills, the adults supporting him described him as needing several prompts to remain on task or to remember to come into school (pre-pandemic), and therefore this lack of routine, along with Finn's reduced motivation, resulted in him accessing very little learning when he was unable to attend school. Finn shared that along with the 'massive changes' he experienced he feels that he has fallen behind in maths and that he has forgotten some of his previously learned skills.

"Gaming on the computer 24/7, so all his sleep pattern was out, he was up all night and sleeping all day. His eating habits were really bad. Really bad. He wasn't eating proper meals, because obviously he was sleeping at the wrong time. So yeah, his routine was way out of sorts."

Willow (lines 40-43)

9.3.1.2. Subtheme – Missed opportunities.

Along with missing out on the academic elements of schooling, Willow shared that Finn has very few friends in his local area and that his socialisation has been affected by government restrictions, particularly as a number of Finn's friends attend his AP and he couldn't see them. Additionally, although Finn was able to spend some time with his older brother during lockdown periods, he noted that it wasn't 'the same' as they were required to do this in a socially distanced way (e.g., when celebrating Finn's birthday). Finn felt that he wasn't as impacted by lockdowns like everyone else was because he doesn't really go out when he's at home (because he doesn't like to), meaning that when he was required to stay home there was little change for him in this regard. However, as the majority of Finn's social interactions were noted to come

from his AP environment, Finn shared that he used social media applications to message his friends during lockdown periods (and that they still use these platforms now). He also connected with other YP online when playing video games.

When Finn came back to AP, changes were made to the day-to-day running of school sessions which no longer accommodated for bus trips or walks in the local area. This was in line with managing government regulations for social distancing and health and safety measures. This was noted to result in a reduction of freedoms for Finn in AP and appeared to limit his opportunities to demonstrate his independence skills to others, as previously he could do this when navigating social situations in the local community.

9.3.1.3. Subtheme – Conflicting information and anxiety.

One of the challenges experienced by Finn during the pandemic appeared to be related to his understanding of what COVID-19 was and how this may affect him and others in his life. Finn is described as a YP who is still developing his problem-solving skills, and due to exposure to conflicting messages within social media, the adults around Finn felt that the information he accessed independently about the pandemic resulted in some feelings of anxiety for him. Contradictions and changes in the rules (regarding distancing, isolation etc.), along with periods where Finn had access to too much or too little information, appeared to result in frustration and confusion for him about how he should personally respond, along with concerns for the future (e.g., about UK borders being closed, etc.). Finn was noted to be worried about his more vulnerable family members (e.g., those who had pre-existing medical conditions and/or were older) and initially developed some uncomfortable feelings about the pandemic, mostly in response to these worries.

9.3.1.4. Subtheme – Additional staff priorities.

School's response to the pandemic was noted to result in additional meetings and administration time to generate and circulate information between staff and to external agencies. Gilly shared that these additional priorities appeared to interrupt the 'connectedness' between the staff and YP within Finn's class, as they often noticed and commented on the fact that Gilly was 'always in meetings' (line 491). The

movement over to video conferencing software instead of in-person meetings was noted to result in staff seeming to be more 'available' to professionals outside of school and therefore the frequency of such meetings has increased exponentially, leaving less time for the implementation of support in class with YP such as Finn.

"...And that's taking up the classroom more since, certainly since September. So that's a massive negative effect of, of the thing. And we need to get back to face to face because, like, you know, social workers, they will call all these meetings now, because they can just go I'll put a meeting, oh another meeting, and I think that's having a definite detrimental effect, I'm having a few of our kids say, oh, you're always in meetings you're never in lessons."

Gilly (lines 487-491)

9.3.2. Theme 2 – Management of the pandemic.

The second theme within Finn's story relates to how school staff responded during the pandemic to meet Finn's needs and to support his mother.

9.3.2.1. Subtheme – Reframing constructions around COVID-19.

A big part of school's role within the pandemic appeared to relate to helping Finn better understand COVID-19 measures and to provide a context to the information he was receiving. With Finn initially seeming quite anxious about lockdown measures, Gilly noted that he became 'more himself' when more information was explained to him and when he was offered alternative perspectives to those presented on social media and news outlets. Gilly felt that the pandemic was made out to be more serious than it actually was, particularly with respect to teenagers as he noted that they were less likely to be affected should they contract COVID-19. Gilly appeared to feel responsible for being a role model for calm behaviour and to help Finn experience opportunities to see other people resuming their everyday lives, to help reduce his anxiety. This is in line with Gilly's constructions that Finn should be being prepared for 'the world', due to his age and upcoming transition to college.

“We painted a bigger picture than it actually needed to be painted.”

Gilly (lines 143-144)

9.3.2.2. Subtheme – Fostering Finn’s interests.

Like Tom, during the height of the pandemic, an outreach service was offered to Finn and his family to help maintain his connectedness to learning and to keep some kind of routine for him. Whilst initially reluctant to engage due to worries about transmission of coronavirus, Finn began joining in with the teaching staff who visited his home and he was noted to go on several trips into the local community, such as going to the beach, bike riding, dog walking, going for a drive, and going to McDonalds. This support, tailored to Finn’s interests, meant that he was kept busy once a week during the lockdown periods when he was unable to attend school. Finn reflected upon this time and said that now, in hindsight, he wishes he’d taken more opportunities to go out during these times, seemingly valuing this support. Similarly, to Tom, Finn also accesses the new animal enclosure which was introduced to learners when they came back to school.

9.3.2.3. Subtheme – Increased planning of school response.

The amount of planning needed by school to respond to the health and safety implications of government measures was said to drastically increase during the height of the pandemic. Daily staff meetings, critical meetings, and liaison with the school’s Clinical Psychologist resulted in a number of action plans and outcomes for the AP learners in their care. When back in school, Finn noted changes to his timetable (e.g., the start of the school day becoming later) and Gilly shared that Finn’s future goals were also prioritised for support, such as preparing Finn for his transition to college. In hindsight, Gilly felt that the school should have remained open from the start of the pandemic to maintain Finn’s routine, however he identified that school responded to the information they had at the time and that the best was made from the situation and information school were given. The AP remained open through

subsequent lockdowns, and Finn was able to access education during the October and December 2020 'firebreak' periods.

9.3.2.4. Subtheme – Supporting Finn's mother.

Willow shared that she has been grateful for the actions of school and their presence during the pandemic. Gilly shared that daily phone calls from different teaching assistants provided Willow with an opportunity to offload about areas of concern or struggles she was having related to the changes to Finn's education and socialisation. These phone calls acted as an opportunity to regulate parents, maintain a connection between home and school, and to offer feedback about what other parents were doing during lockdown periods. During outreach sessions school staff also helped at home with practical tasks like gardening, painting their fence and helping around the house. Willow noted that Finn's behaviour at home is good and that she was more concerned about the upcoming college transition that he will have at the end of the year (this appeared to be preoccupying her more during interview than the impact of pandemic measures). As Willow has an understanding of ALN (from working in a special school herself and from parenting Finn), school's role in supporting her during this time appeared to be from the perspective of providing her with a continuation of contact with the AP and offering her reassurance. Willow shared that she found it more difficult than Finn during lockdown periods to be away from her support networks, so this help appeared to be gratefully received.

9.3.3. Theme 3 – Positive factors.

The final theme in Finn's story relates to the benefits that were experienced during the height of the pandemic by Finn and his family.

9.3.3.1. Subtheme – Appreciating a break from school and social expectations.

Data analysis identified that whilst Finn encountered some difficulties during the pandemic, the adults supporting him felt that he coped well during lockdown periods. Finn appeared to benefit from having a break from the academic and social expectations of his life and he initially liked being at home, particularly as it gave him time to rest, have lie ins and have some down-time outside of school. Gilly noted that

Finn has difficulties with timekeeping and organising himself for school, particularly following a weekend break. Therefore, time spent outside of school was a welcomed reprieve for Finn. Finn also noted that he also liked the school day starting later, which was a change that happened because of the school's response to the pandemic. Willow shared that Finn can find family events difficult, particularly because of the proximity to others in crowds, and therefore in some ways he has liked social distancing measures.

9.3.3.2. Subtheme – Collectively overcoming challenges.

From speaking to Finn, Willow, and Gilly, it is evident that the relationships between Finn and the adults around him have strengthened during this period of significant change for him. Gilly shared that he has gotten to know Finn so much better during the last year, and that their relationship has vastly improved, and Willow felt that her time spent at home with Finn has brought them closer together. Finn noted that he appreciated the offer of outreach support, and his mother shared that she feels school staff work well with him and understand his needs. Navigating the obstacles and uncertainties of the pandemic together appears to have reinforced that sense of Finn's belonging to an AP, and his mother is also considered to be an important part of the system around him.

Interviewer: "Do you feel like your relationship with Finn is the same as it would be if there hadn't have been a pandemic, or do you think it's different?"

Willow: "No, I think it brought us closer."

Interviewer: "Yeah?"

Willow: "Yeah, definitely."

Interviewer: "Why did you think that happened?"

Willow: "Because we were home together more, just being around each other I think."

Willow (lines 174-181)

9.3.3.3. Subtheme – Resuming ‘normality’.

In the same way as Tom, Finn developed an appreciation for school after spending some time away during lockdown periods. He was noted to be glad to go back to a bit of ‘normality’ and informed his mother that he was ready to be back in school (in spite of enjoying the break). By keeping school open, Finn’s routine was able to resume, and he has been able to re-engage with learning and planning for his college transition.

9.3.3.4. Subtheme – Development of maturity.

In addition to Finn making significant progress since attending AP, Gilly noted that during the pandemic Finn seems to have developed in maturity and attributes this, in part, to how he has been required to respond to the everchanging educational and social landscape he has found himself in during the past year. Finn’s maturity extends to how he has understood and interpreted pandemic regulations, and he has been able to notice benefits for the wider community because of measures (e.g., increased cleanliness).

Finn: “Um honestly I think it’s best for the environment and for people now. Cos obviously before it was literally [inaudible] you would probably get a cold. But now that when it’s doing hand sanitising, masks, the risk of getting, um, getting a cold or the flu now is quite minimum now than it used to be. So, it has –”

Interviewer: “It’s a good thing?”

Finn: “Yeah.”

Finn (lines 63-68)

Although Finn feels that he has had to re-learn some of his academic skills, his teacher felt that the attainment gap has not become wider for him during the pandemic, given that he has been able to resume attending school relatively quickly. Gilly also felt that recent events have not affected Finn’s emotional or behavioural presentation, although he acknowledged that it would be unclear what the impact of government measures and restrictions may be upon Finn in the longer term.

9.4. Case Study C – Athena’s experience of COVID-19 measures and restrictions

At the time of the research, Athena was 14 years old. She is described as experiencing challenges relating to attachment difficulties. She has also attended AP for a number of years (approximately 5 years) and is positively engaging with the school. She is chatty, sociable, and friendly. Athena lives with her maternal grandmother, Saturn, and has contact arrangements in place with her mother. Her Teacher, Venus, also participated in this research.

Figure 6. Introducing the reader to Athena, Saturn, and Venus.

Athena’s experience of the pandemic can be summarised by considering three main themes, inclusive of ‘Negative outcomes from measures and restrictions’, ‘Management of the pandemic’, and ‘Positive factors’ (Figure 7).

9.4.1. Theme 1 – Negative outcomes from measures and restrictions.

9.4.1.1. Subtheme – Limitations due to living with vulnerable relatives.

Athena was noted to have a slightly different experience of COVID-19 lockdowns due to her living with her grandparents and great-grandmother. As vulnerable adults lived in Athena’s home, it was noted that more time was spent apart from each other in the house, particularly when Athena’s grandparents became unwell with COVID-19 themselves. Saturn shared that when she and Athena’s grandfather contracted the illness, they began planning for all eventualities, including what would happen if they passed away from the illness. Saturn shared that Athena would ask them if they were going to die, and that she found it hard to understand the times when her grandmother would be able to leave the house (when well) to go to work but Athena couldn’t leave the house.

Athena was noted to spend more time at home than her peers in AP, in spite of school re-opening and offering students to return. She was also unable to access as much outreach support at home than other AP learners, because of familial concerns of transmission of COVID-19. Athena’s role in the home was noted to significantly change, with her having more responsibilities in the house and adopting more of an

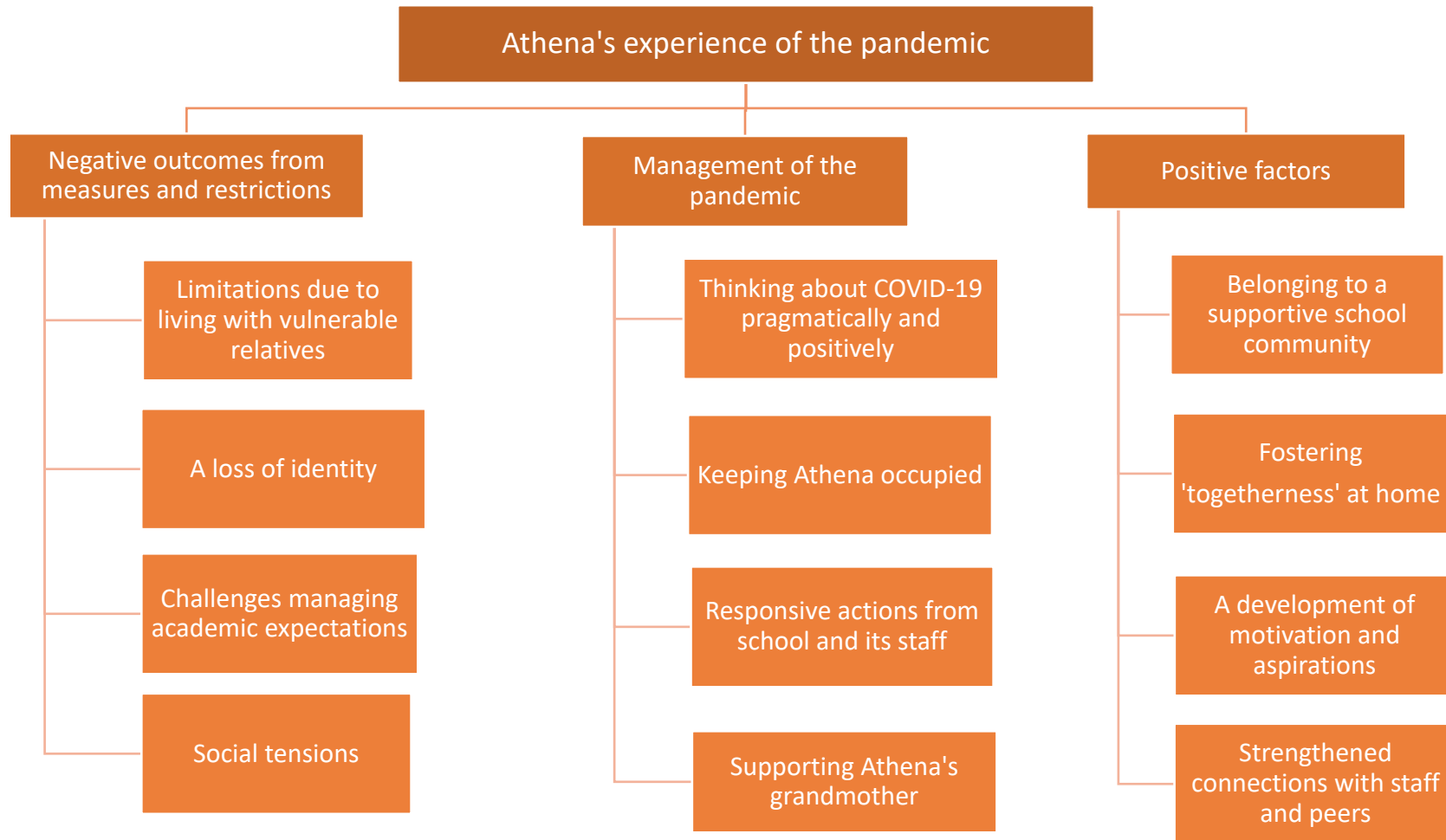


Figure 7. Athena's thematic map.

'adult' role. During the interview with Saturn, it was evident that there was a period where the household felt high levels of stress and pressure, which Saturn felt initially impacted Athena significantly, but that she adapted over time to these changes.

“Some people dropped the shopping off you know she’d bring the shopping in the house and she’d put it away. She cooked for us, had takeaways delivered. To be honest, I’m really proud of her because she, she did manage, it’s weird because there was no choice. There wasn’t an alternative, there was no get out of jail free card or anything.”

Saturn (lines 103-107)

9.4.1.2. Subtheme – A loss of identity.

In line with being unable to access her usual routine, Athena shared feelings of boredom during lockdown periods, and it became evident that her sense of identity shifted significantly when required to stay at home. Athena noted that she had very little to do at home and Venus observed that a significant part of Athena’s sense of self came from her access to extracurricular activities (both in and outside of school), like school plays. In addition to being unable to spend time with her friends at home (or mix with her peers in class), she was also unable to express herself creatively during lockdown periods through participating in preferred activities like drama lessons. Athena is also noted to usually have contact with her mother, however, during lockdown periods these sessions stopped. Her grandmother shared that they had very little support from Social Services during this time and that her Social Worker changed multiple times during a one-year period, which interacted with these processes.

9.4.1.3. Subtheme – Challenges managing academic expectations.

When at home, Athena shared her difficulties keeping up with schoolwork, stating that it has been a difficult process and when she needed help, she felt that she couldn’t access the support she needed to as her grandparents were working. Whilst she recognised that it was initially nice to have a break from her usual routine in AP, she reflected that it made going back to school harder because the work ‘piles on’ during times off (line 158). Venus noted that Athena was most likely to engage in drama

lessons at home but that this was the most effort she put into learning outside of the AP environment. Athena appeared to lose motivation to engage positively with schoolwork when she was home, wanting to sleep in and struggling to motivate and organise herself. Additionally, because of living with vulnerable relatives, her time spent at home (in comparison to Tom and Finn) was much longer, meaning that she missed out on more learning than other AP learners in her provision.

Interviewer: "Have you found it hard or easy to keep up with like schoolwork over this year, how's that been?"

Athena: "I mean it is quite hard because with lockdowns and stuff you haven't worked as much, I've still like been doing a little bit of work, but if you don't know how to start something you can't really tell someone. You can't be like hey can you help me with this and like my Grampy works, so I wouldn't really be able to like ask them and like they're like I'm working so –"

Athena (lines 229-235)

9.4.1.4. Subtheme – Social tensions.

Unlike Tom and Finn, Athena shared that most of her friends are outside of the AP environment (she noted that she finds the students in her class 'annoying'; line 28). Relationships appear to be important to Athena, and she shared that she feels understood by her current friendship group outside of school and that she feels that they communicate well with one another. She appeared to value her friendships outside of school very much, and this seemed to create tensions when considering offers from AP about returning earlier than her friends who attend mainstream education (when her family had agreed that this was a reasonable risk to take). Athena expressed that when offered to come back to school that she felt resistant towards this, as her friends were still learning from home, and she didn't want to seem different to them. This became particularly important to Athena because she met one of these friends during the initial lockdown period and didn't want to cause any disruption to this relationship. When Athena returned to school before her mainstream friends this also became difficult to manage, particularly because she would often be awake for most of the night(s) before school texting her friends who were still learning from home.

9.4.2. Theme 2 – Management of the pandemic.

The second theme within Athena's story relates to how school staff responded during the pandemic to meet Athena and her family's needs, and how Athena personally navigated the difficulties she experienced during lockdown periods.

9.4.2.1. Subtheme – Thinking about COVID-19 pragmatically and positively.

When asked about her constructions of COVID-19 and its accompanying measurements / restrictions, both Athena and her grandmother approached the topic in a rational way, offering balanced perspectives about what the pandemic is and how it has affected them. Athena demonstrated an understanding of COVID-19 symptoms and social distancing regulations, but also shared intrigue about the changes in the world because of the pandemic, such as nature 'taking back' the world (due to the halting of travel and industries that generate pollution). Additionally, she felt that the pandemic has taught the general population more about hygiene, which she saw as a good thing (and is also similar to Finn's constructions of the benefits of the pandemic). She has adapted to wearing a face mask when in her school taxi which was noted by all participants to be a big adjustment for her as she experiences travel sickness, and this worsens when she wears a mask.

Athena shared that she struggled to remember what life was like pre-pandemic, with it feeling like she has been living with the lifestyle changes for a very long time. She noted that a common-sense approach needs to be taken with social distancing measures and that most people aren't following the guidance correctly anyway. Saturn shared some of these feelings and noted that we have 'come through the worst bits' of COVID-19 now (lines 175-176) and that whilst Athena experienced a lot of changes, she recognises that these were out of her control. Saturn and Venus shared that they have been transparent with Athena about how frequent changes, as a result of government restrictions, have created challenges at home and for school staff but that they will navigate these difficulties together, emulating a sense of honesty and pragmatism about the pandemic. For a YP who has experienced significant disruptions to her life so far, it is wondered whether this approach to thinking about COVID-19 has been comforting for Athena.

"I think COVID made us all equal."

Saturn (lines 283-284).

9.4.2.2. Subtheme – Keeping Athena occupied.

As Athena was unable to re-attend AP as soon as Tom or Finn were able to (nor was she able to receive many home visits in the form of outreach support), the adults supporting her noted how it was important to keep her as occupied as possible when spending time at home. Athena was frequently contacted by school staff and her peers in AP through the use of FaceTime, with her speaking to people in AP fairly regularly to maintain her sense of connectedness to school. When at home, she engaged in cooking with her grandmother and went on numerous walks. Saturn noted that the weather affected Athena's enjoyment of lockdown periods and that it was harder to keep her entertained when the weather was poorer. She also shared that Athena is quite independent so spent a fair amount of time occupying herself.

9.4.2.3. Subtheme – Responsive actions from school and its staff.

As previously noted, school staff utilised technology to keep in touch with Athena and contacted her via telephone and email as well as FaceTime to try and support her with her schoolwork at home. Venus reflected that the lockdown periods have now changed how she interprets her role in school, and that she now more frequently checks in with Athena (and other pupils) when they're not in school, whereas previously this may not have happened as consistently. Athena's school are noted to have adapted to government measures by changing the format of the school day, including working in specific groups ('bubbles') to reduce the likelihood of the transmission of COVID-19 around the school. When Athena returned to school, Venus tried to introduce more of the activities that she likes, in response to her missing out on preferred events whilst required to stay at home.

9.4.2.4. Subtheme – Supporting Athena’s grandmother.

When outreach sessions were possible for Athena, she received home visits from school staff. Saturn shared how valuable these sessions were to Athena and herself and expressed a great admiration for school staff. Saturn noted that the readily available support from school, in addition to the ongoing communication, was a significant source of comfort for her during the pandemic. In spite of the difficulties accessing the full range of available help from school, Saturn appeared to value the response of school (much like Tom and Finn’s parents). She shared that school felt like their only real source of connection during the pandemic.

“...She had a laptop, so she was in touch with everybody, lots of chats and what have you, and school were absolutely fantastic, Venus was amazing. When things let up a bit, we had a home visit from school. School was like a solid base, I could phone up and say, this and this and this. It was the only connection really with the outside world.”

Saturn (lines 53-57).

9.4.3. Theme 3 – Positive factors.

The final theme within Athena’s story relates to the positive outcomes from her experience of COVID-19 measures and restrictions.

9.4.3.1. Subtheme – Belonging to a supportive school community.

For Athena, AP is described as a place where she is safe and is accepted for who she is. Athena is noted to have benefitted from the freedom and flexibility of AP and from the extracurricular activities on offer at the school. Venus noted that Athena has made great progress since attending AP and that school is now seen as a safe space for her in which she has been able to develop in confidence. As with Tom and Finn, Athena appears to have also benefitted from belonging to a supportive school community which has acted as a protective buffer during a period of significant change for her. School’s response to Athena and her family during the pandemic was observed to be a positive factor in her experience of pandemic measures and restrictions.

9.4.3.2. Subtheme – Fostering ‘togetherness’ at home.

For Saturn, an unintended outcome of government measures was that her working hours changed, whereby she was able to spend more time at home with Athena during lockdown periods. Saturn shared that she spent the additional time organising her home and spending time with Athena and noticed that she benefitted from having a schedule that was more relaxed at home. For Saturn, a large amount of her time outside of school hours was spent taking Athena to clubs, and she shared that she appreciated spending this time together instead of doing this. Saturn reflected that having more time with Athena meant that they were able to get to know one another better. They also introduced what they called ‘COVID days’ (line 271) where they would stay at home (rather than run errands), relax together, and reconnect as a family. Saturn shared that she felt a real sense of the family supporting one another and that they reintroduced eating together at mealtimes, which she has enjoyed. As a result of these outcomes, Saturn was satisfied with how they, as a family, managed the lockdown periods, and said she wouldn’t have changed how they approached them together.

