

**An Appreciative Inquiry:  
The Perceptions of  
Frontline Educational Psychologists  
into Ethical Issues**

**Doctorate in Educational Psychology**

**Sarah White**

**2013**

## DECLARATION

This work has not been submitted in substance for any other degree or award at this or any other university or place of learning, nor is being submitted concurrently in candidature for any degree or other award.

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## **Abstract**

This study is concerned with ethical issues in professional educational psychology. It investigates how twelve frontline educational psychologists employed in one local authority educational psychology service perceive and manage ethical issues. It examines what they perceive as desirable support and identifies what organisational features contribute to effective support in the management of ethical issues.

Educational psychologists encounter a range of ethical issues in their practice. However little is known about the perceptions of frontline educational psychologists in the United Kingdom.

This dissertation begins with an examination of the changing professional landscape and its consequences for educational psychologists in their practice.

Given the scope of the inquiry, the relevant background literature relates to a broad range of subject areas. The literature review focuses on research evidence into ethics and psychology, ethical theories and concepts, professionalism in educational psychology, features of professionalism and ethical practice in organisations.

Owing to the sensitivities of the context of the research setting, Appreciative Inquiry was selected as the most appropriate methodological orientation. The research constitutes a case study of one local authority educational psychology service.

Educational psychologists identified a wide range of difficult situations and challenges to professionalism in their practice. Of the final themes to emerge character, relationships, supervision and the workplace environment are of significant importance to frontline educational psychologists in managing the ethical issues in their practice.

The study presents an appreciative model identifying factors contributing to the management of ethical issues. It is proposed that educational psychologists are best supported by a range of formal and informal professional support within an organisation characterised by certain features including on-going CPD, leadership and vision, policies, procedures and guidance and a conducive workplace environment.

Areas for future research into the management of ethical issues are called for, including research into fully traded, semi traded and independent models of service delivery.

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## Chapter 1

### **Introduction**

*'Psychologists have the opportunity to exercise power and influence many people's lives. This carries with it the necessity to behave ethically'. (Lindsay, 2008, p.189).*

This study explores the perceptions of frontline educational psychologists into ethical issues. An assumption inherent in the present study is that there is indeed 'a necessity to behave ethically' as urged by Lindsay (2008, p.189); and that in order to do so 'frontline' (the definition of 'frontline' is given later in this chapter) educational psychologists (EPs) require a range of support for managing ethical issues in their practice.

#### **Significance of the topic**

There is increasing interest in professional ethics in many areas of modern social life, both nationally and globally. This interest gives rise to increased scrutiny of ethical behaviour. In the year this study was undertaken the news was dominated by scandals and inquiries, such as, the Leveson Inquiry in Press Standards and MPs expenses. The outcome of these has been a call for greater emphasis on corporate social responsibility, ethical consumerism and institutional interest in ethics. It is interesting to note that in the world of business, the Institute of Business Ethics (IBE), before the recent scandals, had published the Corporate Use of Codes of Ethics, (2005). Indeed, such was the intensity of outrage in the field of business ethics that Boddy (2011) writing in the Journal of Business Ethics speculated that the behaviour of senior managers within modern financial corporations might be compared to the behaviour of psychopaths. Perhaps this may be somewhat of an

overstatement but it does reflect the frenzy of the times and a concern about ethics in the public domain.

The crisis in professional ethics is not confined to corporate life. Traditional professions/service settings such as law and medicine, have encountered their own challenges resulting in debate and changes over established professional practice, especially since the case of Harold Shipman, (HMSO, The Shipman Inquiry- Sixth Report, 2005).

This growing interest in ethics in public and professional life is reflected in the number of websites containing ethics in their title. At the start of this study a search of sites on Google having 'ethics' + date revealed a significant rise in hits over the past ten years, about 112,000,000 in 2012, compared to about 56,900,000 in 2002. This suggests a widespread concern with *'how we ought to live'* (Singer, 1994 p.4) and in *'determining how conflicts in human interests are to be settled and for optimising the mutual benefit of people living together in groups'* (Rest, 1986 p.1).

Professional educational psychology is not immune from these societal trends and changes. There is now an established European Meta Code of Ethics developed by the European Federations of Psychologists' Associations (EFPA) as the basis for all national codes – applying similar standards to all psychologists in Europe (Lindsay et al, 2008).

The dominance of professional ethics in public life and its relevance within professional educational psychology offers important reasons for ethics as the

subject of research. Individual educational psychologists (EPs) are not isolated from wider societal concerns, rapidly changing times and confusion about ethical standards. The perceptions and views of educational psychologists are imperative if there is to be greater understanding in this area. From the outset it is important to define what is meant by a 'frontline' educational psychologist throughout this dissertation: a frontline educational psychologist is directly involved with children, young people and families on a daily basis during the course of their work as opposed to non-generic, leadership or management activities.

A focus of this inquiry is ethical issues at a time of legislative and organisational change. The intention is to investigate the perceptions of frontline educational psychologists into ethical issues working in a local authority (LA) educational psychology service (EPS) and what factors and conditions contribute to effective support for EPs faced with ethical concerns. As stated, the purpose of the study is to investigate ethical issues. Its product will be to put forward to the senior management team of the LA EPS a model envisioning possibilities for the future to support EPs in the management of ethical issues.

The research setting is the educational psychology service which forms part of the Children, Young People's and Families directorate in a large urban and rural LA. The twelve frontline educational psychologists, comprising the population of this study and who were employed up until the autumn 2011, were colleagues of mine.

The first chapter therefore serves a number of inter-related purposes.