9.4.3.3. Subtheme – A development of motivation and aspirations.

Athena’s management of difficulties during the lockdown periods, inclusive of increased time spent at home, managing home-schooling, and returning to AP (with reference to her coping with wearing a mask in the taxi and returning to a routine) was noted by the adults supporting her to have developed her resilience during the pandemic. Venus noted that Athena seemed to be happy returning to AP, in spite of finding it difficult to catch up on work, and that she demonstrated a renewed motivation to achieve her goals. Since returning to AP, Athena is noted to be engaged in her learning and is focused on what she wants to achieve in the longer term for her future.

9.4.3.4. Subtheme – Strengthened connections with staff and peers.

Whilst Athena shared that most of her friends are outside of AP, Venus reflected that the ‘bubble’ system in school has required her to spend more time with the peers in her class and that this has unintentionally resulted in her becoming closer to these YP. Venus shared that lockdown periods have also resulted in a strengthened connection

between Venus and Athena, even with her spending more time at home than other AP learners. Venus noted that Athena has had more contact with her than she usually would (as classes would usually have multiple teachers, but now Athena only works with Venus), and that Athena has gained an insight into Venus' life, which she may not have had there not been a pandemic. For Venus, she also shared that this 'connectedness' was also important for her own wellbeing during the pandemic, and that she has valued the newer ways of working and checking in with pupils (which may not have happened had there not been the recent government measures and restrictions).

"It was like we all helped each other, kids helped us, we helped the kids, that's how it felt."

Venus (lines 198-199).

9.5. Summary.

The data analysis process revealed that the experiences of Tom, Finn, and Athena, (whilst attending the same AP) are markedly different. The findings will be explored further during the 'Discussion' section of this paper.

10. DISCUSSION

10.1. Research Questions (RQs):

This study explored how COVID-19 restrictions have affected YP who attend AP and how APs as systems have responded to such measures. This section of the doctoral thesis will reflect upon how the study has answered the research questions, how it relates to the pre-existing literature on the topic, its strengths and limitations, and implications for next steps.

10.1.1. Answering RQ1: How have COVID-19 measures and restrictions affected YP who attend AP?

Tom, Finn, and Athena were all uniquely affected by the government measures and restrictions that were put in place as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, whilst data analysis identified that they shared overarching themes relating to their experiences, the presentation of these within the subthemes varied greatly.

During the first COVID-19 lockdown period (commencing in March 2020), all YP in the study were initially unable to attend their AP due to government measures. Additionally, they all experienced changes to their social lives because of this. For Tom, Finn, and Athena, their AP was described as a stable educational environment for them that they enjoyed attending, and disruption to their access of such a secure base had adverse consequences for all participants.

The data analysis findings lend support to the pre-existing literature that highlights that APs are positive environments for YP with SEBD needs (Michael & Frederickson, 2013), and for Tom and Finn, their school provided them with the majority of their social connections and relationships (as well as being a place where they can learn). For Tom and Finn, AP became a source of like-minded friends, and the absence of these friendships during lockdown periods proved challenging for Tom in particular. Tom found it difficult to notice any positive aspects of COVID-19 measures, and his mental health was described to worsen during lockdown periods. This is in line with pre-existing literature relating to the impact of social isolation and loneliness on CYP

(Loades et al., 2020; Bignardi et al., 2021; Cooper et al., 2021). This isolation, in combination with Tom being unable to leave the house and access his usual coping mechanisms to manage challenges (e.g., outdoor activities), appeared to trigger his stress responses and was said to exacerbate his pre-existing SEBD (Theis et al., 2021; Johnstone & Boyle, 2018). For Athena, however, she identified that her friends attend mainstream provision, and therefore was less affected by this lack of contact with her peers in AP (but did miss seeing her friends outside of school). For all YP in the study, an increase in mobile phone and computer game use was observed, particularly from the perspectives of Athena and Finn, who used such platforms to connect with others, providing further support to the pre-existing literature (Fernandes et al., 2020). Finn's mother appeared to be more concerned than Finn was about him missing out on his school-based connections, as he felt that his social needs were being met through the use of online platforms.

In terms of how their unique household compositions interacted with YP's experiences of pandemic measures, several factors appeared to contribute to each individual learner. Firstly, familial and school constructions of COVID-19 varied amongst the triads, and these beliefs seemed to be mirrored by the corresponding YP in the case studies. For these families, constructions of COVID-19 played a key role in familial response to the pandemic, and to the AP's response, providing evidence for the benefit of adopting a social constructionist lens within the research (Burr, 2015). For example, for Tom's family the pandemic restrictions were an overwhelmingly negative factor in their lives and were taken very seriously by Hank and Wilson. Whilst this may have been influenced by the negative response(s) that Tom had to the pandemic, conversely, the adults' constructs could also have influenced how seriously Tom interpreted the pandemic to be, potentially demonstrating a cyclical relationship between members of the triad's perceptions of the experience. These findings are also in keeping with the systemic lens adopted in the research (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), with all parts of the triad affecting each other's views and experiences. Additionally, if viewed from a social constructionist lens, it could be reasoned that the unique discourses held by home and school have resulted in specific responses in each triad, such as reactive responses to 'repair' difficulties, versus 'going with the flow' and seeing what happens (Burr, 2015).

Each household in the triads competed with personal challenges because of pandemic measures, and it is important to note that adverse outcomes that occurred during lockdown periods may not only be attributed to difficulties observed because of COVID-19 measures. For Tom, he had the significant life event of moving house during the first lockdown, and also shares a home with siblings who have complex needs. For Athena, she was required to take up a caregiving role during the pandemic and for Finn, he was noted to be worried about the health of his relatives at the start of the pandemic, both of which experiences are consistent with previous literature (Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2020a). Prior literature explores how maternal resilience interacts with the emotional health of CYP (Benassi et al., 2021), and it is wondered how parental response, in presentation of these challenges, have interacted with such processes. Whilst Saturn and Willow immediately responded to the pandemic by keeping their households contained, Hank was keen to get Tom back to school as quickly as possible, which could have positively affected Tom's feelings of agency at this time. The actions taken by Saturn and Willow during the pandemic could arguably have been done to maintain their household equilibriums, in an effort to preserve what they could and to regain control during an unpredictable time (Dowling & Osborne, 2002), and perhaps demonstrate some of their constructions relating to how concerned they were about the transmission of COVID-19 at the time of the interviews and the previous lockdown period(s).

For the YP in the study, time spent at home did result in some positive outcomes. For Athena, her family were able to reconnect more deeply and reinstate more traditional ways of 'being' at home after being relieved from the pressures of schooling and extracurricular activities (Couper-Kenney & Riddell, 2021), and Willow felt similarly that time spent with Finn outside of his usual routine positively affected their relationship. Tom benefitted from having opportunities to bond with his father when engaging in practical activities together, supporting the literature suggesting that time spent outside of school can be used to develop skills and participate in hobbies (Southend EPS, 2020). However, whilst some skills were notably gained during the pandemic (namely, resilience, maturity, and flexibility), the unpredictability of the lifestyle changes did result in some loss in confidence and autonomy for both Tom and Finn in particular.

In terms of having time away from the educational demands of school, the YP in the study shared mixed responses to being away from AP, varying in how much they 'missed' being in school and how happy they were to return. Finn appeared to have valued spending time at home the most and appreciated the reprieve from academic expectations that the first lockdown provided (McCluskey et al., 2021). Athena initially liked having a break from school but found returning very difficult because of consequently falling behind with her work. Tom, as previously noted, thoroughly disliked being home and was very happy to return to AP as quickly as possible. Whilst all YP within the research had varying experiences during lockdown periods, they all appeared to share a renewed appreciation for school and/or learning, with Tom being especially happy to return to his routine, and Athena demonstrating increased levels of self-agency and motivation to meet her academic goals after her extended period of absence from her school environment. This has translated into increased levels of engagement with AP upon these learners' return to education, post-lockdown(s).

10.1.2. Answering RQ2: How have APs responded to such measures and restrictions when supporting the YP attending AP, and how has this been received by CYP and parents/caregivers?

The AP in this study responded quickly during the pandemic to meet the needs of learners and their families. During the first lockdown, they offered an increased number of check ins by telephone, FaceTime, email, and in person through an outreach service. As the provision is an independent school, they also re-opened to students earlier than most mainstream schools, offering learners the option to return sooner than their mainstream counterparts (when the YP were ready to do so).

The approaches of AP during lockdowns were noted to be appreciated by the parents/caregivers and YP in the study and support the pre-existing literature highlighting the importance of effective relationships between home and school (Page, 2021). When conversing with school staff during the interviews, it was clear that staff perceive their role to include working with the whole family system, and not just the YP who attends AP. Additionally, the response of AP has provided families with a 'constant' during the pandemic and strengthened their feelings of belonging to the school community, which was also noted to result in better engagement when the YP

eventually returned to school (Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Craggs & Kelly, 2018). When back in school, it was noted that the AP used flexible and person-centred approaches when providing learning opportunities for the YP in the study, in spite of incorporating some more restrictive changes to the school day (e.g., socialising and working in bubbles). Such attitudes towards working with the AP population are noted to promote engagement in these settings and further consolidate positive working relationships between staff and YP (Michael & Frederickson, 2013; Lloyd & O'Regan, 1999; Nicholson & Putwain, 2015).

A perceived challenge of school reopening during this time was that the pandemic necessitated some newer ways of working, such as an increased number of virtual meetings with external professionals, which interrupted these processes (from the perspective of staff and students).

10.1.3. Answering RQ3: What are the implications for EPs and their services when supporting YP in AP who may have/are experiencing challenges as a result of COVID-19 measures and restrictions?

EPs are well-placed to support CYP, families, and school staff, and can apply psychology broadly to bring about change within systems, working holistically and adopting person-centred practices (Welsh Government, 2016). EPs are able to apply their skills both directly with CYP, their families and school staff, or may work indirectly through methods such as delivering training or developing policy or resources for schools (Welsh Government, 2016).

When considering the responses from participants pertaining to the impact of the pandemic on AP learners, it is reasoned that EPs could assist in numerous ways both during and post-lockdown measures. The AP in the study benefitted from the support of their own Clinical Psychologist, who assisted teaching staff with ways forward and offered guidance related to crisis management and bereavement. For provisions that do not have access to such input, EPs could adopt a similar role, using their unique knowledge and skillset to work in a comparable way. Utilising person-centred and holistic approaches, EPs could also support students with transitions back into school

following home learning, assisting with the understanding of a child or YP's individual needs and helping with the development of a plan for their reintegration. Alternatively, YP may be moving on to post-16 provisions and could benefit from EP input with respect to the planning of this change in educational placement, given that there may have been disruptions to how these transitions are usually conducted due to COVID-19 measures.

For Tom and Finn in particular, they appeared to experience difficulties relevant to how they processed information about the pandemic, noting that conflicting messages in the media resulted in uncertainty and uncomfortable feelings for them. EPs could support schools in their information sharing processes, inclusive of (but not limited to) supervising the development of resources that assist with this, such as social stories.

In terms of support for school staff, the research identified that the teachers participating within this study have been required to significantly modify their day-to-day practices to adapt to the demands of government measures and restrictions, along with managing additional adverse consequences of the pandemic. During (and after) the interviews it was noted by the teachers participating that they had not yet had time to stop and take stock of their experiences of the pandemic, sharing that they have benefited from reflecting upon their recent practice and the impact this has had on AP learners. Moving forward, EPs could be well-placed to offer professional supervision sessions to teaching staff, providing them with a protected space to explore their own practice and wellbeing and to assist them in planning for the changes they are observing within their education provision(s).

In addition to working in a preventative way, EPs could also support schools when responding to unanticipated challenges, such as family illness and bereavement. This could be achieved through individual consultation with school staff, work with families, or providing training to APs (such as Critical Incident training).

10.2. Strengths and limitations of the research, and next steps.

10.2.1. Strengths and unique contributions.

The study offers a unique contribution to the existing literatures as it adopts a lesser observed approach to data collection with the AP population, given that it gathered information from YP in a triangulated way and included the views of the adults supporting AP learners within their individual systems. This assisted the researcher in considering the impact of the pandemic on YP holistically and supported fact-checking processes in the study. The use of semi-structured interviews also allowed for an inductive approach to data analysis to be undertaken, allowing for the respondents to guide the study (as opposed to working with pre-defined assumptions of how AP learners may have been affected by the pandemic). Additionally, school staff shared that the research gave them the opportunity to reflect upon their practice during the pandemic and to consider what has worked well, meaning that it unintentionally supported their professional development during such a difficult time for YP and schools.

The research utilised rapport building opportunities to build trust with participants in the study and approached data collection with sensitivity. Involving the YP in the research process (including them choosing the interview location, pseudonyms, colloquial terms of COVID-19, and engaging in 'research-free' talk), resulted in positive engagement with the study and helped to preserve the wellbeing of the participants post-interview(s). The researcher also took care to conduct the interviews in a specific order, with staff members being interviewed first. As a staff member was required to chaperone the YP to their interviews, there was a possibility that this could be the same staff member that was/was going to be interviewed, and for this reason they were interviewed first to avoid biases (if hearing the YP's views before they were consulted themselves).

10.2.2. Limitations of the research and next steps.

In terms of limitations of the research, the study focuses on the constructs of nine people within three separate YP-parent/caregiver-staff triads, which is a relatively small sample. These triads were all connected to the same AP, and value could have

been added by expanding this research to other AP settings. Furthermore, data analysis approaches which provide an increased depth of analysis, such as Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009), could have added value to this research (however, for this to be appropriate, a more consistent and homogenous sample would be preferable). Next steps for future research may factor in such considerations when exploring the impact of the pandemic on AP learners.

With the participant sample in mind, it is wondered whether the researcher could have taken more risks by reaching out to families who were less engaged with the AP recruited for the study. The recruitment process for this research was relatively straightforward and may be reflective of how the families in the study already work well with school, potentially representing some level of 'order' within their home circumstances. It's wondered what could have happened if the research had attempted to include families who presented as 'disengaged' from the AP, and how pandemic measures and restrictions have affected them.

Whilst all YP participated and managed well within interviews, the research could have also explored their views more creatively (e.g., by using visual means of data collection, such as drawings; Fargas-Malet et al., 2010). This could be a consideration for future research and could provide additional information and a depth of understanding to this population.

Lastly, future research may seek to prioritise choosing in-person interviews for the parents/caregivers, as, upon reflection, it may have been easier to interpret the body language and non-verbal cues of parents if these were held in person.

11. CONCLUSION

This research explored the impact of COVID-19 measures and restrictions on AP learners, from the perspective of the YP themselves, their respective parents/caregivers, and a member of school staff who knows them well. Three research questions were chosen to consider the impact of the pandemic on AP learners, and themes were generated, relative to their experiences in response to their participation in semi-structured interviews. Data analysis indicates that, whilst some commonalities are present amongst YP, their interpretations of the events surrounding the pandemic are unique and individual to each triad. The data provides evidence for the pre-existing literature pertaining to the facilitators and barriers of YP attending AP, as well as that relating to the impact of the pandemic on CYP. It is hoped that the findings from this research will support an informed response to working with schools, inclusive of APs, during the pandemic. It also hopes to provide additional suggestions for how to positively engage AP learners with research, growing the body of literature relating to their views and experiences.

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What can we learn from COVID-19? An investigation into the impact of COVID-19 measures and restrictions on young people (YP) attending alternative provision (AP).

PART 3: CRITICAL REVIEW

Word count: 5,279

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper offers a critical analysis of the processes undertaken within the doctoral research and the implications for the practice of Educational Psychologists (EPs). It intends to offer a reflective and reflexive account of the decisions which formed the research and how they have resulted in findings which contribute to the existing information and literature, relevant to the field. This paper is written in the first person to assist with self-reference and to better accommodate the personal reflections which are shared throughout the paper that pertain to the researcher's doctorate journey.

2. APPRAISAL OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS AND PRACTITIONER

Firstly, the appraisal will explore the reasonings behind the research topic and provide a critique of some of the subsequent methodological choices.

2.1. Development of the research.

2.1.1. Topic selection.

I have always had an interest in the experiences of children and young people (CYP) who attend Alternative Provision (AP), with such curiosities extending from my time spent working in AP as an agency Teaching Assistant (TA), right up until my more recent encounters within the field as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP). The constructs I held about AP learners, whilst varied, often appeared to circle back to the consistencies I observed relating to the role of pupil and staff relationships and engagement, with positive relationships often resulting in this sense of 'community' within APs (particularly when this had followed a 'departure' of some kind from mainstream provision, such as a managed move or exclusion). The role of a sense of community within systems such as AP has always fascinated me, particularly with respect to reintegration to mainstream settings and the factors that facilitate or hinder such processes. Whilst my initial thesis ideas related to such themes, over the course of a six-month period the global pandemic drastically changed what I felt could be achieved within that piece of research, so instead, I turned my attention and reflections to how the government measures and restrictions may have impacted the group of

learners I had become so passionate about. Some questions I asked myself included: *'How are AP learners coping with such significant changes happening to their lives?'* and *'If they felt connected to their AP, how have the inevitable disruption(s) to their important social connections affected them?'* I, with the support of those around me, felt I would be able to conduct some insightful research into a lesser heard population of vulnerable learners, and so the process of this doctoral research began.

2.1.2. Construction of the literature review.

Given that the government measures experienced by the world globally could be argued to be a relatively novel phenomenon, I felt that careful consideration of the literature relating to the topic would be crucial in telling the story of how such lifestyle differences might translate into affecting AP learners. When considering how to approach the review for this research, it was important for me to define AP clearly, demonstrating my intentions around exploring the potential disruption of connectedness between AP and its learners, because of the pandemic. In this case, AP was considered as provisions that were a separate 'entity' to mainstream schools and other educational options, such as home-schooling arrangements.

The chosen literature considered the experiences of CYP within the United Kingdom (UK) rather than in Wales alone, despite there being some variations in how AP is constructed within the UK itself (McCluskey et al., 2015), to avoid narrowing it too far and limiting what findings about AP could be accessed. This felt relevant when considering not only the factors that facilitate and prevent AP learners from engaging with education, but also how CYP as a whole population were affected by the pandemic. Given that countries outside of the UK may have approached the management of the pandemic (e.g., social distancing regulations) differently, containing exploration of the effects of measures upon CYP within the UK alone also seemed appropriate.

When considering contextual factors relating to AP, research that highlighted the views of AP learners was prioritised over that which explored parental or staff constructs, with the aim to reduce any potential political or external influences affecting how I represented AP from the perspective of CYP. However, in terms of

understanding the impact of the pandemic on CYP as a population, a more holistic perspective was taken during the review and considered feedback from not only CYP but also from parents/caregivers and education staff, relevant to the impact of recent years upon CYP in the UK. This approach was selected with the aim of representing as many social and systemic influences as possible that could be followed up within the present study (such findings included the role of social media use and reduced physical activity, amongst others; Theis et al., 2021; Fernandes et al., 2020).

In terms of the inclusion and exclusion criteria for the research, literature pertaining to the context of AP included relevant research from 2011 until the present day. The exceptions to this rule included literature which added to the understanding of the context of the changes within the AP landscape or reflected the government legislation or psychological models that helped to explain such information. Chosen research relating to the impact of COVID-19 and its measures/restrictions dated from 2020 until the present day. The original intentions of the research were to conduct a systematic review for Part 1B of the literature review. However, after exploring this in more depth, I felt as though the topic area was too novel and contained too many focal points (e.g., the impact of COVID-19 measures on mental health, education, socialisation, physical exercise, etc.) to be represented by a review of this kind. This made a qualitative evidence synthesis more practical and suitable for the needs of the research (Grant & Booth, 2009). However, it is recognised that there is value in the rigor of systematic reviews, and therefore for Part 1B ensured that I searched for the pre-existing literature in a systematic way and reviewed studies thoroughly against the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

2.1.3. Development of the research questions.

The research questions were composed with an attempt for them to remain free of potential hypotheses about outcomes specifically related to coronavirus measures and restrictions. I was careful to exclude researcher constructs and biases about whether AP learners would be positively or negatively affected during the pandemic, however I felt that this was difficult to avoid when considering the third research question, which pertains to implications for EPs (Figure 8). This question potentially infers some biases towards the construct that YP are likely to have encountered difficulties during the

course of the pandemic. However, this inclusion felt reasonable (given the literature findings).

Supervision sessions provided me with a valuable space for reflection upon my research intentions and goals. Specifically, meetings with my supervisor offered increased opportunities to critically analyse the purpose and function of this study, in addition to reflecting upon the available research surrounding the topic and what gaps were currently absent in the literature. Supervision sessions acted as a forum that helped me consider how I could make the study meaningful and fit for purpose. It is felt that the research questions are reflective of these considerations.

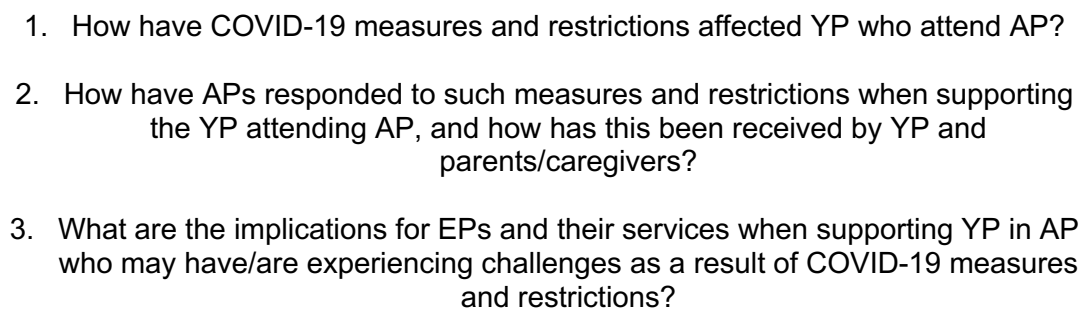
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1. How have COVID-19 measures and restrictions affected YP who attend AP?
 2. How have APs responded to such measures and restrictions when supporting the YP attending AP, and how has this been received by YP and parents/caregivers?
 3. What are the implications for EPs and their services when supporting YP in AP who may have/are experiencing challenges as a result of COVID-19 measures and restrictions?

Figure 8. Research questions.

2.2. Research paradigm and methodology.

2.2.1. Data collection and building rapport with participants.

As a researcher it was incredibly important to me to authentically capture YP voice and to gain a representative account of their experiences during the pandemic. With the understanding that engaging vulnerable learners such as this can be difficult, particularly if their education setting misunderstands the intentions of the research or is uncomfortable with these (Macnab, Visser, & Daniels, 2007), I knew that my biggest chance of success relied upon building rapport with participants and the AP setting. Multiple video conferencing meetings were held with the gatekeeper of the research at an early stage, which outlined the expectations and boundaries of the study and promoted connectedness and communication lines between myself and the AP.

Following this, I was offered a point of contact within the school who facilitated organising participants and the practical elements of the research, (such as physical spaces to hold the interviews), and the sharing of information (e.g., consent and debrief forms). This way of working had unintended benefits with respect to data collection processes, because relevant contextual information or participants' constructs about the pandemic were mostly contained to the interview times (where this was recorded, and I was present). If I had been able to converse more freely with participants outside of interview periods, there may have been a risk of individuals sharing information which could have been more difficult to record and evidence within the research.

The second stage of rapport building within my research included attending the setting a week prior to data collection to meet the YP and staff taking part in the interviews. During this visit I remained outdoors (where the YP were described as most at ease) and engaged with the learners using 'research-free chat' after my initial introduction to them. This time spent getting to know them and their preferences was crucial to my understanding of how to make them as comfortable as possible during the interview process. I asked them about their preference of interview venue towards the end of my meeting with them and began to set the scene of what would happen on the day of data collection. I did not offer the YP the choice of day and time of their interview and wonder now, with hindsight, whether this should have been done. When considered retrospectively, the YP's interviews could have occurred during a time where they were engaged in a preferred learning activity, meaning that I may have been interrupting something that was important to them. This could have affected rapport building with participants and their feelings of wellbeing. Additionally, given that the world (at that point) was at a heightened awareness in relation to social distancing, I found that following such guidance and allowing additional physical space between myself and the YP at times felt inauthentic in representing the interest I was feeling towards them. I felt that this acted as a barrier to conveying the responsiveness and warmth I sought to demonstrate upon meeting them. I also wondered whether, had I arranged interviews myself and had not used the administrative support available, I would have had more opportunities to strengthen relationships with the adults participating in the research and to provide more clarity around the intentions of the study prior to data collection. I was able to meet with the staff beforehand but

did not speak to the parents/caregivers within the triads until they were interviewed. In hindsight I could have built more rapport and familiarity with the parents/caregivers in the study before their interviews began, which may have created more natural flowing conversations when exploring their views.

As previously noted, interviews were conducted in person with all participants except the parents/caregivers, who were reached by telephone. Following measures to ensure the face-to-face interviews were conducted safely and responsibly meant using well-ventilated rooms and sitting in a socially distanced way. Unfortunately, open windows resulted in a need for me to contain and redirect participants when they could hear a moderate amount of unanticipated noise which came into the room from outside. I felt that, at times, these interruptions disrupted the flow of the conversations, particularly for the AP learners who frequently were distracted (this additionally could have impacted their sense of safety during the interviews). However, at those times I checked that participants were comfortable to continue, and the interruptions became manageable and easier to regulate as time passed. We were also on the second floor of an administration building during the interviews, and therefore there were no concerns around confidentiality and being overheard even with the windows remaining open.

Whilst being aware that the YP within the research may also have additional learning needs (ALN) outside of their social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) which could inhibit their abilities to access the interviews (Welsh Government, 2019), I tried to ensure that my questions were pitched appropriately to the YP and that I prevented them from feeling overwhelmed or anxious during data collection processes. I used jargon-free language and sought to inject humour into the interviews to lighten the atmosphere for participants (including asking the YP what they wanted 'COVID-19' to be called during the conversations, resulting in some interesting answers!). In hindsight, I wonder whether different means of gathering YP views could have been undertaken instead of/in addition to semi-structured interviews, such as using visual tools or drawing activities (Fargas-Malet et al., 2010). However, perhaps from a fear of the time pressures of a doctoral thesis, this was not explored. I did also consider completing a Q-Sort activity with participants, but I was uncomfortable with making assumptions around the YP's potential experiences during the pandemic and

missing out on important information by adopting this method (Coogan & Herrington, 2011). Whilst I still feel that an additional measure for the YP could have added value, feedback from parents and staff indicated that rapport was quickly built with them, meaning that they were able to engage positively with the interview processes.

2.2.2. The role of ethics.

This doctoral research was presented to the Cardiff University School of Psychology Ethics Committee prior to its commencement in 2021. During this study there has always been a strong ethical focus, particularly relating to the wellbeing of the AP learners being interviewed. As I was unaware of their individual vulnerabilities and personalities prior to meeting them, I was extremely conscious of ensuring that they could not come to any additional stress or harm by sharing their constructs relevant to their recent experiences. Adams (2008) noted how such concerns can limit researchers in terms of their willingness to ask questions or to seek deeper meaning(s) during data collection processes, and I am certainly in agreement that this factored into how I approached speaking with participants, particularly during the YP interviews. From having an understanding of the needs of such learners, and how relationships with unknown adults could be difficult for them, I sought to minimise any feelings of awkwardness that they may have had and, in hindsight, perhaps did not offer enough space for elaboration during discussions when I noticed silences or feelings of hesitation from the YP. I've interpreted my interjections (as a response to these moments) as a fear of causing emotional distress to the YP and ensuring that their wellbeing wasn't compromised during the interviews. I created a post-interview checklist which was completed with the AP learners and their chaperones (member of school staff) following each YP interview, which asked questions around how they were post-discussion and whether they wanted any follow-up support in relation to what we had talked about. I also, privately, double checked their responses with their corresponding chaperone to confirm that their mood and temperament remained unaffected by the conversation that had just taken place, in case the YP felt embarrassed by sharing that they were adversely affected by our conversations. All AP learners stated that they did not experience any discomfort or distress during the discussions held.

As a practitioner who strives to create a sense of attunement and to evidence active listening skills, I encountered difficulties when navigating the information sharing of participant experiences across triads. Most notably I felt a pressure to demonstrate to participants that individuals within the triads had been heard and that I had taken note of their views, but I was aware that I also needed to protect their responses due to confidentiality purposes. So, when asked by others in a YP's triad what they had shared about a topic, I noticed a tension between demonstrating that I had paid attention to the information, versus reinforcing boundaries about how much of those details could be shared (not only due to confidentiality reasons but to prevent biases occurring in the interviews). Surprisingly I had not anticipated this challenge in advance. However, I feel that it was managed appropriately and respectfully to those in the triads. When this situation occurred, I offered smaller pieces of information to participants in response to their questions, without alluding to more significant or personal details shared by other participants. This showed others in the triad that I had been paying attention during the interviews (which supported the maintenance of rapport with participants) without overstepping the ethical boundaries of confidentiality.

2.2.3. Participants.

The AP in which I recruited my participants were extremely helpful throughout and sought to accommodate my inclusion and exclusion criteria (which was outlined fairly early on in the research process). In hindsight I wonder whether I could have been braver in taking a risk in working with AP learners and families who were less engaged with the school system, as myself and the gatekeeper reflected that the YP and parents recruited for the research were well-known to the school and had been involved in other projects in the past (related to external professionals gathering information etc.). Following data collection and analysis I wondered whether families who perhaps were deemed as more 'disengaged' or 'vulnerable' could have been more representative of the population I sought to gain views from. However, I recognise that it would have been much more difficult to collect data with such YP (again, perhaps lending itself to research that uses other methods instead of / in addition to semi-structured interviews). When exploring this as an option I noticed resistance from myself and, again, a potential fear of my goals as a researcher being unmet. However, this reflection should not minimise or take away from the needs of

the YP selected to participate within this research (nor those of their families). This reflection simply seeks to highlight that perhaps what was offered in the research findings may not have been in line with my initial recruitment intentions which related to AP learners with more complex and challenging home environments (given that in the present study the home environments were ordered enough to be able to participate in the research, whereas families with additional complexities may have been harder to engage).

2.2.4. Ontology, epistemology, and data analysis.

The interview data was analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Initially, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009) was considered, however this was not used as it was felt that the triads lacked homogeneity in experiences, age, and SEBD needs.

Reflexive thematic analysis lends itself to the ontological and epistemological stances taken in the research (namely critical realist and interpretivist perspectives), as it recognises that the relative 'truths' experienced by participants will be viewed in a secondary way, through multiple lenses (i.e., people) and retrospectively (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). I felt that strength was added to the analysis by recognising how my own subjective constructs would interact with the data gathered, and how the punctuation of when the data analysis was conducted (i.e., post literature review) could shape my interpretation of the findings from the interviews (highlighted in the empirical paper of this research).

Upon reflection, a constructivist epistemology could also have been considered for the research as it can marry well with a thematic analysis approach (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). However, constructivism posits that there is no objective 'truth' available to researchers, and, whilst I respect this difference, I wanted to emphasise how the experiences YP have had during the pandemic are representative of their 'truths' about events, even if this has been received in a secondary way. Furthermore, with the understanding that "...realities are socially constructed entities that are under constant internal influence" from social, political, and cultural values, amongst others (Scotland, 2012 p.13), I felt that this was congruent with the systemic lens that I wanted

to utilise across research activities, from participant selection to data analysis. Such approaches to this study have resulted in a holistic means of data collection and its consideration of the impact of the pandemic.

I sought to undertake an inductive analysis, whereby the voices of participants led the generated themes, rather than pre-set themes determining the analysis approach. However, even when doing this, I found that clear commonalities were present within the themes across triads, and that it was the generation of sub-themes that demonstrated the marked differences in AP learner experience. I was surprised by the reoccurring themes that presented themselves during the data analysis process, and at the start of analysing each triad I sought to avoid biases that could occur from being exposed to previous findings within the analysis process (in support of an inductive approach). The analysis findings suggest that the AP learners all had positive and negative experiences of coronavirus measures and restrictions, and that they all received a similar offer of support from their AP (a provision in which they felt safe and secure). The differences in the data appeared to come from how the school's offer was engaged with by the YP, as this appeared to occur at varying levels (e.g., relating to outreach support uptake), and due to varying family compositions and circumstances (e.g., relative's health needs/vulnerabilities). Had the YP within the research attended different APs, perhaps the themes generated could have been more variable, particularly relating to AP response.

2.2.5. The role of the researcher within data collection and analysis.

As previously noted, it was important for me to build a positive relationship with the YP within the research and to ensure they were comfortable during data collection processes. My preoccupation with this goal in mind, I felt, acted as a barrier to me allowing enough space for reflection during the YP interviews. If the YP being interviewed gave short answers or a silence began to become evident I noticed that I was less comfortable with this than when this happened during the adult interviews. The worry that the YP were experiencing discomfort, when they may have just been processing the information shared in discussion, appeared to trigger my own stress response about firstly, whether they were not enjoying themselves, and secondly, about not getting the information I needed for the research. This resulted in me

frequently filling silences or interjecting with questions or commentary when, upon reflection, those spaces could have comfortably remained empty and perhaps would have generated more dialogue as it would have felt less adult-led. This tension also became evident during the telephone interviews with parents/caregivers, and I have considered this as a reflection of having difficulties interpreting non-verbal cues and body language (and therefore 'rescuing' the interview to ensure that the discussions continued to flow). In hindsight, interviewing parents/caregivers using video conferencing software, instead of speaking to them on the telephone, may have assisted with the difficulties I experienced with conversational turn-taking.

Additionally, my personal thoughts/beliefs about participants' constructs during the interviews certainly interacted with data collection and analysis processes. I noticed that, as discussions progressed, I had developed formulations and ideas around how the YP had been affected by COVID-19 measures. I realised that, as I conducted additional interviews, these perceptions became difficult to compartmentalise, and altered how I approached subsequent interviews (e.g., with parents and caregivers, who were interviewed last). When analysing the data, I did not engage in member checking (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) with participants and wondered retrospectively whether the generated themes should have been cross-referenced with them for confirmation of their authenticity in telling the stories of participants. Peer checking of information and themes was also excluded from data analysis (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). However, I do not perceive this to be a barrier of the research, given that an external party would not have been aware of the contextual or situational factors which lent themselves to my interpretation of the data. Additionally, Sandelowski (1993) argued that if multiple realities are assumed to be constructed by others, then repeating these checks (through member checking, for example) is not essential to the credibility of research. Furthermore, reflexive thematic analysis acknowledges that it is my interaction with the data, relative to my understanding and interpretation of information, that generates the themes for discussion, which could not be achieved in the same way by including another researcher or cross-checking information with participants.

When considering how my own constructions interacted with data analysis processes, I also wondered how my own experiences with COVID-19 have influenced my

interpretation of participants constructions. As I contracted COVID-19 myself (post-data collection) and have encountered numerous long-term health-related difficulties as a result, I often reflect upon how this may have unconsciously changed the way I have represented COVID-19 measures and restrictions within my findings, and whether these would have been represented as less 'severe' had I not had such adverse experiences myself.

3. CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

3.1. Unique contributions of the research.

The research offers an in-depth exploration of the impact of COVID-19 measures and restrictions on AP learners, from the perspective of not only the YP themselves but the support systems around them. The triangulation observed within this research is perceived to be a relative strength and provides an insight into how a vulnerable population were supported during undoubtedly an extremely challenging time for CYP, schools and families. The research is also unique in that this AP (being an independent school) opted to remain as open as possible during a time where many Local Authority (LA) maintained schools and APs were closed. It demonstrates how the response of this particular AP has provided a protective buffer to some of the country's most hard to reach and complex learners and how it has safeguarded the wellbeing of not only YP but their families during the pandemic. The decisions made by school demonstrate how they chose to protect AP learners during very unpredictable times, and how to continue fostering that all-important sense of community and wellbeing for such individuals and their families. The use of triangulation within the research has highlighted how crucial systemic thinking is within school systems and how valuable it is to the parents and caregivers in receipt of the ongoing communication and support for their children. It is felt that the research adequately expresses pupil voice and has worked in a way which additionally keeps their wellbeing in mind, from conception of the initial idea and research proposal, through to data analysis and beyond. The research adds to the knowledge base of YP's experiences of the pandemic, which has been gathered in a holistic way and also considers the individual needs of

parents/caregivers and school staff (contrary to previous literature in the field; Cahoon et al., 2021; Theis et al., 2021; Canning & Robinson, 2021, amongst others).

The function of the research is to increase awareness of the experiences of YP who attend AP whilst living in a global pandemic. The findings could be used as a reflective tool to promote understanding of YP's lived experiences and to support service delivery within schools and Educational Psychology Services (EPSs). It is felt that a large and significant gap in the previous research was identified and that explicitly gaining the views from the AP population will add value to the existing research available, relevant to the impact of COVID-19 on CYP.

3.2. Implications for Educational Psychology practice.

The findings of the research demonstrate a continuing need to consider schools as complete systems, inclusive of home environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Dowling & Osborne, 2002). They also strengthen the existing evidence base pertaining to the role of belonging in schools and APs, and the ongoing need to provide and instil a sense of community within such provisions for the individuals who attend them. EPs can support APs with maintaining this sense of connectedness, with planning approaches to supporting CYP and their families, and by providing a holistic perspective when managing challenges related to the pandemic (similarly to how the host AP sought input from their respective school's Clinical Psychologist). EPs could also offer a role in supporting staff (e.g., Teachers and Teaching Assistants) to manage the ever-changing landscape of their roles; however, this must be balanced alongside the needs of the school, considering how AP learners have been affected by school staff having increased administrative workload and meetings (as a result of the pandemic). EPs could support YP to transition back into AP following periods of non-attendance and may also be able to offer staff training related to managing loss and bereavement. When considering this research from the perspective of mainstream provisions, the present study also offers insights into effective working practices of schools with families and how these can translate into positive engagement. It is wondered whether such means of communication were used in mainstream settings during the pandemic and how this may have affected reintegration for their pupils. EPs may have a role in taking the lessons learned from

this research into their practice in mainstream schools, considering how the maintenance of feelings of belonging within school settings can provide a protective buffer for some of the consequences of the pandemic (such as social isolation).

3.3. Considerations for future research.

As previously noted, the views of the YP in the research could have been gathered using more creative means, such as writing, drawing, or choosing images relative to their experiences (Fargas-Malet et al., 2010). Approaches such as these could add additional strength and a richness of information and could help during times where individuals had difficulties verbally expressing themselves, helping them to better organise their thoughts (Miles, 2000). A post-data analysis meeting as a follow up to interviews could also add value, which could help to give the research a focus on implementation and next steps, instead of being purely exploratory in nature. Additionally, future research could consider the experiences relevant to APs that remained closed during lockdown periods, resulting in an opportunity for comparisons between different provision approaches.

3.4. Personal reflections and closing comments.

I am truly grateful to have been able to conduct this doctoral research within an AP that presented as such an open system and who demonstrated not only an inclusive ethos but a willingness to be reflective throughout this thesis journey. The provision was very accommodating to my needs as a researcher and I felt that the experiences I had, relative to feeling accepted and welcomed into the school, mirrored the ethos and approach that the AP learners were said to have experienced during the pandemic.

I've embraced this research as an iterative process, whereby my needs as an individual are a crucial element. Continual reflection upon my practice throughout this journey has enabled me to present my findings as fairly and accurately as I felt possible at the time of writing. Balancing the demands of not only doctoral research but also a professional placement (and navigating the joys and tribulations of becoming a new parent) has been a significant challenge for me this year. However, the confidence I feel in being able to present research that is mostly consistent with my initial intentions

has been the source of a great deal of pride that I hold, following submission of this work.

Whilst I can never truly understand the experiences that have been shared with me during the study, I feel confident in stating that I have fully immersed myself into this process and have respectfully considered participants' stories. It is hoped that the practice demonstrated by this school can be received by the EP field as an example of effective collaborative working, and may inspire others in future, particularly with respect to the importance of maintenance of home-school connections. It is also hoped that the messages within it can help others whilst we, as professionals, continue to support CYP, their families and schools during this ongoing period of educational change.

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Appendix A - Information on search - Part 1A.

Database	Boolean Search terms (*was used as a truncation symbol)	Number of results
PsycINFO	Set A: alternative education* provision, alternative provision, alternative school, specialist resource base*, specialist education	227
	Set B: view*, perspective*, belief*, construction*, thought*, pupil view*, pupil voice*, pupil experience*	158,531
	Set A 'and' Set B	8
Web of Science	Set A 'and' Set B	122
ERIC	Set A 'and' Set B	166
Scopus	Set A 'and' Set B	235
British Education Index	Set A 'and' Set B	21
ASSIA	Set A 'and' Set B	491
Total number of results for Part 1A		1,043

Screening process:

Identification	
Number of records identified through database searching	1,043
Number of duplicates removed	135
Screening	
Number of records screened by titles and abstracts	908
Number of records excluded after reading titles and abstracts	889
Eligibility	
Number of full-text articles assessed for eligibility	19
Number of full-text articles excluded	14
Included	
Studies included from database search	5
Additional papers or studies included from grey literature	20
Additional papers or studies included from snowballing methods (Cresswell, 2009)	6
Total number of papers or studies included (Introduction & Part 1A)	31

Studies included from database search:

- Craggs, H., & Kelly, C. (2018). School belonging: Listening to the voices of secondary school students who have undergone managed moves. *School Psychology International*, 39(1), 56-73. <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0143034317741936>
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- Nicholson, L. J., & Putwain, D. W. (2015). Facilitating re-engagement in learning: A disengaged student perspective. *Psychology of Education Review*, 39(2), 37-41.
- Page, D. (2021). Family engagement in alternative provision. *British Educational Research Journal*, 47(1), 65-84. <https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3692>

Additional papers or studies included from grey literature:

- Baumeister, R., & Leary, M. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 117(3), 497-529. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.117.3.497>
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N.B. Grey literature was obtained through exploration of resources that were available to the researcher during her time spent on the Doctorate in Educational Psychology course, and through utilising online search engines for relevant papers/studies (e.g., Google Scholar, etc.).

Additional papers or studies included from snowballing methods (Cresswell, 2009):

Baumeister, R. F., DeWall, C. N., Ciarocco, N. J., & Twenge, J. M. (2005). Social exclusion impairs self-regulation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 88(4), 589–604. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.88.4.589>

Cook, L. (2005). School without walls: reconnecting the disconnected at 14. *Support for Learning*, 20(2), 90-95. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0268-2141.2005.00367.x>

Furrer, C., & Skinner, E. (2003). Sense of relatedness as a factor in children's academic engagement and performance. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 95, 148–162. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.95.1.148>

Lloyd, G., & O'Regan, A. (1999). "Education for Social Exclusion? Issues to Do with the Effectiveness of Educational Provision for Young Women with 'Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties'." *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties* 4(2): 38–46.

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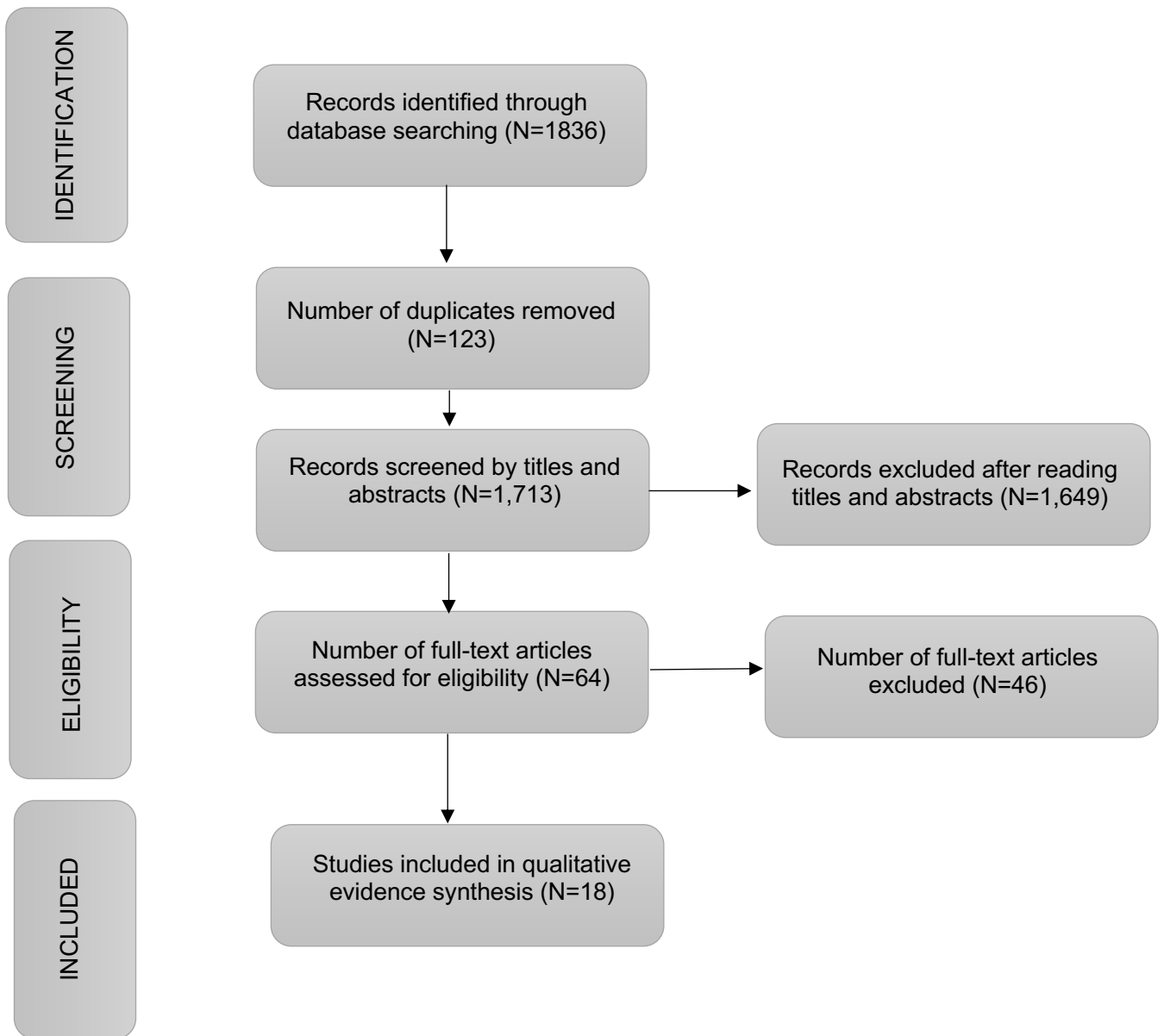
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Appendix B - Information on search - Part 1B.

Database	Boolean Search terms (*was used as a truncation symbol)	Number of results
PsycINFO	Set A: learner*, student*, child*, young people*, teenager*	523,950
	Set B: impact*, effect*, experienc*	542,516
	Set C: coronavirus*, covid*, pandemic*, social distanc*, lockdown*	7,793
	Set A 'and' Set B 'and' Set C**	187
Web of Science	Set A 'and' Set B 'and' Set C 'and' Set D: United Kingdom, UK, England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland	520
ERIC	Set A 'and' Set B 'and' Set C 'and' Set D	130
Scopus	Set A 'and' Set B 'and' Set C 'and' Set D	40
British Education Index	Set A 'and' Set B 'and' Set C 'and' Set D	168
ASSIA	Set A 'and' Set B 'and' Set C 'and' Set D	791
Total number of results for Part 1B		1,836

***Manually screened records for 'Set D' as inclusion in initial searches for PsycINFO resulted in an unmanageable number of records for screening.*

Adaptation of PRISMA flow diagram (Liberati et al., 2009*)



Additional papers or studies included from grey literature and snowballing methods (Cresswell, 2009) = **7**

Total number of papers or studies included (Part 1B) = **25**

*Liberati, A., Altman, D., Tetzlaff, J., Mulrow, C., Gøtzsche, P., Loannidis, J., & Moher, D. (2009). *The PRISMA Statement for Reporting Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses of Studies That Evaluate Health Care Interventions: Explanation and Elaboration*. Retrieved from: <https://journals.plos.org/plosmedicine/article?id=10.1371/journal.pmed.1000100>

Additional papers or studies included from grey literature:

- Children's Commissioner for Wales. (2020a). *Coronavirus and Me: Survey Responses from young people aged 15-18*. Retrieved from https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Briefing_Report_1518_FINAL_ENG.pdf
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N.B. Grey literature was obtained through exploration of resources that were available to the researcher during her time spent on the Doctorate in Educational Psychology course, and through utilising online search engines for relevant papers/studies (e.g., Google Scholar, etc.).

Additional papers or studies included from snowballing methods (Cresswell, 2009):

- Paulauskaite, L., Farris, O., Spencer, H. M., EPICC-ID group, & Hassiotis, A. (2021). My Son Can't Socially Distance or Wear a Mask: How Families of Preschool Children with Severe Developmental Delays and Challenging Behavior Experienced the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Journal of Mental Health Research in Intellectual Disabilities*, 14(2), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19315864.2021.1874578>

Appendix C – Overview of studies included in qualitative evidence synthesis for Part 1B (Grant & Booth, 2009):

Author, Year & Title	Aims of research	Sample/size	Method	Findings
<p>Cahoon et al. (2021)</p> <p><i>Understanding home education in the context of COVID-19 lockdown.</i></p>	<p>To investigate the impact of COVID-19 restrictions on the delivery of education for CYP varying in circumstances (e.g., socioeconomic status, maternal education etc.).</p>	<p>173 parents / guardians (representing 314 primary school age children*).</p> <p>*36 children were excluded due to being identified as having ALN which was not accommodated for in this research.</p>	<p>Online survey, where parents have previously been recruited and have agreed to be contacted for further surveys.</p>	<p>Parents reported:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Moderate’ enjoyment supporting home learning in the areas of literacy/reading (74.3%), art (69%), science (68.5%) and maths (67.9%). • A need for need for additional support in relation to help them with home learning. • Children spent between 1 and 3 hours engaging in home learning across Key Stages. • Access to technology was noted to be less likely for children from lower SES backgrounds. • Parents expressed worries about their child’s social and academic skills because of lockdown measures.
<p>Theis et al. (2021)</p> <p><i>The effects of COVID-19 restrictions on physical activity and mental health of children and young</i></p>	<p>To explore the effects of lockdown restrictions on physical activity and mental health of CYP with physical and/or intellectual disabilities.</p>	<p>125 Parents or caregivers.</p>	<p>Cross-sectional study design including an online survey in June-July 2020 (Likert scales and free-text questions).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative effects of lockdown restrictions reported (61% reduction in physical activity levels and over >90% of respondents reporting a negative impact on mental health).

<p><i>adults with physical and/or intellectual disabilities.</i></p>				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Findings linked to a lack of access to specialist facilities, therapies, and equipment. • Concerns were noted about the long-term effects of these findings on CYP with disabilities.
<p>Hu & Qian (2021)</p> <p><i>COVID-19 and Adolescent Mental Health in the United Kingdom.</i></p>	<p>To examine the mental health impact of the pandemic on adolescents (considering social, demographic, and economic variations on outcomes).</p>	<p>886 adolescents aged 10-16 years old.</p>	<p>Participants were surveyed pre-pandemic and during. A Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire was used to measure adolescents' mental health.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adolescents with 'better-than-median' mental health before the pandemic experienced an increase in their emotional problems, conduct problems, hyperactivity, and peer relationship problems, but a decrease in their prosocial tendency during the pandemic. • Adolescents with 'worse-than-median' mental health before the pandemic have experienced opposite changes in each domain. • Negative mental health impact was noted to be more prominent among adolescents in one-parent, one-child, and low-income households.
<p>Loades et al. (2020)</p> <p><i>Rapid Systematic Review: The Impact of Social Isolation and Loneliness on the Mental Health of</i></p>	<p>To explore how isolation measures and loneliness impacted the mental health of CYP.</p>	<p>83 articles (80 studies), providing findings for 51,576 YP (mean age</p>	<p>Rapid review for articles published between January 1, 1946, and March 29, 2020. 20% were double screened using predefined criteria, and</p>	<p>63 studies noted that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social isolation and loneliness increased the risk of depression (and possibly anxiety) at the time loneliness was measured and between 0.25 and 9 years later.

<p><i>Children and Adolescents in the Context of COVID-19.</i></p>		<p>15.3 years old).</p>	<p>20% of data was double extracted for quality assurance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Duration of loneliness was more strongly correlated with mental health symptoms than intensity of loneliness.
<p>Fernandes et al. (2020)</p> <p><i>The impact of COVID-19 lockdown on internet use and escapism in adolescents.</i></p>	<p>To investigate the impact of lockdown on internet use in adolescents and investigated the relationship between gaming addiction, internet use and COVID-19 worries.</p>	<p>185 adolescents (mean age = 21.59 years old) from several countries (e.g., UK, India, Malaysia, and Mexico). 40 YP were from the UK.</p>	<p>Online questionnaires, including questions on internet, social media, gaming, depression, loneliness, escapism, and COVID-19.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use of social media and streaming sites by adolescents has increased during the pandemic. • YP who scored highly on gaming addiction, compulsive internet use and social media use also reported high scores of depression, loneliness, escapism, poor sleep quality and anxiety related to the pandemic. • The results indicate that the pandemic outbreak has had a significant effect on adolescent internet use and psychosocial wellbeing, regardless of the country of origin.
<p>Bignardi et al. (2021)</p> <p><i>Longitudinal increases in childhood depression symptoms during the COVID-19 lockdown.</i></p>	<p>To offer a longitudinal examination of childhood depressive symptoms before and during a UK lockdown to support information gathering processes</p>	<p>168 children (aged 7.6–11.6 years old).</p>	<p>Mental health assessments taken before and during the UK lockdown (April–June 2020), which included self-reports, caregiver reports, teacher reports, and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During one of the UK lockdowns, children’s depressive symptoms increased substantially, relative to pre-lockdown scores.

	and policy, in response to the pandemic.		use of the Revised Child Anxiety and Depression Scale (RCADS) short form.	
Canning & Robinson (2021) <i>Blurring boundaries: the invasion of home as a safe space for families and children with SEND during COVID-19 lockdown in England.</i>	To examine the impact of lockdowns on families who have children with ALN, specifically ASC and complex needs.	8 families of children with ASC/complex needs (aged 5–13 years old).	Interpretative, ethnographic narrative data, relating to a 9-week lockdown period, gathered through telephone/online interviews and a closed social media platform.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The safe space of home for CYP with ALN became crowded with external expectations such as schoolwork and meetings with professionals, blurring the boundaries between home and school.
Cooper et al. (2021) <i>Loneliness, social relationships, and mental health in adolescents during the COVID-19 pandemic.</i>	To explore how social contact, perceived loneliness, and interactions between parents and children impacted the mental health of CYP.	894 11–16-year-olds initially, 443 of which completed follow up research one month later.	Completed measures of loneliness, social contact, parent-adolescent relationships, and mental health difficulties during the first 11 weeks of lockdown and one-month later.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Associations were noted between social contact, feelings of loneliness, and the interaction between parents and their children on subsequent self-reported mental health issues. Research supports the concept of increased feelings of loneliness corresponding with poorer wellbeing (from the perspective of CYP).
Greenway and Eaton-Thomas (2020) <i>Parent experiences of home-schooling children with special</i>	To explore parents' experiences of home-schooling during the pandemic.	238 parents of children with ALN, who were home-schooling during the	Anonymous online survey, with data collected from June-July 2020.	<p>Parents reported:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dissatisfaction with the support and resources they received for their child during the pandemic/school closures.

<p><i>educational needs or disabilities during the coronavirus pandemic.</i></p>		<p>coronavirus pandemic.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents felt unprepared for home-schooling. • Parents were more likely to involve their child in decision making about their learning. • Parents' experiences of home-schooling were negative, regardless of their child's level of ALN or the family's SES.
<p>Couper-Kenney & Riddell (2021)</p> <p><i>The impact of COVID-19 on children with additional support needs and disabilities in Scotland.</i></p>	<p>To assess how children's rights have been prioritised during the pandemic.</p>	<p>16 mothers, including 1 mother who had a child with ALN.</p>	<p>14 mothers participated in email interviews, 2 were interviewed via video call.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing inequalities for CYP was exacerbated during the pandemic, including access to learning resources and support from external professionals. • Some families reported enjoying having a break from academic pressures.
<p>Benassi et al. (2021)</p> <p><i>Quality of life and its relationship to maternal experience and resilience during COVID-19 lockdown in children with specific learning disabilities.</i></p>	<p>To examine the quality of life (QoL) of children with specific learning disabilities (SpLD), inclusive of physical, emotional, and school factors, and to explore how maternal resilience was related to this.</p>	<p>35 primary-aged children with SpLD, 85 typically developing children and their mothers.</p>	<p>3 standardised questionnaires were completed by the mothers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children with SpLD were noted to have a worse QoL than their typically developing counterparts. • Mothers of children with SpLD shared more concerns about their children's difficulties. • Maternal resilience played an important role in the emotional health of children with SpLD.

<p>Beaton et al. (2021)</p> <p><i>Decommissioning normal: COVID-19 as a disruptor of school norms for young people with learning disabilities.</i></p>	<p>To focus on how schools have changed social inclusion for CYP with learning disabilities during the pandemic.</p>	<p>2 Local Authority (LA) workers, 1 Head Teacher of a Special School, 1 Special Educational Needs and Disability Consultant, 1 YP and her mother.</p>	<p>Interviews.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes to schooling because of the pandemic can help to deepen social inclusion for CYP, including promoting CYP's communication of their needs and parents understanding of their children.
<p>Crawley et al. (2020)</p> <p><i>Wider collateral damage to children in the UK because of the social distancing measures designed to reduce the impact of COVID-19 in adults.</i></p>	<p>To outline the impact of social distancing measures and school closures on CYP and their families.</p>	<p>N/A.</p>	<p>N/A.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided a commentary on school closures, including how some remained open for vulnerable CYP or for CYP whose parents were key workers. • Discussed how social isolation impacted the mental health and wellbeing of CYP and their parents.
<p>Hefferon et al. (2021)</p> <p><i>Priorities for the child public health response to the COVID-19</i></p>	<p>To outline the impact of COVID-19 on children in England, including interruptions to healthcare, schooling and longer-term impacts</p>	<p>N/A.</p>	<p>N/A.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlighted longer term risks due to the diversion of healthcare and other interruptions to CYP's lives because of COVID-19. • Noted the need to prioritise CYP's health post-COVID-19.

<i>pandemic recovery in England.</i>	on poverty and social inequalities.			
McCluskey et al. (2021) <i>School closures, exam cancellations and isolation: the impact of Covid-19 on young people's mental health.</i>	To explore the impact of the pandemic on YP's mental health and wellbeing, from their perspectives, and to consider what may help to support this in schools.	45 YP (15-18 years old).	Online focus group interviews.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For some CYP, school closures provided a welcomed change from living with the academic and social expectations of schooling. • School closures resulted in uncertainty and worries relating to examinations and educational transitions. • The experiences of CYP are uneven.
Andrew et al. (2020) <i>Inequalities in Children's Experiences of Home Learning during the COVID-19 Lockdown in England.</i>	To explore CYP's experiences and activities at home during the COVID-19 lockdown.	Parents of children aged 8-15 years old.	Combines novel data from the UK Time Use Survey, which ran from April-June 2020, compared with previous data from 2014-15 from 4238 households. The survey gathered information on how children spent their time on a term-time weekday and randomly sampled two selected days within a week. Information was confirmed via interviews.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attainment gaps have widened for CYP during the pandemic. • The amount of time spent learning and undertaking activities during this time were affected by the family income, in spite of resources being shared from schools to assist with home learning.

<p>Montacute (2020)</p> <p><i>Social mobility and COVID-19: Implications of the COVID-19 crisis for educational equality.</i></p>	<p>To highlight the impacts of the pandemic on social mobility for CYP from Early Years through to post-16 provision (and beyond) in their paper for the Sutton Trust.</p>	<p>N/A.</p>	<p>N/A.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attainment gaps have widened for CYP during the pandemic. • Some CYP are missing the benefits of attending school such as accessing free school meals (FSMs). • Parents differ in their engagement in home-schooling approaches.
<p>Holt & Murray (2021)</p> <p><i>Children and Covid 19 in the UK.</i></p>	<p>To offer a view on the position of children in the UK and their experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic.</p>	<p>N/A.</p>	<p>N/A.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The experiences of CYP during the pandemic have been uneven, with some appreciating the time spent at home, and others finding this challenging.

Appendix D – Interview Schedule

YP interview questions:

1. How would you describe COVID-19 (or coronavirus) to someone who didn't know what it was?
2. What do you think about all of the rules we have to follow because of COVID-19, like keeping our distance, wearing masks, and having to isolate sometimes?
3. What have the lockdowns been like for you? What do you like and not like about them?
4. What do you do at home when you aren't in school?
5. How has it been trying to keep in touch with friends when you haven't been able to see them?
6. Has it been easy or tricky to keep up with schoolwork this year? Why?
7. How have school helped you to carry on your learning this year?
8. Is there anything else you would like to share about this last year?

Parent/caregiver interview questions:

1. How do you think [child name] is managing the global pandemic?
2. What does [child name] do at home when they are not in school and on the weekends?
3. What positive changes to [child name] have you noticed since COVID-19 measures and restrictions began in March 2020?
4. What has helped you manage the new measures and restrictions as a family over the last year?
5. How has [child name]'s school helped you over the past year to support [child name] and their learning?
6. If you relived the year, what would you do change or do differently to adapt to the measures and restrictions?

School staff interview questions:

1. How do you think COVID-19 measures and restrictions have impacted [child name] over the last year?
2. How have you as a school supported [child name] and their family throughout the pandemic?
3. How have you tried to keep [child name] engaged with learning over this past year? Has it been successful?
4. What positive changes to [child name] have you noticed since COVID-19 measures and restrictions began in March 2020?
5. If you could approach this situation again, what would you do differently to support [child name]?
6. How could other professionals have helped you with any recent challenges you have experienced?

Appendix E – Gatekeeper Letter



School of Psychology, Cardiff University Gatekeeper letter

Dear ,

I am a doctorate student in the School of Psychology, Cardiff University. As part of my thesis requirements, I'm carrying out a study on the impact of COVID-19 measures and restrictions on children and young people (CYP) attending alternative education provisions (AP). I'm writing to enquire whether you would be interested in/willing to support this research by providing permission for me to recruit CYP, parents and staff from your education provision.

The research aims to complete three triad case studies. Specifically, it would like to gather the views of three child-staff-parent combinations. The means of data collection will be flexible, and could be completed in person, via video call or telephone. Should they be completed in person, the interviews will be held at your school and will take approximately 30 minutes (per interview) to complete. The interviews will be recorded (audio only) and transcribed by the researcher. Any information that identifies the research participants will be removed during the transcribing process. Your school will be termed as 'a specialist setting in Wales' (or similar) during the write up of the thesis and will not be explicitly identified/identifiable.

To proceed with this research, participants will need to be identified within your AP. The CYP identified within your AP will be required to be between 11 and 19 years old and need to have attended your AP for at least two school terms. Parents/caregivers can be biological or non-biological legal guardians of the children/young people identified. The staff members chosen may be Teachers, Teaching Assistants, Additional Learning Needs Coordinators (ALNCoS), or other staff members, who must work with the identified child/children on a daily or regular basis and know them well. Once chosen, they can receive letters detailing information relating to the project and indicate their consent to participate (these forms can be emailed to you in advance). Consent must be gained prior to commencement of the project. This research has been approved by the School of Psychology Ethics Committee. My research supervisor is Andrea Higgins, Cardiff University.

Many thanks in advance for your consideration of this project. If you are happy to support this research, please can you consider identifying appropriate participants within your AP who you think would be happy to work with me and forward the attached information and consent letters with my contact details.

Please let me know if you require further information and thank you for your consideration of the research.

Kind regards,

Kate Gobourn
Trainee Educational Psychologist

Researcher:

Kate Gobourn
School of Psychology,
Cardiff University, Tower Building,
30 Park Place, Cardiff,
CF10 3AT

Email: DaviesK29@cardiff.ac.uk

Research Supervisor:

Andrea Higgins
CUCHDS room 1.20, Tower Building,
70 Park Place, Cardiff,
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Tel: +44 (0)29 2087 9003

Email: higginsa2@cardiff.ac.uk

Cardiff University's Research Ethics Committee:

School of Psychology, Cardiff University, Tower Building,
30 Park Place, Cardiff, CF10 3AT

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

Appendix F – YP Information Form



School of Psychology, Cardiff University

Child/Young Person Information Form

I'd like to invite you to take part in my research study, which is about what children and young people think about COVID-19 (or coronavirus) and how it has changed the way we live our lives.

Before you decide, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read this information and discuss it with others if you want to. If there is anything that is not clear, or if you would like more information, please ask me.

I'm interested to find out how children and young people have been over the last year, since COVID-19 measures (like lockdowns) began. I want to know about what you think about the rules (like wearing masks), what you get up to in your spare time and how the changes have affected your learning. To do this, I would come into your school and we would have a chat about these things, this is called an interview. I would wear a mask and follow all of the school's safety rules to do this with you and you can have a member of staff with you if you want to as well. If I can't come into school, we might talk over a video call.

I will record our conversation when we speak to each other. I will just record us talking if we meet in person or on video chat. This is so I can write up what we have talked about afterwards, which I will do within two weeks of us talking. After I've done this, I will delete the recording. When I've read through our conversation, I will write it up as part of a big report. I will never use your name in the report or include anything that can be traced back to you.

Helping me with this study is your choice, and you can decide if you would like to take part or not. You can also stop our chat at any time if you don't want to carry on, especially if you are finding it too tricky to talk about. You can also ask me to delete my recording of our conversation before I've written it up. This research has been approved by an Ethics Committee which means that it is ok to go ahead, and I have done all of the proper checks I need to before working with you.

Thank you for taking the time to read about my research, I hope you will become involved.

Kate Gobourn
Trainee Educational Psychologist

Researcher:

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Appendix G – YP Assent Form



School of Psychology, Cardiff University

Child/Young Person Assent Form

The following research will ask you about what you think about COVID-19 (or coronavirus) and how your life is different because of it. Ticking the boxes below will tell me that you are ok with the information below and that you agree to take part:

- I understand that helping with this project will involve taking part in an interview about COVID-19 and how it has affected me. This will take approximately 30 minutes of my time.
- I understand that I have volunteered to take part and that I can stop the interview at any time without giving a reason.
- I understand that my interview will be recorded (audio only) so it can be written up by the researcher after the interview.
- I understand that I am free to ask any questions at any time. I can stop the interview or discuss anything I'm worried about with the researcher, Kate Gobourn, or the supervisor, Andrea Higgins.
- I understand that at the end of the interview I will be given more information about the study.
- I understand that when my interview is written up the researcher won't be able to tell whose answers are whose, so people won't be able to tell which answers are mine. I understand that this information may be kept for a very long time or published. Because the researcher won't be able to tell whose answers are whose, I won't be able to take my answers back once they are written up.

Thank you,

Kate Gobourn
Trainee Educational Psychologist

Researcher: Kate Gobourn School of Psychology, Cardiff University, Tower Building, 30 Park Place, Cardiff, CF10 3AT Email: DaviesK29@cardiff.ac.uk	Research Supervisor: Andrea Higgins CUCHDS room 1.20, Tower Building, 70 Park Place, Cardiff, CF10 3AT Tel: +44 (0)29 2087 9003 Email: higginsa2@cardiff.ac.uk
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Additional notice: Cardiff University is the data controller, and the Data Protection Officer can be contacted at inforequest@cardiff.ac.uk.

Appendix H – Staff Information Form



School of Psychology, Cardiff University

School Staff Information Form

I'd like to invite you to take part in a research study, which is about the impact of COVID-19 measures and restrictions on children and young people (CYP) who access alternative education provisions.

Before you decide, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read this information and discuss it with others if you wish. If there is anything that is not clear, or if you would like more information, please ask me.

The purpose of this research project is to explore how CYP accessing alternative provisions have experienced the past year, since COVID-19 measures and restrictions were introduced in the UK. As well as gaining their views, I'm looking to explore this topic from the perspective of children's parents/caregivers and school staff who know the individual children/young people well through the use of interviews. I would most likely speak to you in person in school, or via video call (we can discuss this, should you consent). If we spoke in person, I would wear a mask and follow all of the school's current risk assessment policies to ensure the safety of us and others.

All interviews are recorded (audio only) and stored on an encrypted USB until they are transcribed (at which point they will be permanently deleted). Your responses will not be identifiable once they are transcribed. Interview responses will be analysed and included within my doctoral thesis.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you can choose to withdraw from the project at any time prior to the transcribing of data. After this I will not know whose data is whose and therefore will not be able to remove any conversations recorded. This research has been approved by an Ethics Committee which means that it is ok to go ahead, and I have done all of the proper checks I need to before working with you, the children/young people in your provision, and their parents/caregivers.

Thank you for taking the time to read about my research, I hope you will become involved. Please let your Headteacher/Principal know or get in touch with me (using the information below) if you would like to take part.

Kate Gobourn
Trainee Educational Psychologist

Researcher:

Kate Gobourn
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Appendix I – Staff Consent Form



School of Psychology, Cardiff University

School Staff Consent Form

The following research is being carried out as part of the course requirements for completion of the Doctorate in Educational Psychology at Cardiff University. This research is being supervised by Andrea Higgins and has been approved by the Ethics Committee of Cardiff University's School of Psychology.

What can we learn from COVID-19? An investigation into the impact of COVID-19 measures and restrictions on children and young people (CYP) attending alternative education provisions (APs).

- I understand that my participation in this project will involve taking part in an interview about the impact of COVID-19 measures and restrictions upon children and young people attending alternative education provisions. This will take approximately 30 minutes of my time.
- I understand that participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I can stop the interview at any time without giving a reason.
- I understand that my interview will be recorded (audio only) so they can be written up by the researcher after the interview.
- I understand that I am free to ask any questions at any time. I am free to withdraw or discuss my concerns with the researcher, Kate Gobourn, or the supervisor, Andrea Higgins.
- 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 research information provided by me will be stored on an encrypted USB until it is transcribed, it will then be held totally anonymously so that it is impossible to trace this information back to me individually. I understand that this information may be retained indefinitely or published. Because of the anonymity of my responses, it will not be possible to withdraw my responses after these have been transcribed.
- I consent to participate in the study conducted by Kate Gobourn, School of Psychology, Cardiff University, with the supervision of Andrea Higgins.

Thank you,

Kate Gobourn
Trainee Educational Psychologist

Researcher: Kate Gobourn School of Psychology, Cardiff University, Tower Building, 30 Park Place, Cardiff, CF10 3AT Email: DaviesK29@cardiff.ac.uk	Research Supervisor: Andrea Higgins CUCHDS room 1.20, Tower Building, 70 Park Place, Cardiff, CF10 3AT Tel: +44 (0)29 2087 9003 Email: higginsa2@cardiff.ac.uk
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Additional notice: Cardiff University is the data controller, and the Data Protection Officer can be contacted at inforequest@cardiff.ac.uk.

Appendix J – Parent/Caregiver Information Form



School of Psychology, Cardiff University

Parent/Caregiver Information Form

I'd like to invite you and your child/young person to take part in a research study, which is about the impact of COVID-19 measures and restrictions on children and young people (CYP) who access alternative education provisions.

Before you decide, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read this information and discuss it with others if you wish. If there is anything that is not clear, or if you would like more information, please ask me.

The purpose of this research project is to explore how CYP accessing alternative provisions have experienced the past year, since COVID-19 measures and restrictions were introduced in the UK. As well as gaining their views, I'm looking to explore this topic from the perspective of children's parents/caregivers and school staff who may know your child well. To do this, I will conduct interviews with both your child and yourself. I will most likely speak to your child/young person in school, or via video call. I will conduct the parent/caregiver interviews in the way that best suits you as an individual. This may be by phone, in person or via video call (we can discuss this, should you consent). If we spoke in person, I would wear a mask and follow all of the school's current risk assessment policies to ensure the safety of us and others, as the interview would take place in school.

All interviews are recorded (audio only) and stored on an encrypted USB until they are transcribed (at which point they will be permanently deleted). Yours and your child's responses will not be identifiable once they are transcribed. Interview responses will be analysed and included within my doctoral thesis.

Participation in this study, from yourself and your child, is entirely voluntary and you can choose to withdraw from the project at any time prior to the transcribing of data. After this I will not know whose data is whose and therefore will not be able to remove any conversations recorded. This research has been approved by an Ethics Committee which means that it is ok to go ahead, and I have done all of the proper checks I need to before working with you and your child.

Thank you for taking the time to read about my research, I hope you will become involved. Please either get in touch with school or myself (using the information below) if you and your child/young person would like to take part.

Kate Gobourn
Trainee Educational Psychologist

Researcher:

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Appendix K – Parent/Caregiver Consent Form

School of Psychology, Cardiff University

Parent/Caregiver Consent Form



The following research is being carried out as part of the course requirements for completion of the Doctorate in Educational Psychology at Cardiff University. This research is being supervised by Andrea Higgins and has been approved by the Ethics Committee of Cardiff University's School of Psychology.

What can we learn from COVID-19? An investigation into the impact of COVID-19 measures and restrictions on children and young people (CYP) attending alternative education provisions (APs).

- I understand that participation in this project will involve me and my child taking part in separate interviews about the impact COVID-19 has had on my child/young person. This will take approximately 30 minutes of my time and 30 minutes of my child/young person's time.
- I understand that participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that we can withdraw from completing the interview at any time without giving a reason.
- I understand that our interviews will be recorded (audio only) so they can be written up by the researcher after the interviews.
- I understand that I am free to ask any questions at any time. I am free to withdraw or discuss my concerns with the researcher, Kate Gobourn, or the supervisor, Andrea Higgins.
- 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 research information provided by me will be stored on an encrypted USB until it is transcribed, it will then be held totally anonymously so that it is impossible to trace this information back to me individually. I understand that this information may be retained indefinitely or published. Because of the anonymity of my responses, it will not be possible to withdraw my responses after these have been transcribed.
- I consent for myself and my child to participate in the study conducted by Kate Gobourn, School of Psychology, Cardiff University, with the supervision of Andrea Higgins.

Thank you,

Kate Gobourn
Trainee Educational Psychologist

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Additional notice: Cardiff University is the data controller, and the Data Protection Officer can be contacted at inforequest@cardiff.ac.uk.

Appendix L – YP Debrief Sheet



School of Psychology, Cardiff University

Child/Young Person Debrief Sheet

What can we learn from COVID-19? An investigation into the impact of COVID-19 measures and restrictions on children and young people (CYP) attending alternative education provisions (APs).

Thank you for taking part in this research study. You have helped us learn more about how COVID-19 (and all of the rules we now live by) affects children and young people. You taking part in an interview about your experiences will provide others with really important information about how we can support children and young people, especially in schools like the one you go to.

The recording with your answers to the interview questions will be kept safe on a password protected USB until the answers are written up. Then the recording I have taken of our interview will be permanently deleted. When your answers are written up, any information (like if you use someone's name) will be taken out so we can't trace the answers back to you. When this is done you will not be able to take your answers back, but you can before then if you change your mind about being a part of this study.

Thank you again for taking part. It is so important that we learn more about how the changes to our lives, because of COVID-19, are affecting children and young people.

If you would like to find out more information you can contact:

<p>Researcher: Kate Gobourn School of Psychology, Cardiff University, Tower Building, 30 Park Place, Cardiff, CF10 3AT</p> <p>Email: DaviesK29@cardiff.ac.uk</p>	<p>Research Supervisor: Andrea Higgins CUCHDS room 1.20, Tower Building, 70 Park Place, Cardiff, CF10 3AT</p> <p>Tel: +44 (0)29 2087 9003 Email: higginsa2@cardiff.ac.uk</p>
<p>Cardiff University's Research Ethics Committee: School of Psychology, Cardiff University, Tower Building, 30 Park Place, Cardiff, CF10 3AT Tel: +44 (0)29 2087 0360, Email: psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk</p>	

Appendix M – Staff Debrief Sheet

School of Psychology, Cardiff University

School Staff Debrief Sheet



What can we learn from COVID-19? An investigation into the impact of COVID-19 measures and restrictions on children and young people (CYP) attending alternative education provisions (APs).

Thank you for taking part in an interview about the impact of COVID-19 measures and restrictions upon children and young people (CYP) who attend alternative education provisions (APs). The research was looking to find out what CYP's experiences have been over the last year, including how they have found national and local lockdowns, and the impact that those measures have had on their relationships and their learning. It is hoped that the feedback gained from this research can be used to develop a clearer view of CYP's experiences of the global pandemic and the local restrictions that have accompanied it. With this information, Educational Psychologists (EP) may use this knowledge as a reflective tool when supporting CYP, their families, and school staff in future.

All possible steps will be taken to ensure that you, as an individual, cannot be identified throughout the research process. The recording with your answers to the interview questions will be kept on an encrypted USB until they are transcribed. Then, your data will be retained anonymously and will not be able to be linked back to you. Once transcribed you will not be able to withdraw your responses, but you can before then if you change your mind about being a part of this study.

Thank you again for taking part in this research. It is so important that we learn more about how the recent changes to our lives, because of COVID-19, are affecting children and young people, especially in alternative provision where little research has been undertaken.

If you would like to find out more information, please see the researcher's details on the following page.

Kind regards,

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Trainee Educational Psychologist

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Appendix N – Parent/Caregiver Debrief Sheet

School of Psychology, Cardiff University

Parent/Caregiver Debrief Sheet



What can we learn from COVID-19? An investigation into the impact of COVID-19 measures and restrictions on children and young people (CYP) attending alternative education provisions (APs).

Thank you for taking part, and for consenting to your child to take part, in interviews about the impact of COVID-19 measures and restrictions upon children and young people (CYP) who attend alternative education provisions (APs). The research was looking to find out what CYP's experiences have been over the last year, including how they have found national and local lockdowns, and the impact that those measures have had on their relationships and their learning. It is hoped that the feedback gained from this research can be used to develop a clearer view of CYP's experiences of the global pandemic and the local restrictions that have accompanied it. With this information, Educational Psychologists (EP) may use this knowledge as a reflective tool when supporting CYP, their families, and school staff in future.

All possible steps will be taken to ensure that you and your child, as individuals, cannot be identified throughout the research process. The recordings with your answers to the interview questions will be kept on an encrypted USB until they are transcribed. Then, your data will be retained anonymously and will not be able to be linked back to you or your child. Once transcribed you will not be able to withdraw your/your child's responses, but you can before then if you change your mind about being a part of this study.

Thank you again for taking part in this research. It is so important that we learn more about how the recent changes to our lives, because of COVID-19, are affecting children and young people, especially in alternative provision where little research has been undertaken.

If you would like to find out more information, please see the researcher's details on the following page.

Kind regards,

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Appendix O – YP Post-Interview Checklist

School of Psychology, Cardiff University

Post C/YP Interview Checklist(s)



Consider the C/YP's presentation immediately following the interview and debrief (tick to indicate response/completion):

1. Ask the C/YP how they are feeling after the interview, give them opportunity to share their reflections and elaborate upon their emotional state. In respect of their emotional state, does the participant appear to present as distressed or anxious following the interview?
2. Check in with the corresponding member of teaching staff who is also taking part in the research study (in the C/YP-staff-parent triad) to highlight any continuing concerns post-discussion with the C/YP.

Does there appear to be any adverse impact from the C/YP participating in the interview?

Yes No

If 'No', no further action is required.

If 'Yes' continue with the following actions:

3. Offer the C/YP and staff a follow-up session to discuss the impact of the interview and to talk more about COVID-19 measures and restrictions in a child-friendly way. This follow-up session could also include sharing appropriate information or visual resources to discuss COVID-19 measures and restrictions (e.g., information around why we wear masks) and will be individualised to the needs of the C/YP.
4. Inform the C/YP's parent/caregiver of the outcome(s) of the interview, relevant to the 'anxiety' or 'distress' experienced by the C/YP as a result of the interview. (Do not share their individual interview responses unless there are concerns for the C/YP's personal safety or there are safeguarding concerns.)

If safeguarding concerns are apparent post-interview. Follow this up with the Researcher's Designated Safeguarding Officer and the C/YP's school's safeguarding lead.

Appendix P – Staff Interview Transcript (Wilson)

File Name	Transcript 1 – Wilson (Staff – Case Study A)
Length	42 minutes 58 seconds
Interviewer	Kate Gobourn

1 [Interviewer](#): So, let's get started then. Um, right where to begin. Could you tell me a
2 bit about who Tom is?

3 [Wilson](#): Yeah. So, Tom is a young lad who started education in mainstream school,
4 went through primary school, didn't have the best experiences of mainstream school.
5 His behaviours did kind of escalate and it ended up in him, his basic routine was
6 where he'd be met by a TA when he came into school and was taken into a room
7 with no windows and doors and was just kind of kept in there really to do work and
8 just play on an iPad. So it was almost kind of like, it wasn't behaviour management it
9 was just kind of containment really. He'd have different lunchtime and break times to
10 his peers, and then he'd go home, get picked by up my mum or dad and that's it
11 really. So, kind of coming into a school I think for him was quite, um, he was quite
12 nervous, quite frightened, quite scared having negative experiences of education but
13 also the other school as well, and like that sense of containment for him he doesn't
14 feel, it's really strange he doesn't feel safe in a contained space. He feels, things that
15 are kind of like on top of him, he doesn't have freedom, you know, which is quite sad
16 really for a 14 year old kid to feel that.

17 [Interviewer](#): So was it the transition to secondary school then, which was when it was
18 made apparent that he needs to be here, because he would have been 11 then
19 wouldn't he?

20 [Wilson](#): Yeah, so he, I'm trying to think now, I don't think he even transitioned into to
21 secondary school. So from [home area], he would have gone to the comp, I don't
22 even think he did any time from there. So he came straight from Key Stage 2 to us.
23 So he had a bit of time away from school and between finishing in his primary school
24 to coming to us as well, so I think the adjustment of coming back into a school would
25 be hard enough for any young person, let alone the kind of needs that Tom has but
26 also the past experiences he has as well so that was kind of compounded. And then

27 when Tom first came, as one in the teacher's class, he was a model pupil, and would
28 say you know yes sir, please, sir, thank you sir, which which was really nice to see
29 but a lot of it was a honeymoon period until they feel safe and feel comfortable and
30 then they start exhibiting certain behaviours. So yeah, you know for a period of
31 probably June into the summer right up until probably the end of the year, then, you
32 know, he was, you would find in a classroom he was still quite agitated sometimes in
33 the classroom, that's when behaviours would start to seep through. And then he
34 would, you know, kind of stay outside, not come inside, get quite angry when staff
35 tried to, you know, encourage Tom inside and kind of complete his work and then
36 come back outside as well, so control is quite important for Tom as well if he doesn't
37 feel at ease, he can control things he doesn't feel safe so therefore it's like a kind of
38 self-perpetuating circle as well so he won't be engage in lessons because he doesn't
39 feel safe in the classroom because it's not under his control.

40 [Interviewer:](#) Mm-hmm.

41 [Wilson:](#) Yeah so, you know, thankfully we haven't seen those behaviours with Tom
42 for a while, really. He's come into our class, we've got a little more flexibility, we're a
43 smaller group, so there's only two other young people in the class. So as myself two
44 TAs so we've got the flexibility to kind of divide and conquer really, you know Tom
45 does like to be out and about and the amount of time he spent over the animal
46 enclosure has really helped him, kind of first thing in the morning gets dropped off by
47 dad, he'll go down there, have a little check in, see how the animals are see how the
48 fences are, the feeding stalls if anything is needed food wise and stuff, provision for
49 the animals. It just helps him kind of, that's his little regulation time because you
50 know he's got a journey from [home area] everyday which can be half an hour to,
51 traffic wise, an hour, two hours really so he gets agitated from that, you know.

52 [Interviewer:](#) In terms of his needs, so his primary social emotional behavioural but is
53 there anything else going on there for him as well?

54 [Wilson:](#) Yeah, there's been, mum has been trying for quite a while to get a diagnosis
55 of ADHD. They're thinking Tom needs a diagnosis and to receive medication that will
56 help him, cognitively, and the home is quite a busy place for Tom, so he lives with
57 mum and dad and his two younger siblings and one older sibling as well. So, his
58 youngest sibling is, is quite a busy young man as well so he's received a diagnosis

59 of Tourette's. So, Tom's obviously worried about him because he just started high
60 school so he had negative experiences of school as well, was being bullied as well
61 as kind of COVID as well as not going into school so thankfully he's started going to
62 school five days a week now and actually looks forward to going to school. So I think
63 for Tom as well that's a bit of a relief because he was like, I don't want my brother to
64 get bullied. That's not to say when Tom and his brother are home they don't fight and
65 argue, which you know is quite a stressful situation for mum and dad really so it
66 tends to happen that dad takes Tom out and mum has the other two younger siblings
67 and they kind of swap roles as and when and some of the behaviours Tom exhibits
68 at home, I think they are down to the fact that he, he doesn't have as much time with
69 mum as he'd like to because obviously dad's kind of taking him out and managing
70 the situation, the environment, so it's easier for the other two of them as well. Things
71 have got better at home though. From speaking to mum and dad, there are times on,
72 could be a Sunday night, where Tom will, for no apparent reason, there's obviously a
73 trigger but it's obviously not obvious to Mum and Dad, where he will just go in and
74 start kind of hitting things in his room and smash his wardrobe up and will go outside
75 and start breaking things, whether, you know, we've had a bit of a chat with Tom is,
76 has there been something that's kind of triggered it, that you know that we haven't
77 seen or mum and dad haven't seen is the that coming back to school on a Monday
78 after a lovely weekend or maybe something that's happened in school and he's kind
79 of dwelled on and thought, I've got to face it again, you know, so, and there is, you
80 know he can he can say what it actually is, and sometimes he can't. He can't
81 formulate, you know why he's done it.

82 [Interviewer:](#) Sometimes it's like holding it in all day as well, until you get back to that
83 safe place.

84 [Wilson:](#) Yeah. So that's, I think that's, that's it. Because, you know, he's, he does
85 really well around school, you know that there we have had a few kind of situations
86 where someone's got to him and got really frustrated by the person and kind of
87 grabbed them in a headlock and kind of held them and not being physically
88 aggressive towards them other than that, you know, it's not like punching, kicking, I
89 want to fight them. And other times I think it's, It is that kind of boiling point he's
90 reached that like point of, I can't contain it anymore, I've, I'm trying really hard, like in

91 school and home yeah I feel safe enough to, you know, that's when it does kick off
92 kind of thing you know, and whether that's being physically aggressive towards
93 younger brother, or, you know, verbally aggressive towards mum and dad and stuff
94 and kind of, you know, damaging, destroying things.

95 [Interviewer:](#) So, for someone then who has those behaviours at home, and someone
96 who needs a lot of control in their life to feel comfortable and to feel safe, what
97 happened when the world got turned upside down like last March?

98 [Wilson:](#) That's a really good question actually because speaking to Tom, let me say,
99 how have you, how do you think you've coped, you know, because we can only see
100 what we see here, obviously we don't see him at home and in his environment. I
101 think, yeah, he has been affected like a lot of young people, not just here obviously,
102 you know, outside. Um, he did kind of take up fishing, which was great and mum and
103 dad, they look for, you know, anything that can kind of interest Tom, any sort of
104 interest Tom has they foster it you know so the fishing he lives near [home area], so
105 they were out there from, you know, kind of first thing in the morning till you know,
106 sunrise and sunset and sometimes they were doing, kind of sleepovers on the river
107 as well camping out. So they, he has managed in that regard but sometimes it, as
108 mum and dad will admit, it's not being able to do that all the time because of
109 obviously family commitments and other things as well.

110 I think school is massive for Tom, definitely, you know, friendship wise. He's got two
111 friendships with two other young people who are, you know, they're really great. So
112 he went on the recent the last snowboarding trip was his first time away really from,
113 from mum and dad and also away with the school. He's got on really well with the
114 two young lads who have similar interests, you know, they will help out over the
115 Animal Enclosure and really get on like a house on fire, they're like brothers almost,
116 you know, they're kind of like thick as thieves, great together and then the bit of play
117 fighting will start and it's like boys come on let's separate it because we know what
118 will happen, you know, one will take it too far... But unfortunately those two are
119 leaving this year. I think that's kind of starting to dawn on Tom as well. Even though
120 he won't say it, you can kind of, you know it's there, you know it's that kind of like,
121 unsaid need, you know that kind of unmentioned need really for him. But yeah,
122 coming to school I think has been great, from obviously we had two weeks off before

123 our Easter break, so we had kind of like 4 weeks off, and then the plan was to come
124 to school. So, the pupils would do, kind of, two, three days a week.

125 [Interviewer](#): So is this back in March [2020] right in the beginning?

126 [Wilson](#): Yeah, so what we did as a staff team is kind of sit down and obviously our
127 most vulnerable pupils, you know, we obviously phoned parents, carers, and said,
128 you know, look what, what is it you would like, you know a lot of parents and carers
129 said no I don't feel safe sending my child to school, you know, totally fine. Yeah, the
130 last thing we want is to make a stressful situation any more stressful, you know, and
131 support as much as possible so so we sent work packs home for those that didn't
132 want to come into school, you know, with the expectation that we weren't expecting
133 them to be completed and sent back, you know, anything like is, you know, a lot of
134 mainstream schools were sent devices home to young people so they could access
135 online learning to set up accounts for them and email accounts. And that was really
136 good just to try and keep them in some type of routine as well because obviously a
137 lot of our young people do like to kind of stay up late, like many teenagers watch,
138 you know stuff on Netflix and play games at all hours in the morning and you know
139 they're kind of night-time becomes daytime and vice versa.

140 [Interviewer](#): But Tom wasn't part of that was he because he came in?

141 [Wilson](#): Yeah, Tom was in, I think I think 3, 4 days a week, I think it was. So, initially
142 when Tom first started like a lot of our young people at school he was transported in
143 by transport organised by the local authority, but there was a few, I think he found
144 that quite stressful to kind of come in and there were one or two instances of him, not
145 wanting to get up in the morning not going in the taxi. I can't recall any behaviours in
146 the taxi, you know, that were kind of violent or dangerous.

147 [Interviewer](#): So normally he was brought by parents, was it?

148 [Wilson](#): No, so initially that's how all young people come into school but then dad
149 took over that. So it was, I think it was almost kind of a plan formulated about
150 speaking to Tom and saying, how about if dad brings you in, I think we tried it a
151 couple of times it worked and I think mum and dad, for them, obviously, there's a
152 financial payment for it as well so they also get paid to bring Tom to school, which is
153 great for that because obviously it is a steady income for them I think for Tom that's
154 quite nice to start his morning off with mum or dad, with dad bringing him in. So, you

155 know, they leave, come to school, grab some breakfast and McDonald's or
156 whatever, you know, then Dad always stays in and around the locality, picks Tom up
157 at the end of the day then and straight home. So that's really good for him, kind of
158 like a little settler in. And it's, it's great communication with mum and dad they're
159 really open to this as well so if Tom's had a bit of a, you know, busy night they'll
160 phone and say, it wasn't great last night, you know, so this happened, this
161 happened, this happened, and we can always phone them as well and say, oh yeah,
162 accident in school today or something's playing on his mind or whatever so great
163 lines of communication with mum and dad, they're really approachable.

164 [Interviewer](#): How has he been with, um, what are his reflections that you've observed
165 about social distancing, masks, hand washing, sanitising –

166 [Wilson](#): Tom's actually really good, he'll carry a mask with him all of the time. You
167 know when we go out with [inaudible] he got a mask. Others forget but he's always
168 got his all the time, social distancing is quite interesting because I don't think children
169 do get social distancing, especially, you know, teenage boys who just want to rough
170 and tumble with each other, you know, but on the whole yeah he's really respectful
171 outside, you know, we'll go into a shop and he'll hand sanitise, you know, just keep a
172 distance from other people. Really well-behaved outside, which is great, you know,
173 for him. So obviously all our young people have risk assessments, for him he has
174 quite a low risk assessment as well because although we have seen previously, you
175 know, dangerous behaviours and high risk behaviours thankfully we haven't seen
176 those as well so you know things like crossing the road or taking him out cycling it's
177 not right Tom you've got to sit next to me, I can say just meet me at the skate park
178 and stuff and, you know, he'll cycle up or down and is more than happy to do that
179 and I feel comfortable, a lot of the staff feel comfortable with that thinking about it –

180 [Interviewer](#): Yeah, so his understanding is quite good, does he know what COVID
181 is?

182 [Wilson](#): Yeah, I think he Tom's quite impressionable. He watches a lot of stuff on
183 Netflix, watches a lot of stuff on YouTube and things like that. So, some of his
184 opinions are informed by the different medias out there as well so, you know, a lot of
185 kids they watch the internet or whatever it is, they'll see it on social media and it's
186 true. You know, because it's written there isn't it, you know, why would people put

187 stuff on it that's not true. So, we do have to have those conversations with a lot of
188 our young people about, you know, the media and also the different forms of media
189 and the dangerous things about, you know, different forms of media and kind of
190 getting sucked into that kind of vacuum and that is very one way of thinking,
191 especially around COVID as well. So he is, I wouldn't say narrow minded I'd say he's
192 quite easily influenced in that way. So yeah, he understands what, you know what
193 COVID is, I think you know he he'll come in and say something like, he sees it on TV
194 and we'll have to explain about the context behind it. But yeah, he is aware of it, as I
195 say, but he's pretty good with distancing and mask wearing. And as a school, you
196 know, we, like many places you know the novelty of wearing a mask wears off, it
197 becomes like a kind of hat or, you know catapult or something to flip stones and stuff
198 through. So we were quite relaxed, well I wouldn't say that, but obviously, we offered
199 it, all PPE to all pupils and said up here there's aprons, masks, goggles, hand
200 sanitisers, visors, whatever you feel most comfortable with. A lot, didn't, didn't
201 choose to wear it. And that's, that's totally fine, Obviously –

202 [Interviewer](#): But he spends a lot of his time outdoors anyway so that kind of is, the
203 easier to manage situation –

204 [Wilson](#): Yeah, yeah.

205 [Interviewer](#): Have you noticed any positive changes to Tom since this has all
206 happened in terms of his resilience or his adaptability, his engagement with
207 learning?

208 [Wilson](#): Yeah, I'd say resilience is definitely one from speaking to mum and dad at
209 home if he said he needed to change a tyre on his bike, he'd have a go at doing it,
210 get frustrated, ask dad for help, dad would be able to do it, and he'd get really
211 frustrated with that because he wasn't able to do it. Whereas now, he's, he's got
212 more resilience he'll keep on doing it, then he'll ask for help, but he's able to accept
213 that an adult might be able to do something the first time that he can't do, but will be
214 okay with that, you know, and he'd be quite curious about it, you know, how did you
215 do that? You know, so almost wanting to, bettering himself in that regards, in getting
216 into a classroom, we tend to do a lot of work with Tom initially in what we call the
217 pods, it's a smaller room, where there's just Tom and a staff member there, it's a bit
218 more relaxed, there's kind of soft comfy chairs there. He'll do work, and then in the

219 background it's got kind of YouTube on, watching people chuck themselves around
220 on BMX bikes and stuff like that to kind of help him regulate and stuff, we're doing,
221 you know, we never kind of push, you know, where it was like do this piece of this
222 and this and this and this and this we'll just say that's the work, you know, have a go
223 at it, whenever you want to break, that's fine, so it's kind of that drip feeding and he
224 does really respond well to that. With Tom as well it's about who he, you know
225 doesn't work with as well so we're saying, you know, you've got Maths or English or
226 whatever, who would you like to work with in the pods? Sometimes he'll choose
227 [teaching assistant], myself, so I think for Tom being given that choice, and kind of
228 meeting that needs of control in that regards, to give him the option that
229 empowerment of it. So that's the expectation, you know, how can we help you meet
230 that expectation as well. Sometimes you've done it over the alpaca enclosure or
231 down [bike shop], or sometimes we've gone out and done it in a cafe or something
232 like that depending on how he is. He's able now to kind of reflect as well on on his
233 emotion so previously on his TIP, his therapeutic intervention plan, he had a real
234 trouble kind of labelling his emotions as well, so he'll tell a sad story but have kind of
235 like a smile on his face. So it's about seeing Tom do that and recognising it and
236 saying to him look, I'm really confused by the tone of the story but you, you're smiling
237 when you do it and not a criticism but for, for him to be able to kind of label his
238 emotions, I think, you know, because he could probably previously label the
239 emotions of angry, sad, frustrated and happy, but not be able to show them in that
240 regard, you know for him angry would be smashing things up, or being verbally or
241 physically aggressive towards people, whereas now he's able to kind of feel a bit
242 frustrated and say someone's f'ed me off for whatever it is, and he's, he comes to us
243 now and he says, we call it flighty and he'll say he's flighty. So that means like he's
244 feeling a bit anxious, on edge, very kind of like hypervigilant, which thankfully our
245 levels have come down from that he is still very kind of hypervigilant but it's not as
246 apparent as before, you know you can actually kind of see him looking around for
247 kind of like trying to identify threats or like there's that there and that there, you know,
248 the real kind of like, fight, flight, freeze.

249 [Interviewer](#): In terms of his perseverance especially, what do you think has caused
250 those changes? What do you think's going on?

251 [Wilson](#): That is a really question for Tom, which we've had and we've said, when we
252 had these like annual education reviews and fed back to him and to mum and dad on
253 his progress and stuff we've said we're really pleased with the progress. Sometimes
254 he wasn't able to kind of accept that praise and, you know, kind of brush it off like a
255 lot of young people do, but I think it's because he was never, he was never really
256 praised in school, that's a really sad thing isn't it for a kid, and just not kind of word of
257 mouth or well done, but that really kind of explanation of, I really like the fact that you
258 did this, you know, and for Tom as well I think it's about, it's timing with it as well. So
259 it's not just as soon as you finish a piece of work, oh well done that's it now crack on
260 to the next one, it's about having that reflection on it and I knew you found it really
261 frustrating, you know you got really frustrated by that but that's great, the fact that
262 you able to sit there or just go for a walk, come back and return to it. And I said to
263 him you know like, what do you think is happening, he said oh the animals, I said
264 what do you mean by that and he said, oh well, it wasn't for the animals then I
265 wouldn't be able to do this, so I said okay that's really interesting and I said, what
266 was it about the animals and he said oh they just kind of helped me calm me down
267 and kind of chill me out and give you a focus on the purpose.

268 [Interviewer](#): So, in terms of, um I was just reflecting on something you said, and I
269 was thinking about Tom, and his need to know like what's coming next and, you
270 know, having specific routines and being comfortable in those, a lot of things in the
271 world have changed now, but that actually means that there are a lot more rules, and
272 there are a lot more expectations and they're much clearer socially in terms of what
273 we need to be doing, what we can't do, who we can be around all those sorts of
274 things. Do you think that's something that's potentially helped or hindered Tom? If he
275 likes to know what's coming next, in a social situation he knows that most people will
276 be in masks, they'll probably keep their distance. If he's not comfortable with other
277 people that might be reassuring –

278 [Wilson](#): Yeah, I think, yeah prepping Tom I think is, is something that we started
279 doing, like a lot of the kids here as well is, you know, about the kind of the
280 expectations about when we're out. Normally, you know, as in, you know, let's keep
281 our language, let's not swear, there's young children there and people around but
282 also obviously with COVID now it is about, alright you know, basically if we're visiting

283 a shop right, make sure that we've got our masks, there's hand sanitiser there to
284 use, you know about social distancing and things, so there are times when we do
285 have to kind of, especially with play fighting, you know that that's a really big thing,
286 but that's a big thing kind of school wide really um, just, yeah, just to kind of get that
287 best practice in with him. I think it has helped him because it's, it's not for him, I think
288 it's, it's not something that adults have just made up on the spot, there's a kind of
289 context behind it as well and it is a real world context for him because he can see
290 that he is, so he has, he goes and sees his nan and granddad in [location], and I
291 think because he can identify with the fact of potentially, you know, the older
292 generation are at a higher risk, he can actually think oh, yeah, that could be my nan
293 or that could be somebody's nan or somebody's granddad. So he does respect that
294 kind of thing, you know it's not that no Tom you cannot do this because, it's just that
295 a gentle reminder of, I've got a mask you've got a mask, he doesn't have to be asked
296 to put the mask on, he's soon as you get to the, to the shop or whatever it is the
297 mask is straight on and, you know, hand sanitiser and things, you know, very kind of
298 very good at kind of following the one way systems in shops and stuff so yeah I think
299 he can see a kind of relevance with doing it and I think for him because he can see
300 that he's more biddable towards it as well.

301 [Interviewer](#): So on the whole, would you say that since March of last year [2020],
302 things have either gotten better for him, or things have been a bit more difficult. What
303 do you think?

304 [Wilson](#): A bit of both really, at home he seems more settled, at home mum and dad
305 said he seems more settled, but there are instances of him showing kind of
306 damaging behaviours and being quite verbally aggressive to mum and dad,
307 thankfully it's not as often. There's no real pattern towards it, it's not like right every
308 Sunday night or every wherever it is... In school we've seen, we seen a few
309 behaviours of where it was, you know, he, he's quite self-negating, but also he's
310 quite critical or contemptuous of others as well, so he's quite [mimics muttering
311 inaudibly] that is his kind of like go to. Or you better make sure he keeps his distance
312 or not do that otherwise I'll point out them ten feet under, what do you mean by that
313 Tom? That's almost like his way of, kind of verbalising that someone's done
314 something to annoy him, to frustrate him. He doesn't go over there, you know and

315 smack someone, which, which is great, you know, it's almost like that, that's his way
316 of letting us know that he's a little bit frustrated, a little bit angry about something
317 which he wouldn't necessarily have done in the past. He'd always use that as a
318 threat, you know, he was kind of at the tree and sort of frustrated and shouted out
319 I'm gunna put you six feet under, you know, whereas now he's able to kind of
320 verbalise that with us. And other times yeah, we've seen it where, you know, he's
321 actually smiling a lot more, and genuinely smiling he's really enjoying himself really
322 feeling happy and safe at school.

323 Interviewer: Do you think that's because school has been the constant when
324 everything else has changed?

325 Wilson: Yeah, I think so, and the fact of it, yeah it hasn't changed, no matter if his
326 behaviour has been great, or his behaviour has been quite high risk and quite violent
327 and quite abusive and quite aggressive. It's not changed in that way at all we haven't
328 gone no actually Tom, no, we don't want that, that's too much we're gunna ignore
329 you until, you know, yeah of course, it has to be done, you know, if someone's kind
330 of escalating you don't wanna kind of poke the beast and everything like that so
331 sometimes we do withdraw, you know, but then say to him, look, you know, I can see
332 you're really frustrated, really angry about that, well I'm just going to be over here
333 when you're ready to come talk or whatever, you know just let him know that we're
334 not abandoning you, you know and sometimes with him what he says and what he
335 actually needs are totally different, you know he saying f off and then really he wants
336 you to be close to him. He wants that, he's actively searching and looks for that kind
337 of connection, you know that physical, kind of, he responds really well to that just like
338 arm on the shoulder, which is great, you know, for a 14 year old kid to, to be able to
339 accept that I think is a really hard thing, especially for Tom who's had kind of various
340 experiences within school and forming relationships because he doesn't have many
341 friends outside he's got one or two friends who he who he speaks to, but really yeah
342 I mean he's, he's just searching for, for that friendship, that kind of like connection.

343 Interviewer: Do you think that school staff forming that relationship with him has been
344 the most important part of engaging him with his learning, so starting with that
345 relationship with a trusted adult and going from there?

346 Wilson: Yeah I think so I think he would have struggled previously to, with a with a

347 new person coming in so for example if we've got a new TA who started this week
348 with us. I took him over this morning, told them a little bit about Tom what he likes to
349 do and things like that, and Tom's actually managed to have a conversation about
350 what he's doing, building a fence, which he wouldn't have before, or he'd have done
351 it but not made eye contact, whereas now he's actually making eye contact –

352 [Interviewer](#): And he did with me as well –

353 [Wilson](#): Yeah yeah yeah, which is like, that's a massive thing, he won't appreciate
354 that he won't understand that he wasn't able to do that before until you kind of label it
355 with him. Tom you wouldn't have been able to do that a year ago, nah nah I probably
356 wouldn't have. So he, he doesn't recognise how far he's come.

357 [Interviewer](#): Yeah, he probably can't take stock of what he's achieved, but he
358 probably knows that he feels better –

359 [Wilson](#): Yeah yeah yeah, definitely. I think you know he, himself, he says he feels
360 safe he feels comfortable at school now, which is, which is great to hear. But it's not
361 just lip service remember he actually genuinely does and you can see it the way he
362 moves about, you know he never used to eat lunch in school, for a teenager eating
363 lunch, especially he's a boy, you know, he must be, dad said he would be starving
364 when he got home, we just assumed he got the house he wouldn't stop eating and
365 then went to bed, whereas here now we'll say right Tom what do you fancy to eat,
366 we'll go get it, bring it down to him and he eats at the picnic benches over the
367 enclosure, but now he's actually bringing lunch and sitting on the benches with like
368 us and eating it as well. You know as soon as he's eaten he goes back over there,
369 but that, you know that kind of little like baby steps is great for him.

370 [Interviewer](#): Yeah, there's so many positives like from what you're telling me. I'm
371 interested to know though, if you could approach this year again, so if you could start
372 right from the beginning, would you do anything differently in supporting him? Or is
373 there anything you wish you could have done that you weren't able to do?

374 [Wilson](#): I feel sometimes as though with the other members of the class, for instance,
375 if, if we, if we're a member of staff down or Tom's almost that like constant and you
376 know the fact of, where he will be. He'll be over in the alpaca hut, with the animals
377 doing little bits and pieces over there and it's almost that like, not that reliance like
378 you can rely on him to be there all the time but it's almost that alright okay I know

379 Tom will be okay over there. Sometimes I think maybe check in with him a lot more.
380 And that's not that we just thought we can't be bothered today it's about the fact that
381 actually you're rather looking at him cracking on with the work so going out and
382 saying more than we probably do [inaudible], you know everything okay, you know
383 you know where we are like we do when we go over there, but I suppose that that
384 more kind of check in with him as well. And we've, the reason sometimes we haven't
385 done it is because of that independence with him as well, to give him that
386 independence to give him that look we're here, we're still here if you need us, and we
387 trust you over here, we're saying to him, look, we trust you with being away with
388 tools and there's keys, can you go and open [bike shop] now can you go down to the
389 the shutters and get a couple of bikes out and stuff and start pumping the tyres up,
390 taking stuff off the bike, so, I think potentially maybe doing that a bit earlier as well?
391 So a lot more trust a little bit earlier on to see how he would cope with it and
392 obviously could have adjusted to it as well then, and I think with support for for home
393 as well because, you know, mum and dad said they're really struggling at home with
394 him and we have, you know, I think parents want like a kind of silver bullet don't they,
395 they want like a kind of quick fix. And I think it's, sometimes just having different
396 conversations going look, you're doing the best that you can like we've told you a
397 load of times. You can empathise with them, I think, you know, and saying that you
398 know yeah it must be really stressful with the, you know Tom and he has brothers
399 similar at home and stuff and he really, yeah, he just, you want to do more than
400 you're actually able to, you want to problem solve as the adult, I'm going to do this to
401 help you with this and this and this and you can do it but it doesn't necessarily solve
402 the problem you just –

403 [Interviewer:](#) And you can't do everything –

404 [Wilson:](#) So yeah, in a roundabout way I suppose we probably could given him more
405 trust earlier on. But yeah, with regards to that I probably, no I'd not change too much
406 –

407 [Interviewer:](#) The foundation is there –

408 [Wilson:](#) Yeah, maybe just that reinforcement of him of, you know that how far he
409 actually has come and yes, he does enjoy being with the animals but it's actually
410 him, you know –

411 [Interviewer](#): Given what you said as well, do you think there's, um, like any other
412 professionals who could have supported you, you know, in the last year during the
413 pandemic and well we're still in the pandemic, but is there, is there any, could you
414 have been helped more by external professionals?

415 [Wilson](#): I mean, there's this constant ongoing communication with like CAMHS and
416 the family, and that obviously with lockdown you know CAMHS is a, it's an
417 overstretched outlet isn't it you know and mum and dad were kind of they wanted
418 more support, but it's very, obviously as a school we can't do CAMHS referrals or
419 anything like that, it's not our position and responsibility to do it and obviously, you
420 know, when we've had some neurodevelopmental psychologists come in and assess
421 Tom, what she's got on paper and what Tom presents are two different people. Yes,
422 there are times where Tom is like that, 100%, and I think, not that we wish we saw
423 those behaviours in schools to actually go, yeah, what mum or dad are seeing we're
424 seeing that here, because I think that's, that's credit to us what we're doing here with
425 Tom, you know he's buying into it here. Yeah, sometimes I kind of do wish we could
426 have sped things up with kind of CAMHS and, again, problem solving, for mum and
427 dad to try and help things along, you know, to see if there is a diagnosis for Tom, not
428 just necessarily for medication purposes but I suppose for them, because they, I
429 think they just think they've been kind of fobbed off and they were told that it's down
430 to bad parenting. I'm not a parent I can't, you know, I don't, I can't speak in a parental
431 role at all but to be told that must be pretty horrendous, you know, so you can't
432 emphasise with them at all about that. Because, because you, you know, for
433 someone to tell you that. So I do feel as though, yeah, I wish we could have done
434 more to support that kind of external process but again it's a process that has to be
435 followed. And there are plans for OT to come in and see Tom. So things are kind of
436 progress in regards to that. And maybe some kind of respite I suppose for mum and
437 dad, not like a residential respite but maybe for, if there was any agency that is able
438 to offer to someone just to come in and take Tom out fishing or mountain biking or
439 wherever it is just to give mum and dad a bit of respite for the other children but also
440 for themselves as well. I think like maybe a family therapy would benefit them
441 massively and not being able to kind of, I say offer that, but, you know when we've
442 looked into how to do it, it's obviously got to come from a kind of social worker

443 referral, type of thing as you know, we've obviously got [intervention] up and running,
444 which is good and, you know, Tom's parents, we think would be a great candidate
445 for that. I remember them doing a NVR course but I think it wasn't what they were
446 looking for, I think they were looking for that silver bullet. So obviously, we were
447 looking at speaking to [staff member] about that and inviting them in to take part –
448 [Interviewer](#): I think the tricky thing isn't it is that all of these challenges don't happen
449 overnight. So, overcoming those challenges won't happen overnight either, but we've
450 got to respect that parents have reached such a point of no more tolerance that they
451 all want that silver bullet don't they, like you say, I see it all the time. And that's got to
452 be really hard for them but they sound like they really engaged parents –
453 [Wilson](#): Yeah they are and I think, okay, well back to us as like problem solvers, we,
454 to sit with somebody in that like feeling of complete just at a loss and just dunno what
455 to do, that's awkward for us isn't you know, and we do it, I suppose for us we found it
456 hard, not having that kind of face to face contact, so we realise that Tom's mum
457 came in for his annual ed review. One day she said, do you know what, I want a bit
458 of a change of scenery, bit of a break from [home location] and then Tom's dad had
459 the other two. And it was really nice for mum to come in as well, but also that yeah
460 that face to face contact with, with both parents. I think it's important for Tom to see it
461 as well so before when Tom was in a previous class and had had a great day, he
462 walk out and the staff would go out and have a chat with dad in front of Tom which is
463 really important as well to acknowledge that you know yeah Tom's day has been
464 great today however you guys been able to turn around and to see if there's anything
465 on Tom's mind, to let Tom know that, you know, we want him here. It's great for him
466 here, he loves it here, we know he loves it here and this is the best way for him in
467 regards to what he's able to get out of it. And I think that yeah that kind of face-to-
468 face contact and for Tom to see that as well is important, and we've not been able to
469 do that often, because of the [inaudible], and for mum and dad to see some of the
470 stuff he's done as well. You know where it was before we would say come in, bring
471 the brothers and sisters in with you and see the animals and this is the great work
472 Tom's been doing and stuff, and they know about because we tell them about it, but I
473 think with Tom it would be more powerful if mum and dad had come to see it.
474 [Interviewer](#): So COVID sort of interrupted that connectedness?

475 [Wilson](#): Yeah, and do you know what I think he'd be able to actually show them
476 around, he would actually take real pride in them listening and being able to just go
477 on and on about what they've done, which is great, and he wouldn't have done,
478 which he would have been able to do but wouldn't have done last year. So yeah, I
479 mean that's, that I suppose is being hampered yeah by the pandemic, him not being
480 able to kind of show them that that work he's done.

481 [Interviewer](#): Okay. Is there anything else that you feel is important to know about,
482 from my perspective about Tom and his experiences over the last year? I think
483 you've summarised it really well, but then I don't know the whole story.

484 [Wilson](#): No, I think, yeah, with regards to mum and dad they're obviously able to give
485 you more of an oversight about Tom and they, they do see him being the Jekyll and
486 Hyde, you know, so we're not able to give that insight as to how violent he is at home
487 how aggressive he is at home and you know how sometimes he does struggle at
488 home.

489 [Interviewer](#): He's somewhere that meets his needs, so why would you see that –

490 [Wilson](#): Yeah, yeah. And I think it's great in one way but frustrating in the other side
491 because you, we have those conversations with Tom like how was last night and
492 he's able to say that now, oh last night wasn't great, sometimes without even us
493 broaching that which is, which is a positive. Yeah, I just think with regards to Tom
494 he's come on leaps and bounds, and I think it's, there's obviously more work to do
495 with Tom, you know, he's kind of with, we're kind of just reaching the kind of layer
496 with him really. But yeah, I just think he's done really well, you know and mum and
497 dad seem happier with him in school because I think there was a point last year
498 where I think they thought, all right, what we gunna do, if you know school breaks
499 down will that have an effect on home life as well, would it mean that we have to look
500 at kind of foster care because he doesn't have social worker involvement, there's no
501 social worker. And I think for that to happen I think it would have been, I think mum
502 and dad would have been really gutted, I think. So they seem happier, you know that
503 he's, he seems to be more settled here –

504 [Interviewer](#): You've been a safety net for these families –

505 [Wilson](#): Yeah, I think we have, I think it's, from like a personal point of view when
506 they were saying let's get children back to school I was in two minds about it, I was

507 thinking well no, because one, one of the biggest threateners of COVID is schools,
508 and two, kids are quite versatile and quite resilient, the kids that have had safe
509 upbringings. You're right, it's really interesting how there hasn't been more kind of
510 studies into kids with learning difficulties in addition to their needs and and kids who
511 haven't had that safe, sound upbringing and how impacted they've been with COVID,
512 because you always do think about your kind of personal experiences don't you, oh
513 you know I had a teacher in school who would do this, this and this, you know, it was
514 awful, cuz you just sometimes just bring yourself back to it, you know like, even
515 though Tom's never experienced, thankfully, a you know a real kind of traumatic
516 experience in his life, I think that the most dramatic thing he's seen is his dad kind of
517 badly cut his finger and kind of he spurting blood and stuff and that and passed out
518 which is a traumatic thing –

519 [Interviewer](#): But in terms of the more traditional traumas we might think of –

520 [Wilson](#): Yeah, thankfully he's never had any abuse or neglect or anything like that.
521 And that's, again, I think that's a, because he's not had that, you know any any other
522 adverse childhood experiences, I think that's frustrating for mum and dad as well
523 because he, he, of his behaviours, you know, so they're looking for that diagnosis, I
524 think, you know is it kind of ADHD where it's almost –

525 [Interviewer](#): Neurological rather than experiential –

526 [Wilson](#): Yeah, I think for them to, by getting that, I think that would mean that people
527 would actually understand and validate the reasons why Tom's behaviours are the
528 way they are. I don't know if a diagnosis is the right thing for Tom, you know, are
529 they pushing it because they feel they've exhausted every other avenue and that's
530 the last thing available to them? Yeah, no, he's just done really well considering.

531 [Interviewer](#): I don't think I've got any more questions so unless there are any other
532 things you want to add?

533 [Wilson](#): No, I think I've garbled on long enough. Thanks.

[End of recording]

Appendix Q – YP Interview Transcript (Tom)

File Name	Transcript 2 – Tom (YP – Case Study A)
Length	16 minutes 52 seconds
Interviewer	Kate Gobourn

- 1 [Interviewer](#): All right then, so let's get started. So a lot has happened since March
2 last year when we were all told to lock down and all of that. I'm interested to know, if
3 there was an alien that came to Earth, and knew nothing about Coronavirus, what
4 would you tell them if they asked you to explain what it was, what would you tell
5 them it is?
- 6 [Tom](#): Um, let me think.
- 7 [Interviewer](#): So somebody knows nothing about it. Because everyone in the world
8 knows what it is, don't they? So it has to be an alien.
- 9 [Tom](#): Stay away from everybody. Stay away from everybody, masks, that kind of
10 thing.
- 11 [Interviewer](#): Yeah. So what happens if you get COVID?
- 12 [Tom](#): You lose your scent, taste, smell and all that, taste, the cough. Is there a
13 sneeze or –
- 14 [Interviewer](#): I don't know, I think you can pass it through a sneeze –
- 15 [Tom](#): Yeah, I think, but the main one is cough, watch if someone coughs, run.
- 16 [Interviewer](#): Yeah, basically. So when it all started, we were told that we have to
17 wear masks, we have to wash our hands and we need to stay two metres apart from
18 other people. Um and for a long time we weren't able to go to, um some people
19 weren't able to have school –
- 20 [Tom](#): We didn't go to school at all for a while –
- 21 [Interviewer](#): Meet your friends, what was that like?
- 22 [Tom](#): Terrible. No one really felt what it was like to, obviously we had the weeks off
23 but you will never have, you're in your house the whole time, lucky for me, as soon
24 as lockdown started, I moved home, so that was a different area for me –
- 25 [Interviewer](#): Okay.
- 26 [Tom](#): As soon as I moved I was in the house constantly.
- 27 [Interviewer](#): Yeah, it's like two big changes that isn't it. So you can't go out –

28 [Tom](#): Six weeks later I had to move out of the house to get something fixed so I had
29 to move to a different place for two weeks and then go back.

30 [Interviewer](#): Oh my gosh, that sounds really stressful –

31 [Tom](#): That was all in a month or two within being in the house and I was like, crazy.

32 [Interviewer](#): What was that like for you? Was it stressful?

33 [Tom](#): I didn't like, I didn't like change back then, but it was, it was alright, but it was
34 different because change and all that. I think I'm getting used to the change now.

35 [Interviewer](#): Do you like where you live now?

36 [Tom](#): Oh yeah, 'cause I'm more outdoors I've got the field near me, I've got the
37 woods near me.

38 [Interviewer](#): Ooh, so do you like to go and fishing and –

39 [Tom](#): Yeah, I do.

40 [Interviewer](#): Okay.

41 [Tom](#): We've got the river just down the road so I go fishing once in a while –

42 [Interviewer](#): Have you caught anything big?

43 [Tom](#): Biggest one I've had is 8 pounds, I think, 8 pounds.

44 [Interviewer](#): That's good!

45 [Tom](#): That's, that was my first a couple of weeks ago and my mates were trying it for
46 ages and I just rock up –

47 [Interviewer](#): That's really cool was it like, um, I don't even know what fish are down
48 there, a trout?

49 [Tom](#): Yeah, I think, I think it was a trout yeah, that's what normally goes with there –

50 [Interviewer](#): My, um, my brother-in-law, fishes, or fishes? Is that word? Fishes all the
51 time. And, um, two weeks ago he gave us like to trout and they were enormous –

52 [Tom](#): Yeah –

53 [Interviewer](#): Not as big as a baby –

54 [Tom](#): Yeah.

55 [Interviewer](#): But they were big, they were pretty big. Okay, so you like being outside
56 then, how did you find, um, like the lockdowns and things like that, obviously, you
57 were able to go on your walks and stuff –

58 [Tom](#): Yeah. Well soon as those walks came in I was fine but through the 'you cannot
59 leave' I was stuck.

60 [Interviewer](#): Yeah. Why, what is it about being in the house that's tricky?

61 [Tom](#): I don't know but I've always been an outdoors person and like, as you know
62 you met me over there when I was outside –

63 [Interviewer](#): Yeah.

64 [Tom](#): So I don't know. Something about indoors I hate.

65 [Interviewer](#): Is it crowded in your house, are there lots of people?

66 [Tom](#): Not really, not really because we all have our own rooms, but mainly, they will
67 be in one section of the house and I'll be on the other, so it was always apart near
68 enough.

69 [Interviewer](#): Just like your space.

70 [Tom](#): Yeah.

71 [Interviewer](#): That's fair enough, I like my space too.

72 [Tom](#): Yeah.

73 [Interviewer](#): Makes me feel calm.

74 [Tom](#): With the outdoors it's just any space you know?

75 [Interviewer](#): What was it like not being able to come to school?

76 [Tom](#): Weird, but in my old school I would have had a week off when school was
77 meant to be off. But especially because you weren't allowed out you weren't allowed
78 to be in school. And that was when I started to like school more. So, think COVID
79 changed it, definitely.

80 [Interviewer](#): Do you think that not being able to go made you appreciate it more and
81 like –

82 [Tom](#): Yeah –

83 [Interviewer](#): That you enjoy it?

84 [Tom](#): Yeah, it definitely got me thinking that I enjoyed the school more than just
85 sitting at home, being bored all day.

86 [Interviewer](#): And you've got friends here like, what, what was it like for you, not being
87 able to be in touch with them or see them every day?

88 [Tom](#): Um, like again it was weird because I have my style of like being around
89 people. This is different style with my family and then with my friends here, so totally
90 two different sides, so weird but think I had contact with them, but that was rare so –

91 [Interviewer](#): Yeah. Was that hard not seeing them because it's like your normal,
92 everyday routine, isn't it?

93 [Tom](#): Yeah, it was near enough a routine every day but you are seeing your family
94 constant every day, so you will start getting bored with faces, obviously it's family,
95 but you will start to get bored of people you see every day.

96 [Interviewer](#): It's great, like spending more time with your family and stuff isn't it but it
97 can be too much like I found it hard as well being stuck at home with my husband
98 and I had a baby then, a new baby and it was, um, I needed help from people and
99 there was no one to help me so that was, that was really tough, so I can imagine, if
100 there were, if you like being outside and like having your space may being in the
101 house would be –

102 [Tom](#): We've got a bigger garden from, from before so we had that garden but that
103 was it –

104 [Interviewer](#): Yeah. So what did you do when you are home when you couldn't go
105 out?

106 [Tom](#): I was on my XBOX all the time through lockdown but now I'm rarely on it in the
107 day. Don't touch it. No.

108 [Interviewer](#): Was there anything that you liked about the lockdowns?

109 [Tom](#): I don't think there was, no I don't think anybody liked it.

110 [Interviewer](#): Good thing we've hopefully seen last of those then.

111 [Tom](#): Yeah, yeah.

112 [Interviewer](#): How have you found, um, you know, the changes to how we live now, so
113 we've got to wear masks, we've got to wash our hands and all of that, how do you
114 find that?

115 [Tom](#): I think it's just become a normal routine now. So, when I first started, like
116 COVID everybody was joking about it. But now when it is starting to kick in,
117 everybody was like, oh no, it's just normal routine now. It's like waking up and going
118 to work it's that, it's a routine now.

119 [Interviewer](#): I still find it strange though that like, that's our normal now –

120 [Tom](#): Yeah, for God knows how long –

121 [Interviewer](#): It's a new normal though, isn't it?

122 [Tom](#): Yeah.

123 [Interviewer](#): Do you like sort of knowing that everybody, like, everybody's got to
124 follow the same rules now when we're out and we're being sociable, is that a good
125 thing, do you think, or, or not?

126 [Tom](#): I don't really know.

127 [Interviewer](#): I kind of miss talking to random people, you know, bumping shoulders
128 with someone and saying hello –

129 [Tom](#): Sometimes you forget that you have a mask on when you smile at someone,
130 you know when you smile, you forget you have the mask on.

131 [Interviewer](#): Yeah, it's weird. I find as well that I work extra hard to smile with my
132 eyes, so you know like sometimes when you smile –

133 [Tom](#): You see your eyes –

134 [Interviewer](#): Your eyes like change, so I'm doing an extra big smile so people know
135 I'm smiling and by the time I get home my face hurts because I've been trying to eye
136 smile all day, I find that really tricky. Okay, fab! In terms of like schoolwork and your
137 learning and things like that, has it been easy to keep up with it over the last year, or
138 has it been hard with having some interruptions?

139 [Tom](#): I've just been over the alpaca pen really. I'll do my schoolwork as well but I
140 have more learning with skills, more hands-on skill for carpentry, farm stuff. I've got
141 more of that skill, that I'm learning.

142 [Interviewer](#): So do you feel like when you're at home you're able to practice that kind
143 of thing?

144 [Tom](#): Yeah so my dad used to be a carpenter, so he'll teach me stuff that I don't
145 know. And if I bring stuff home that he might not know, I'll teach him. There's a back-
146 and-forth thing.

147 [Interviewer](#): Yeah. Your dad sounds really cool. Like, what, have you built anything
148 at home or –

149 [Tom](#): We built, my nan she wanted a bench, my dad was like instantly on it we were
150 both out there building it. So, we're having a new workshop, soon, a week or two?
151 We're having a new metal shed put in. So it'll be a nice workshop to work in because
152 we're normally just either doing out front or out back in the gardens but now we'll
153 have a shed. So I do workshops and all that.

154 [Interviewer](#): How are you getting on with the, um, fence last time I came –

155 [Tom](#): The fence, I'd say is just 5% under halfway done.

156 [Interviewer](#): Wow, that's really good progress!

157 [Tom](#): We moved on, because yesterday, well, it was Monday we had the delivery of
158 all the stuff we took it all down there and we started digging the rest of the holes, and
159 we're on it like from yesterday. We got most of the first lot done within 10 minutes, 20
160 minutes?

161 [Interviewer](#): Wow.

162 [Tom](#): So it was, it was only four of us as well.

163 [Interviewer](#): You guys are going to have to come around to do my garden because I
164 need help, I need serious help! It's awful. We used to have a chicken coop and like a
165 run. And we were going to move house so we gave the chickens to our friend who
166 also keep chickens, and then the house sale fell through. So we just have this big
167 run now with no chickens, but because there's no chickens it's completely, um,
168 what's the word, overgrown because they were eating all the weeds and everything
169 so my grass is like this, and then you look at the chicken run and it's like there with
170 weeds and everything. Um, so yeah, I need you to come around –

171 [Tom](#): Our coop's inside somewhere so you don't have to worry about weeds.

172 [Interviewer](#): They're like free roaming aren't they so they go everywhere, whereas
173 ours had to stay in a pen because of foxes and things like that, because I live in
174 [location] so it's –

175 [Tom](#): Yeah, so the alpacas they scare off the foxes, so we don't really have a fear,
176 well, we still have to be careful but the alpacas scare the foxes off. We're fine with
177 our chickens.

178 [Interviewer](#): So, are you an animal lover as well as an outdoors person?

179 [Tom](#): I think since the alpacas been there yeah definitely, definitely started to like
180 animals more I like to use them but now I've got into them a lot more.

181 [Interviewer](#): Have you got pets at home?

182 [Tom](#): Nah.

183 [Interviewer](#): No, would you like to?

184 [Tom](#): Not, not where we live now. But it's an amazing place, but there's been some
185 animal snatching around so I was like... We had this one guy walk up the street the
186 other week, just whistling for dogs, like treats, whistles, everything. There's a dog
187 over the road that's like up here when he stood, so you go try and steal that –

188 [Interviewer](#): Oh if they were around where I live my dog would just be straight there,
189 she's so friendly. That's scary.

190 [Tom](#): It's like, all the expensive dogs, or even if someone's walking down the street
191 with them, they will grab the lead and take them in front of the person –

192 [Interviewer](#): Wow.

193 [Tom](#): I wouldn't like that. I'd love to have a dog, but obviously what has happened –

194 [Interviewer](#): Would you like a school dog?

195 [Tom](#): We have a school dog.

196 [Interviewer](#): You have school dog! Why have I never met –

197 [Tom](#): [Says dog name], you have met, oh my god.

198 [Interviewer](#): No, I'm upset by that!

199 [Tom](#): He's a cute little dog.

200 [Interviewer](#): Oh, well there we are then, you learn something new every day.

201 [Tom](#): You'll see him walk around one day, he's down every day now.

202 [Interviewer](#): Okay. I could chat to you forever about animals, but I should probably

203 ask you a bit more about COVID if that's okay?

204 [Tom](#): Yeah, okay.

205 [Interviewer](#): I was just wondering if you can remember anything that school had done

206 different to normal, over the last year, to help you or to get in touch?

207 [Tom](#): By full lockdown the school had opened up like, like three/four times, not two or

208 three times a week in lockdown so you'd come in and just chill out from there. So

209 you had something else to do.

210 [Interviewer](#): Yeah –

211 [Tom](#): That was like more into lockdown.

212 [Interviewer](#): Was that good?

213 [Tom](#): Oh yeah, yeah. Coz it helped me because I was stuck, stuck at home, but now

214 I had school to come to coz I had a one-to-one TA. She took me riding once a week,

215 as well.

216 [Interviewer](#): Oh wow, where was that?

217 [Tom](#): That was from here to [location] is it called? Back up to there and back

218 [Interviewer](#): That's far, is it?

219 [Tom](#): It's only 20 miles? 20 miles

220 [Chaperone \(Wilson\)](#): Good on a bike is our Tom.

221 [Interviewer](#): Wow, that's so impressive!

222 [Tom](#): It's a good bike as well. And mention a bike to [Finn] you should.

223 [Interviewer](#): Okay, good inside tip to get him chatting, okay. Okay, cool. All right then,

224 so you did some bike rides and you came in. Um, is there anything else you could

225 think of that was different last year to now that is worth me knowing well that is a bit

226 –

227 [Tom](#): What with school?

228 [Interviewer](#): Yeah.

229 [Tom](#): One big change obviously is the alpacas but other than that, there might be
230 some other like small things around but I don't really know.

231 [Interviewer](#): Yeah.

232 [Tom](#): So I'm not really inside the building. I'd have to work down over there as a
233 class, so –

234 [Interviewer](#): Do you think that, um, this year with the pandemic and everything has
235 been, overall, like a good thing or not good thing?

236 [Tom](#): People say it's good and some people say it's bad, it's 50/50.

237 [Interviewer](#): What would you say is good about it for you? And what would you say
238 isn't?

239 [Tom](#): Uh, the one good thing was me overthinking like obviously when I wasn't in
240 school I appreciated school more, but I think I was the only one thing. I appreciated a
241 lot that I'd say.

242 [Interviewer](#): Yeah, that's really important thing though. And do you feel like you're
243 back and connected with like your friends and everything now, like are things back to
244 normal for you?

245 [Tom](#): Yeah, yeah, well it would've been normal on the first day back for me, [name]
246 was normal. Everybody else was a bit more careful but we were just on it straight
247 away.

248 [Interviewer](#): Okay, no social distancing.

249 [Tom](#): Haha, no.

250 [Interviewer](#): Okay, fab. Is there anything else that you want to share about your
251 experiences and, um, you've told me a lot and that's really, it's been really helpful
252 and thank you for coming inside as well coz I know that, that's something that can be
253 a bit difficult. Um, and you picked the sweets that I was hoping you were going to
254 leave so I'm a bit upset, but other than that, I'll survive, I'm going to stop the
255 recording now. Thank you.

[End of recording]

Appendix R – Parent Interview Transcript (Hank)

File Name	Transcript 3 – Hank (Parent – Case Study A)
Length	36 minutes 26 seconds
Interviewer	Kate Gobourn

- 1 [Interviewer:](#) Okay, um, right, so where to begin really so obviously this research is
2 looking at the impact of COVID and the measures and restrictions that we now live
3 with on children and young people who are in alternative provision, but before we
4 kind of get to that could you just explain from your perspective a bit about who Tom
5 is and who he lives with?
- 6 [Hank:](#) Yeah so basically Tom's got four brothers and a younger sister. The eldest
7 has just recently done time in prison, and then we have another brother who is a
8 twin. And he's got an artificial leg from birth.
- 9 [Interviewer:](#) Okay.
- 10 [Hank:](#) And we've had to remove him from the house because things he was doing
11 bringing into the house wasn't appropriate with kids, around.
- 12 [Interviewer:](#) Okay.
- 13 [Hank:](#) And then his twin had a kidney transplant about seven, eight years ago, and
14 he's slightly autistic as well, and he has anxiety issues and other stuff.
- 15 [Interviewer:](#) Okay.
- 16 [Hank:](#) Obviously then there's Tom, and then his younger brother [name] has just
17 recently been diagnosed with Tourette's and tics.
- 18 [Interviewer:](#) Okay.
- 19 [Hank:](#) And we think he's got anxiety as well. And then there's the, our youngest girl.
20 That's who Tom's family are, and in the house is his younger sister, his younger
21 brother and one older brother, and me and his mum.
- 22 [Interviewer:](#) Wow, that's, um, yeah that's a busy, that's a busy complicated house for
23 you isn't it?
- 24 [Hank:](#) It is constant turmoil.
- 25 [Interviewer:](#) I can see why you forgot to tick that box [referring to consent form]

26 [Hank](#): Because obviously with [brother1] with his issues, with [brother2] with his
27 issues, it's just like a constant cauldron just churning around waiting for something to
28 bubble and burst. And that's the situation we live in in our house.

29 [Interviewer](#): Yeah.

30 [Hank](#): Because when COVID started, like the lockdown started, we were in a
31 process on that day of moving houses.

32 [Interviewer](#): Yeah, yeah, Tom did say that actually –

33 [Hank](#): Tom stood up like a trooper, and it was just me, him and his mum who done
34 the move ourselves.

35 [Interviewer](#): Wow –

36 [Hank](#): So we literally had to phone the police to make sure it would be alright. And I
37 phoned someone in the council to make sure it was okay for us to be moving into a
38 house to get the all clear because it was on that day that everything closed.

39 [Interviewer](#): Right, okay, got you.

40 [Hank](#): But yeah, so basically we moved in with the family into a house, no TV, no
41 telephone line so no internet. So you can imagine the turmoil we moved in to.

42 [Interviewer](#): Yeah, I can imagine. Honestly, my, my son is obsessed with YouTube.
43 So, I can only, I can only imagine how that was initially.

44 [Hank](#): It was pure and utter... but like I said Tom stood up and he helped me do the
45 move. And he was an absolute trooper.

46 [Interviewer](#): How do you think he coped with those changes, you know, so first of all
47 the move, and obviously he, you know, he stood up, like you said. But do you think
48 he found that tricky or do you think he found it okay?

49 [Hank](#): It was hard for him. I can imagine because the lockdown when it kicked, in his
50 school had become his safety blanket, his safe place. So, when the lockdown
51 happened that was immediately taken away. So straightaway that started boiling
52 inside of him. But luckily the house we moved into was at the end of the
53 [countryside].

54 [Interviewer](#): Yeah.

55 [Hank](#): And literally, we've got woods, and mountain bike trails, the river, all on our
56 doorstep. So we were lucky in one way. We had that one hour a day kind of thing
57 where we could go and do something, which helped him a bit, but soon as we come

58 back, you'll see Tom change straight away.

59 [Interviewer](#): Was that not enough time, you know for him he needs to be, he likes
60 being outside and having his space doesn't he?

61 [Hank](#): I've always taught my kids bush crafting, being outdoors, that's our lifestyle.
62 Because as it is, I said, we can take the kids home and say there's your iPads,
63 there's your games, your phones, and they'll go straight out to play. They're not
64 confined to stay on their games if that makes sense, they will, they will choose to go
65 out more than they will stay on technology. And this is from all my three youngest
66 ones –

67 [Interviewer](#): Can you take mine as well?

68 [Hank](#): Well that's what I mean, when we was in our old house Tom used to walk over
69 two miles to go bush crafting in the woods in that area, we'd go out and just spend a
70 day, and then come back. And then my other two youngest they started coming with
71 us. So, we've always had that outdoor side to us.

72 [Interviewer](#): Could you explain a little bit about what happens when Tom's inside,
73 and what that's like for everybody and for him?

74 [Hank](#): When we come home from school as it is, as of lately, when get in, he comes
75 in the car from coming out of school, Tom changes straight away. His attitude, his
76 demeanour, he gets, he always looks on, even if you're in a good situation he'll look
77 on the bad side of it. He will only see negative results out lot of it. So as soon as he
78 gets sent from school, like get into the car, that's when it changes.

79 [Interviewer](#): What do you think is going on there?

80 [Hank](#): It's, he says it's boredom, because he doesn't have any real friends up there,
81 because he can't click with them. There's just something and the kids are far away,
82 they're normal kids and Tom tries to like be in charge and he wants to control things,
83 but with normal kids they won't let that happen. Obviously, with [TOM's school] every
84 kid there has their own situation they're going through. So they tend to mould easier
85 together because they kind of relate but with kids at home they don't relate like that.

86 [Interviewer](#): Yeah, I'm getting this really big sense of connectedness between the
87 young people who are going to the school and the school, in terms of like the sense
88 of community that's there and belonging, especially.

89 [Hank](#): That school they've built theirselves a little community in one way haven't

90 they, where you've got the farm side of it, you've got the athletic side, you've got the
91 music and drama side, you've got so many little things there which different groups
92 go to, but they all congregate with the same issues, in the same place, if that makes
93 any sense?

94 [Interviewer](#): So what was it like then for Tom when he wasn't able to go to school?

95 [Hank](#): Like I said earlier they took his safety blanket away. The government came in
96 with these restrictions, you can't do this, you can't do that, and straight away you've
97 severed an artery really of Tom's safety blanket, his whole point of being at that time
98 was gone. With Tom he's, in his old school, he was going for an hour a day
99 eventually it was. He would abscond, we would have trouble actually getting him into
100 school, soon as this school came along Tom wanted to go, he looked forward to
101 going, Sunday's he could not wait to go back into school.

102 [Interviewer](#): As a parent that must be so nice.

103 [Hank](#): Yeah, but it's like you've just severed that artery, and that is just gone. It's like
104 you've lost a leg, you can't do nothing.

105 [Interviewer](#): What did you do during that time then?

106 [Hank](#): At home it was a lot of, it was the time I bought myself a small van, because I
107 take Tom to school and I stay down here, and I wait for him to pick up. So what I've
108 done is made myself a little micro camper van. Yeah, so during the pandemic, I
109 hadn't, luckily I had some materials to make a basic start, so that was a little project I
110 had going during the six weeks. But Tom would only get involved for a small amount
111 of time because he's just constantly bored. He can do what he wants to do like with
112 school. He does a lot at [bike shop], he does with the animals. He's got more
113 freedom because they can offer him more opportunity in school.

114 [Interviewer](#): What have school done with Tom during this last year to sort of, promote
115 his engagement and his learning when he, when things haven't been normal?

116 [Hank](#): I think from early on the school realised Tom was not an inside person. I think
117 they clicked onto that, and obviously when they got the animals Tom found his little
118 niche, and school realised that so they could accommodate Tom and his schooling in
119 the pen over there. So they kind of said, we speak everyday normally, me and his
120 teachers like I said I've been coming down since Tom's gone to school, I'm down
121 here every day. So I can speak actually face to face with the teacher –

122 [Interviewer](#): That's so nice –

123 [Hank](#): or a TA, and they can tell me how his day's gone, or in the morning I can say

124 what's happened at home so they're aware of it. So we've kind of developed a bond

125 so that we can benefit Tom.

126 [Interviewer](#): Would you say your relationship, your relationship with the school is

127 really good then?

128 [Hank](#): Oh, it's brilliant. I can talk to any of the teachers, the TAs, they're willing to

129 come up and speak to me. I even have some of the kids, you can see they're a bit

130 edgy but as soon as they see me they come up and have a chat. And they come up,

131 it calms them down a little bit, but we've got good rapport, and I've always said if I

132 can do anything to help school I'll do it.

133 [Interviewer](#): I think they really value you from what I've heard so far. And I think they

134 admire your craftiness, as well.

135 [Hank](#): Craftiness?

136 [Interviewer](#): Yeah, as in like the carpentry and not being sneaky 'crafty'.

137 [Hank](#): I was gonna say, what have they found out?!

138 [Interviewer](#): Well, that's what I'm calling you about actually.

139 [Hank](#): That's alright, I'm used to it. But no I've always said to the school they've

140 always seen the projects I've done Tom talks about projects that we get into. And so

141 I've got a van with me every day, and then in the back is, there's two beds in there

142 now, there's a cooker, I can carry the mountain bikes in case Tom wants to bring his

143 bikes to school I can bring them down, so we can work on them in [bike shop]. As

144 soon as lockdown happened, that just disappeared. It was just, Tom at home, even

145 CAMHS have recently said, if you've got goldfish bowl and you put all of people's

146 issues into a goldfish bowl that is Tom he's got so many traits of different things they

147 can't put a name on it.

148 [Interviewer](#): Right.

149 [Hank](#): So he's just like a cauldron just constantly churning. You can't, we've thought

150 PDA, other things, and CAMHS are thinking autism, but what part we don't know, so

151 he's fighting with all this going on, while the lockdowns happened. And we're trying

152 to work with the school, trying to work that out, it's just constant. Tom is just

153 constantly turning in his head, it's never a good day.

154 [Interviewer](#): How does he respond to, like the social changes like distancing and
155 masks and hand sanitising?

156 [Hank](#): Well before the lockdown Tom every morning we come down we go to
157 Tesco's. Soon as social distancing came down, bang, Tom cut that off straight away,
158 he wouldn't go into anywhere. Really he would only go in with his mum or me, other
159 than that Tom will not touch shops or anything –

160 [Interviewer](#): Still or back then?

161 [Hank](#): He still won't come into Tesco's with me in the morning, shops he will go in
162 are mountain bike shops with me, cos he just can't do it now on his own, he won't go
163 in on his own.

164 [Interviewer](#): Oh, that's so sad, isn't it?

165 [Hank](#): Yeah, but what it is for Tom, Tom has to be able to go in first to see the place.
166 So he can see what's there and who's around, he has to like suss it out. But then
167 he'll only still go if it's one of us with him, he won't go in on his own anymore. But
168 before he would go down to the local bike shop and get some parts, like the local
169 bike shop. But now he won't even do that.

170 [Interviewer](#): That's really tough. It's a shame isn't it because you've built some
171 independence skills there, and now they've kind of, it's gone back a little bit from
172 what you've said.

173 [Hank](#): This lockdown has changed lives forever, I think, just the way people socialise
174 they, it's the physical touch when you shake a hand or a hug. It's just that little bit of
175 socialising taken away for so long, it's changed a lot of people even my little boy
176 [brother1] he's suffered, he's just gone back on himself. He's just, his anxieties are
177 going out of the roof every day. And he would go to school in the car and he would
178 hide so his mates wouldn't see him.

179 [Interviewer](#): Oh bless him.

180 [Hank](#): And he's just started at the comp. So that's his first year, when you're in
181 school you learn in school don't you. That was gone.

182 [Interviewer](#): Do you think Tom worries about about [brother1]?

183 [Hank](#): They fight like cats and dogs, but as Tom says it, he will actually look out for
184 [brother1], he has done. So, I said it's just Tom's head is just all over the place and
185 then with the lockdown it just spiked it.

186 [Interviewer](#): Have you noticed any positive changes to Tom since this has all
187 happened?

188 [Hank](#): He's slowly coming out of it because obviously, with yourself yesterday, he
189 wouldn't have done that a year ago. So over the year he has in some way built
190 himself up a little bit. I think that's down to the socialising in school, where they've
191 got the animals, they've got people come in they've had [news broadcaster] come
192 down and they get the lorry drivers delivering, especially for materials for the animal
193 pens. So Tom's gotten a little bit of socialising that way. And I think that probably is
194 just enough for him, not overloading it.

195 [Interviewer](#): Yeah, like not too intrusive but enough for him to know that other people
196 do come and visit.

197 [Hank](#): Yeah so with the lockdown nobody could visit so you couldn't see anybody.
198 He got on really well with my brother, his uncle over in [location]. And we've already
199 lost my brother a couple of times for heart issues and stuff. So for that to be taken
200 away from Tom not being able to be there, that was a big knock.

201 [Interviewer](#): It's kind of gone from like, people are people who keep you safe to
202 people aren't, other people aren't safe?

203 [Hank](#): Yeah and that got taken away by COVID, the security blanket. Obviously kids
204 with issues, they have people they trust. They go to places, and those people there
205 they trust, you take that away, the kids are left on their own.

206 [Interviewer](#): Do you think over the last year, he has regressed, made progress, or
207 stayed the same as how he was before COVID began?

208 [Hank](#): See I would say he has regressed slightly, a little bit, but he has grown a bit –

209 [Interviewer](#): In different areas?

210 [Hank](#): Yeah, because he's had to go from having everything to everything being
211 taken away, now to learn in a different lifestyle basically. That's just because of the
212 rules and regulations that have been put in normal life, so you have to relearn your
213 social life again.

214 [Interviewer](#): Like their resilience is amazing, isn't it, what's been thrown at them and
215 they may not necessarily understand why.

216 [Hank](#): That's the hardest part is, how do you explain to someone who doesn't really
217 understand, is like with Tom and [brother1] and [sister] the three youngest, because I

218 should have said the three eldest are like stepchild I've been with them since they
219 were eight. But my three, I'll call them my three then, I've always tried to be more
220 open with them about what is going on in life, as obviously kids go on Facebook or
221 on Instagram, they're on... they see news reports on these programmes on these
222 slides and whatever. And I try to explain to them what's going on, what's going on in
223 the world. So not to hold anything back from them. So that's why I've always tried to
224 be with them, just trying to be a bit more open. So kids, they are sponges they learn,
225 they soak everything in. So I think being open with them, not from like a dead early
226 age, but just being open with them at an early age will make them more comfortable
227 in their surroundings.

228 [Interviewer](#): People want to know the truth, don't they, they want to know the facts.

229 [Hank](#): But you can't believe everything you see in the papers, it's been proven time
230 and time again. So many news outlets that are constantly cut off which tell the truth
231 which the big media won't let you see.

232 [Interviewer](#): So how did you manage that?

233 [Hank](#): Obviously, I've watched things and I look at news reports on other sites and
234 I've tried to explain to the kids that they're saying that, but there's also these people
235 saying this, so don't judge everything you see straight away.

236 [Interviewer](#): I remember feeling overwhelmed myself, let alone trying to explain it to
237 somebody else.

238 [Hank](#): Because it all came out like Wuhan, came from this lab. And it was like, how
239 do you explain to them that it come from a lab, what was that lab doing? And I
240 basically had to sit down, especially with Tom, I said that lab, there was a female
241 scientist, this is how I see it, and they were doing research on bats where the virus
242 comes from. And the only place that these bats come from are from a cave in a
243 certain area of that country. I said that's why people are saying, yeah, it's coming
244 from there. And then it moved on to the meat factory, meat market whatever it was. I
245 said you're hearing different stories so just go back to the beginning and look for
246 where it came from first. So it's just built up his knowledge, not everything is black
247 and white.

248 [Interviewer](#): That's good, you know, making him a bit more flexible.

249 [Hank](#): I think that's how you got to be. We was trying to explain to the kids, they can't
250 do this, they can't do that. They need to know why. But obviously you can only do
251 that to a kid of a certain age really. I think they were, they were taking tips of what I
252 was saying but you can see they didn't really understand. But as with Tom, as you
253 saw yourself, he's a different kettle of fish. He is a very knowledgeable kid.

254 [Interviewer](#): Oh yeah, yeah.

255 [Hank](#): And I think that's because we've tried to be open with him, so he understands
256 what is going on in the world, so he could cope with it a little bit easier. If that makes
257 any sense but it does to me –

258 [Interviewer](#): No it does, I'm just thinking about what, what you're saying is really
259 interesting and it's really useful actually to speak to all three of you in terms of
260 teacher and Tom and you and like this is exactly what I wanted to do all three,
261 because one side of the story isn't enough. You have to get it all –

262 [Hank](#): You need to see all aspects of what goes behind that one person. Obviously
263 from the main person in the middle, Tom, and then you see both sides of how we are
264 trying to cope with the situations that are put in front of us.

265 [Interviewer](#): I suppose I'm interested to know as well. If, if we flashed back and had
266 to do everything all again, God forbid, no, but if we did, and you had to relive it all
267 again, is there anything that you would have done differently?

268 [Hank](#): No, because you can only do what happens in front of you there and then, life
269 isn't a kettle of fish where you know you're going to catch fish. Life chucks up so
270 many different spikes here there and everywhere. And I'm a person who, well you
271 can speak to my partner, when something happens I look into it, but I look into it a bit
272 more than you would normally. I want to know, like I said, I asked I went back I found
273 out it come from bats in this certain cave, and then they tested on back at this lab, I
274 look into it deeper and I try and see different aspects of what's being reported. So I
275 think my outlook and I, I'm easier to explain to Tom what's going on on my
276 perspective and how I see it and Tom in his head he kind of knows a kind of a story
277 of what's going on. And then you've got the school they helped him try and
278 understand what he's, well they're telling them to make his own assumptions. So, so
279 what happened, if it happened I'd do it again. But how can you say, it's gonna be the
280 same again next time.

281 [Interviewer](#): That's true. Yeah, that's true. I like to throw that question in and just see
282 what people say, cos some people do feel like there are things that they wish they'd
283 done more or less of or whatever and, yeah, it's just interesting.

284 [Hank](#): Obviously we were in a situation we were in a house move at beginning of
285 lockdown. There were people there were people on Facebook having a go at us,
286 because we were moving, were talking behind our backs and everything, but they
287 didn't know the situation. They didn't know that I had phoned the government I
288 phoned the police to make sure everything was alright. I dealt with the move
289 ourselves nobody else was involved. The house was empty. But we still had people
290 slating us. You try explaining that to someone like Tom. All he wanted to do is go out
291 with a bat and hit em, that is Tom though. If anyone says anything to us about us,
292 he'll go for em. It's happening in the school, someone says something about me and
293 Tom will put the kid in a chokehold.

294 [Interviewer](#): He's passionate about his family isn't he?

295 [Hank](#): Yeah, it doesn't come across that way at home sometimes. But Tom's
296 growing, he's learning to deal with what is given to us at a moment. And all we can
297 do it to try to explain our way as we go along.

298 [Interviewer](#): Well, it sounds like you're doing an amazing job. And that, sorry it
299 always sounds condescending when I say things like that but I do genuinely mean
300 that. And I think how Tom was yesterday in our interview is testament really to all of
301 the hard work that everybody's put in and you're a massive part of that. And so yeah,
302 don't, don't knock yourself and I know things are really busy for you but it's –

303 [Hank](#): Oh, not for me really, it's easier for me to help Tom because I'm in a situation
304 where I'm very good with my hands. So I can put, I'm doing woodcarvings in the van
305 and Tom sits down and watches what I'm doing. I can go into the woods, take Tom
306 bush crafting and then he watches what's going on and learning. I think Tom and me
307 get on a little bit better because I can turn anything into something.

308 [Interviewer](#): Yeah, but you're helping him to be still and to regulate himself and to
309 just be in that moment and you're reducing his stress by doing that so you're doing a
310 lot, even though you think you're not.

311 [Hank](#): That's the reason I stay down there as well because, Tom being Tom I know
312 he likes to know there's someone close just in case. It's like with COVID we were all

313 under each other's feet but he knew we were there. With school he knows, I say to
314 him three different code words, and nobody else will know what it means but he
315 knows what area I meant. Right, so he knows if something happens in school and he
316 needed a breather I would say where I'm at now and he'd know where I am, go to
317 there or get a good teacher to take him and it would be sorted. This is where the
318 safety blanket comes into it, when we said at the beginning of school or when Tom's
319 lost it.

320 [Interviewer:](#) But it works both ways, doesn't it, because from what you've described
321 you're his safety blanket as well when he's in school?

322 [Hank:](#) Yeah he knows I'm around all the time, I don't go too far except for if I'm going
323 mountain biking, that's a different story –

324 [Interviewer:](#) A bit more difficult! Okay, is there anything that we haven't talked about
325 about Tom's experiences of COVID measures and restrictions and the pandemic in
326 general, that we haven't, we haven't got to, or that we haven't talked about because I
327 feel like we've covered a lot –

328 [Hank:](#) I think you have and I don't think you can cover everything anyway, because
329 there's so much going on that even the littlest thing you forget about anyway, until
330 you put the phone down and then you think, damn I should have said that or asked
331 that.

332 [Interviewer:](#) Yeah, I suppose for me as well it's like what is, what stands out to you
333 that I'm interested in. So even though I will have those moments, I'm sure, I guess
334 I'm really interested in what your interpretation of it all is. And you've given me a lot
335 to think about.

336 [Hank:](#) That's what I mean it's like when this lockdown happened, when Tom went to
337 school I stay down here, and then I go home and life starts again with a different
338 lifestyle. That was taken away so for me, my little bit of freedom was gone as well.
339 And I think a lot of parents lost that, they're having to deal with these children with
340 their situations at home. And bit of time at school gave them their freedoms –

341 [Interviewer:](#) And a bit of rest and relief –

342 [Hank:](#) It is their respite, in a way. I think there's a lot of parents out there that are still
343 going through it, that are suffering because of it. Because CAMHS and all these
344 authorities are so overloaded because they picked up on so many kids with issues,

345 because their safety blanket, their freedoms have gone, their normal lives have had
346 to change, it might not go back for two more years yet. So that's impacted a
347 generation of children with issues and normal kids. But the more challenged kids,
348 they've got a harder hurdle to overcome. Because the schools teach the kids how to
349 communicate, how to socialise, how to be normal. And that's gone. That's how I see
350 it.

351 [Interviewer](#): Yeah, I think, you know, you're right and just from the parent perspective
352 being, being one, and being at home with my son, you know I needed that break too
353 –

354 [Hank](#): Yeah, and you lose that don't ya? Cos like I said we had our eldest in prison
355 for robbery, we were dealing with another one with drugs and alcohol and whatever
356 else he was doing I don't know, we're dealing with that. And then [brother2] with his
357 kidney transplant thing and each family is individuals. You can't put a marker on
358 someone say, right, you lot are under that blanket, well you're not. No one is the
359 same. So, normal life is a easy bracket to put on something, but normal life to some
360 people is totally different.

361 [Interviewer](#): Yeah, and I think we're just all trying to get back to our own version of
362 what normal was.

363 [Hank](#): Yeah, and I don't think that's going to happen for a while, and we will still have
364 to help these kids try and get over it. Because the COVID locked down people's
365 lives, but it's also the shops, your kid wants something but you can't go out to the
366 shop to get it. Even if you could go to a shop that shop can't get it because of
367 lockdown rules restricting some travelling, import and export. So you try and explain
368 that to a child who wants something there and then.

369 [Interviewer](#): Yeah, true. And you can get, you know, they don't have the resources to
370 give to you.

371 [Hank](#): Yeah, so I think it's a much bigger impact on kids with issues than a normal
372 kid.

373 [Interviewer](#): Where things maybe are a bit more urgent?

374 [Hank](#): Yeah, like if your kid's having a tantrum because he wants some kind of
375 squishy. And you know that squishy will settle him down but you can't go to the shop
376 to get that. Cos you look at Tom he's a bit sensory with what he eats. It's like you

377 can't go out and get it, you go to a shop you could be there queuing for God knows
378 how long, meanwhile someone else is back at the house having to deal with an issue
379 going on. That's all been mixed up in it as well. So that little kid is trying to deal with I
380 want this but I can't get that and he's stopping me getting it and they're stopping me
381 getting it and I've been told I can't do this and I can't do that. There's so many mixed
382 things going on in that child's head –

383 [Interviewer](#): And they don't understand why –

384 [Hank](#): Yeah exactly, they're so mixed up. And like I said some younger kids can't
385 understand that

386 [Interviewer](#): So needless to say you're happy that school, at least school's back up to
387 normal and –

388 [Hank](#): Yeah we were quite lucky because during that time, they done, they did try
389 and help the load like trying to help getting Tom out riding one day a week, but
390 obviously rains and stuff like that you can't do it all the time. Because that's another
391 thing with Tom, at school he got into the, you're in [location] aren't you? You know
392 the [team]? They're a road cycling team –

393 [Interviewer](#): Oh right, okay –

394 [Hank](#): Well their head coach, beginning of lockdown Tom had just been picked up by
395 him, to join [team] with them.

396 [Interviewer](#): Oh no, and he couldn't go? Has he been since?

397 [Hank](#): No, because of lockdowns and TAs and can't go and do this, lockdowns, can't
398 do that. And of course restrictions of government about things you can't do this and
399 you can't do that.

400 [Interviewer](#): It's just these opportunities, isn't it, passing by.

401 [Hank](#): Did he mention the Duke of Edinburgh yesterday?

402 [Interviewer](#): No, no.

403 [Hank](#): Tom was actually doing his Duke of Edinburgh, I think they said he's halfway
404 through doing his bronze award, but they can't carry on doing stuff, because of
405 lockdown restrictions, because you can't do certain things outdoors, and all that stuff
406 that is all part of the Duke of Edinburgh Tom cannot do.

407 [Interviewer](#): Right, I see, which is crazy isn't it because we're allowed to be outside.

408 [Hank](#): Yeah, but you can only have a certain amount of groups of people can't you –

409 [Interviewer](#): Oh bless him, I really hope that for everybody's sake that things start to
410 get more quickly back to how they used to be.

411 [Hank](#): I don't think it's got, it's got to be quickly, I think it has to be managed, which
412 they are trying to do, but I think we go around it in the wrong way sometimes. I think
413 they've just got to be careful and I think, basically it just comes down to common
414 sense of everybody else. People need to use their common sense to make
415 judgments that they know are right and go by that and not go beyond it. And we've
416 seen so many people flouting the rules, and you're trying to tell the kid that he can't
417 do it but there's a group two doors down doing that.

418 [Interviewer](#): That's got to be so difficult especially if, you know, Tom is a bit more of a
419 black and white thinker. It's like, well, that doesn't make sense, because they're
420 doing it –

421 [Hank](#): But it's, all the kids in these situations are seeing it all over the world, they're
422 seeing what's going on. And that's why it is, and they've said it is going to be a
423 mixed-up generation.

424 [Interviewer](#): Hm, wow. Okay, well I think, you know, from what we've talked about I
425 have absolutely loads to think about and reflect on from what we've discussed. So,
426 unless there's anything else to add, I'm going to stop the recording is that okay?

427 [Hank](#): Yeah, it's no probs.

428 [Interviewer](#): Thank you.

[End of recording]

Appendix S – Reflexive thematic analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2021)

Phase 1-2: Familiarisation with the data set and coding.

All interviews were transcribed into individual word documents. These documents were then uploaded to NVivo12 according to their case study (e.g., for Case Study A, Tom, Hank, and Wilson’s transcripts were uploaded). Each document was then analysed separately and coded (see Figure 9 for an example of this process).

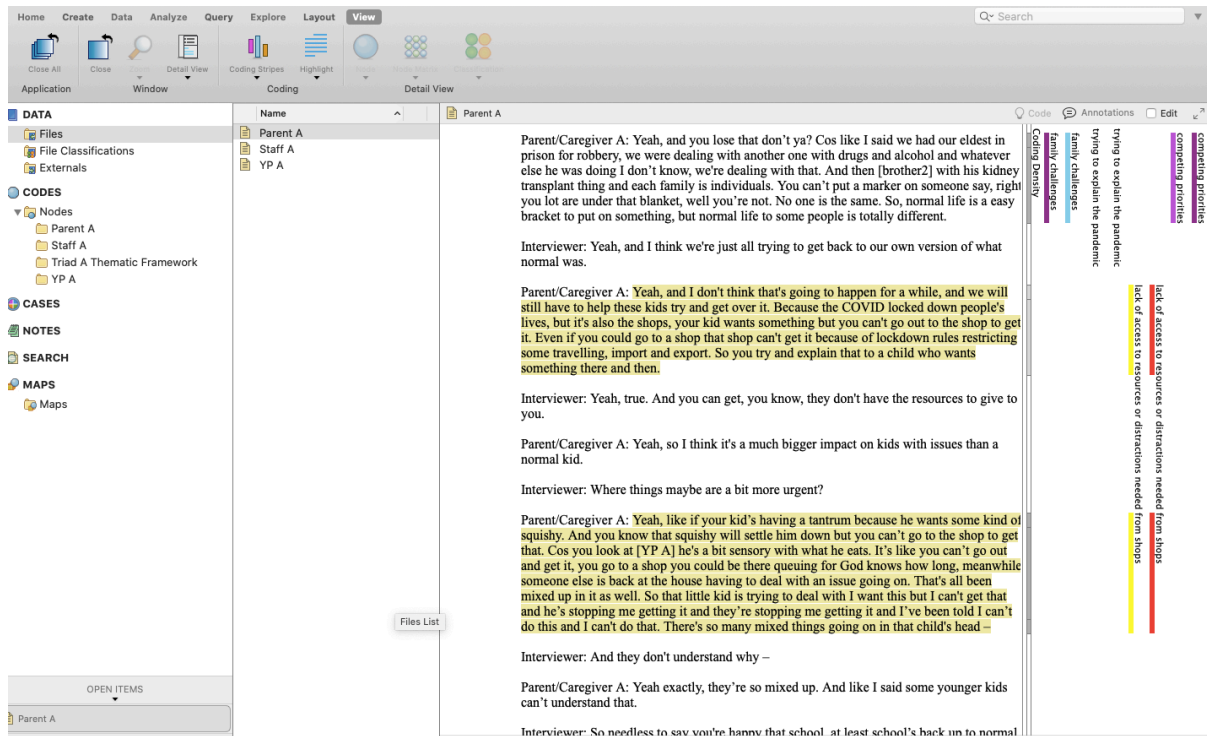


Figure 9. Example of coding of a transcript.

Familiarisation of the data occurred during the transcription process, prior to coding, and when coding the data.

After coding the transcripts, the codes were checked to ensure accuracy and to check that there were no significant gaps of text that had not been coded. They were also assigned to individual files for each member of a case study (e.g., Parent A, YP A, or Staff A). An example of this for Case Study A can be seen in Figure 10.

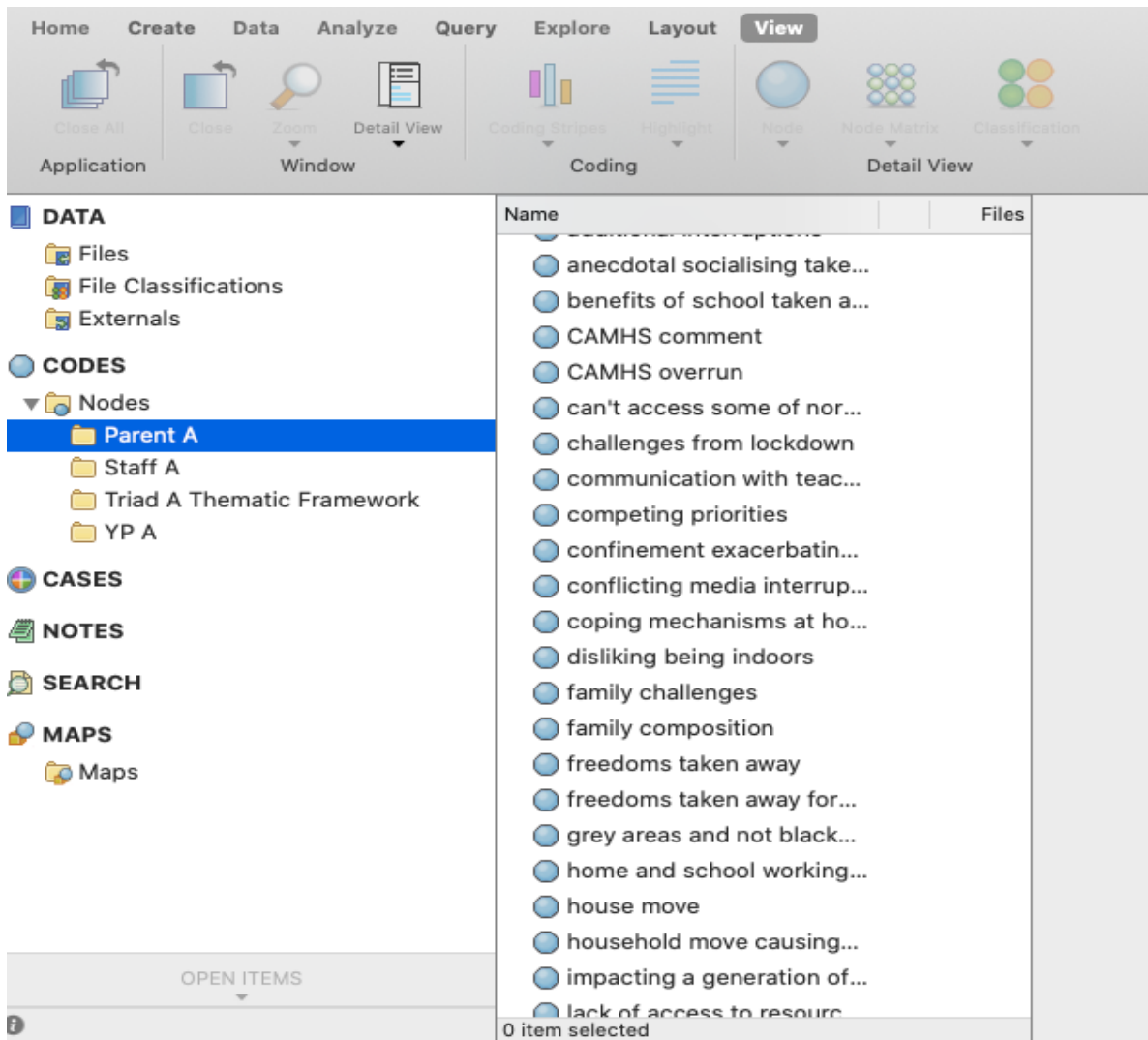


Figure 10. Example of codes transferred to individual participant files.

Phase 3: Generating initial themes.

As the data for each case study was going to be considered as whole (e.g., all responses for Case Study A, all for B, etc.), all participant codes were organised in one collated code list under the name 'Triad A/B/C Thematic Framework' (see Figure 11). Once transferred, initial themes were generated within these lists and the lists were then printed to be developed and reviewed more thoroughly in Phase 4.

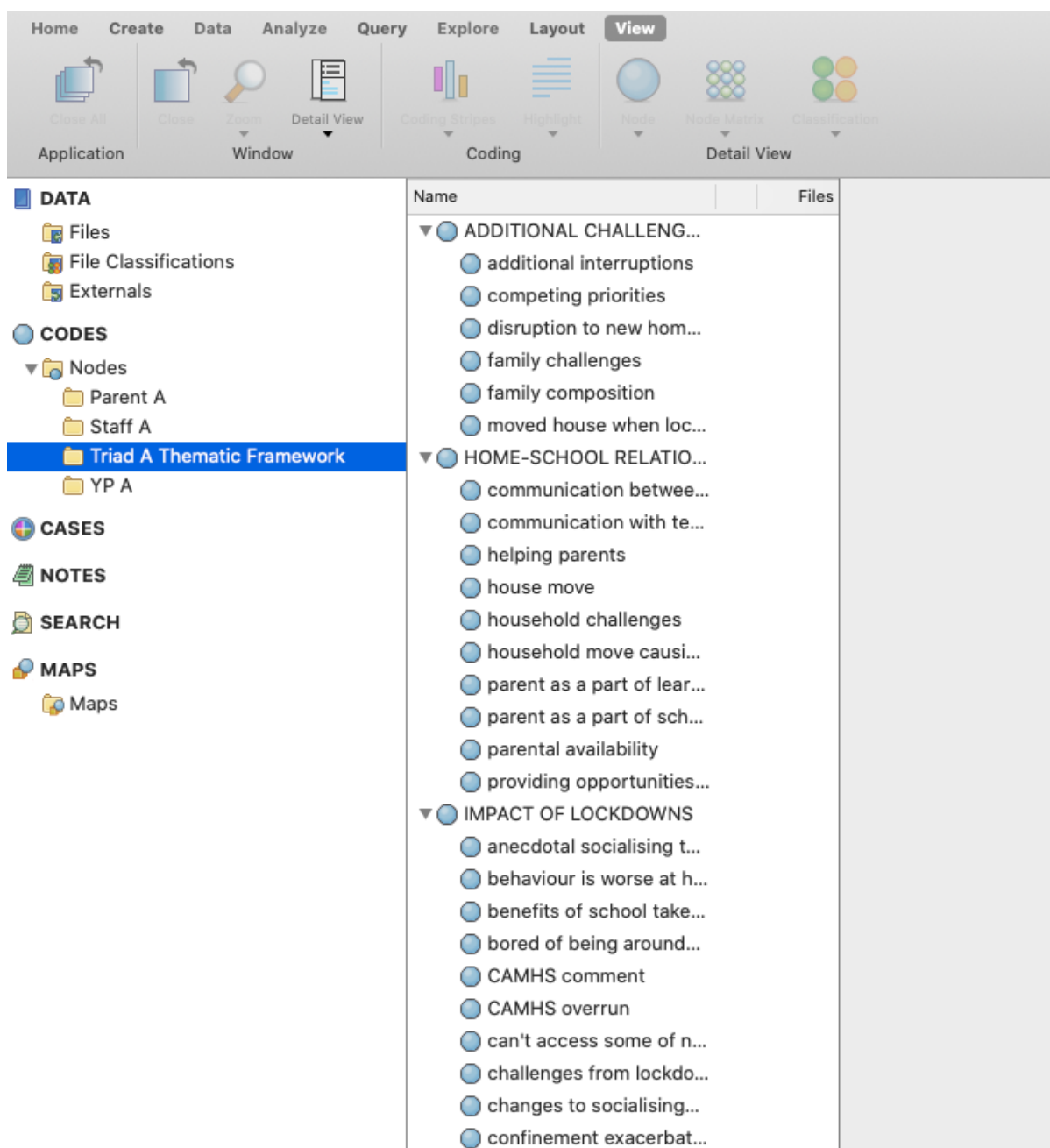


Figure 11. Example of codes collated to represent all data in a triad.

Phase 4-5: Developing and reviewing themes and redefining and naming themes.

The list of codes (organised into initial themes; see Figure 12) were analysed and cross-referenced with the original transcripts for further clarity. These initial themes were re-organised and re-named as the themes were developed, with this process being mapped onto large pieces of paper. The codes were checked off on the original list once they had been accounted for on the map and numbered so they could be easily linked to themes (see Figure 13). The thematic map was then written up (Phase 6).

✓ person-centred (12)	1
✓ person-centred approaches (17)	5
✓ positive home and school relationship (16)	1
✓ positive relationship with teachers and students (16)	1
✓ prevented family breakdown (13)	1
✓ school as a safe space (18)	1
✓ school aware of A's needs (7)	1
✓ school based support (17)	1
✓ school is important to A (8)/14	1
✓ school opportunities (20)	1
✓ school promoting confidence (20)	1
✓ sense of community (16)	1
✓ settled in school (18)/14	1
✓ showing A that there is communication between hom... (16)	1
✓ starting to regulate self more in AP (20)	1
✓ supporting A to recognise successes (17)/14	1
✓ variety in school (20)	1
✓ wanting to reinforce progress (20)	1
✓ YP A has made improvements since being in AP (20)	1
✓ YP with the same issues in same place (16)	1
▼ SCHOOL RESPONSES	0
✓ accessibility of learning (3)	1
✓ continued attendance to school (3)	1
✓ feeling in control is necessary for engagement (3)	1

Figure 12. Part of printed coding list following the development of initial themes.

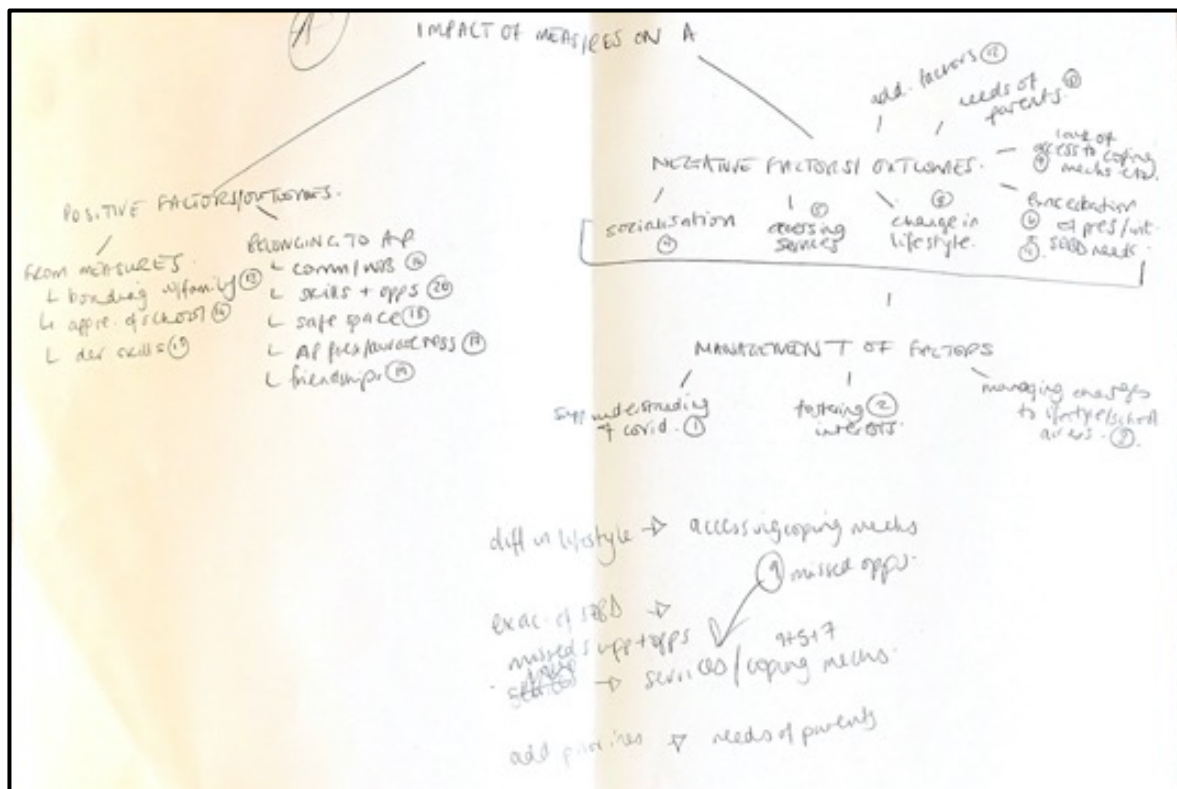


Figure 13. Example of thematic map at Phases 4 and 5.