- To identify the personal and professional background to the study.
- To identify the study's origins and significance.
- To explore the changing professional landscape.
- To identify the aims of the research.
- To describe in greater detail the research setting.
- To acknowledge the methodological orientation of the research and the study's theoretical significance.
- To address questions of definition and terminology.

The chapter concludes with an outline of the structure of the dissertation.

### Personal and Professional Background to the study

My interest in ethical issues has developed through my practice as an EP both in case work and systemic work against an ever changing organisational and national backdrop. In my own practice some decisions have been better or surer than others, whilst some have resulted in sleepless nights, confusion and criticism. In the course of my nine year career as a frontline EP I have had to face a range of dilemmas and challenges including:

- Hearing from a child that the previous head teacher had hit a pupil.
- Being asked to conduct a cognitive assessment on a pupil with Downs Syndrome.
- Supporting another professional with a mental health issues impacting on practice.

- Being asked to act as witness in a tribunal where I was in support of the parents.

In my current role as a frontline educational psychologist working with the most vulnerable children, young people and families I face more pronounced and complex dilemmas than in my career as a teacher. The ethical issues I have faced as an EP have acted as a stimulus to this research.

### The Study's Origins and Significance

The catalyst for undertaking a study in this area arose from a growing feeling of personal and professional discomfort and unease that my own decision making may have been over-influenced by changing organisational pressures. For example, all early intervention and preventative work was suspended in order to meet the statutory responsibilities of the LA at a time of reduced resources. Furthermore, following the reorganisation of the LA I became increasingly aware that my decision making had become coloured by the sometimes conflicting interests of children, young people and their families and the looming market forces where it was proposed that there would be a traded educational psychology service to be bought in by schools and other interested parties. The LA which is the focus of this case study was proposing a part statutory, part traded model of service delivery as part of a new organisational structure. At issue was the need to generate traded work in order to safeguard the jobs of educational psychologists. Some schools expressed interest in buying a large 'package' of EP time while others did not request any service because of uncertainty about their budgets. There were yet other schools

which requested services on a 'pay as you go' basis resulting in competing demands on a reduced number of educational psychologists owing to forced redundancies. The significance of this led to increased demands on time and resources to deliver an unplanned service whilst continuing to balance competing statutory and traded priorities. This placed in sharp relief my perceived ethical responsibilities and professional duties to the most vulnerable children, young people and families, whilst meeting the demands of schools paying for a service which secured employment for myself and colleagues. The origin of the study was therefore the start of the journey in reconciling how a part traded and part statutory funded service might develop to ensure equal access to all whilst ensuring ethical principles were upheld.

### The Changing Professional Landscape

Professional Educational psychologists are currently facing a complex, newly evolving landscape, in terms of the legislative background such as The Children's Act (2004), The Academies Act (2010), the Education Act (2011) and the recent Green Paper on Special Educational Needs; 'Support and Aspiration' and an austere economic climate. The Academies Act (2010) will enable more schools in England to become academies. A significant number of academies have opened since September 2010. The effect of the changes in legislation may lead to significant changes in the role of the educational psychologist.

Within this context many LA psychology services in the UK have faced considerable reorganisation in recent years. The local authority concerned in this study was significantly restructured in 2011 with a reduction in the numbers of full time

equivalent educational psychologists over time. The Association of Educational psychologists has published Principles for the Delivery of Publicly Funded Educational psychology services (AEP, 2011). It states that 'access to the service should be free at the point of delivery to children, young people and families'. In the new market economy educational psychologists may face ethical dilemmas associated with payment which in turn may affect the relationship between frontline professionals, schools, children young people and families.

Since 2009 professional educational psychologists are now required to be registered with the Health Professions Council (HPC) with new duties and standards of proficiency, conduct performance and ethics. Since this research began the HPC has been re-named the Health and Care Professions Council. In addition to the four ethical principles stated in the British Psychological Society Code of Ethics and Conduct, the HPC includes fourteen standards of conduct, performance and ethics. Alongside this the growing interest in professional ethics was reflected in an article in the Psychologist, 'The only way is ethics' (Sergeant, 2012), and in the establishment in 2012 of a Division of Educational and Child Psychologists (DECP) working group of into ethical trading (DECP Annual Report, 2011).

Arguably the social, political and economic context has an impact on all walks of professional practice to some extent, including educational psychology. Social, political and economic developments may have an impact upon the ethical realm of the profession too, making the concern with ethics more foregrounded and important. This complexity is embedded in the current study.

## Aims of the Research

The increasing public interest in ethics in professional life has highlighted the centrality and significance of ethics across different domains of public life including professional educational psychology.

But how do these societal trends along with the resurgence of interest in professional ethics manifest themselves within the context of a LA educational psychology service and specifically for frontline EPs? What is the impact of the rapidly changing times on educational psychologists, the ethical issues they encounter and their decision making? And how can an organisation support its frontline workers? What support do frontline EPs want when faced with challenging situations?

These broad questions were distilled into the following research questions for this study:

- What do frontline EPs perceive as ethical issues in their practice?
- How do frontline EPs manage perceived ethical issues?
- What support do frontline EPs perceive as desirable when managing perceived ethical issues?
- What organisational arrangements would EPs wish to see implemented to support the management of ethical issues?



## The Research Setting

The research setting was my own workplace. The county in which this study took place is in the south of the country. Children's services in the County Council were deemed to 'perform well' in a recent Ofsted inspection 2011. In particular most services, settings and institutions which were inspected by Ofsted were good or outstanding but a few were rated inadequate.

The inspectors noted that the performance of children's services had been maintained since the previous year, 2010. They reported that most services setting and institutions were good at helping children and young people to stay safe. They noted that average standards were continuing to improve steadily at age five, eleven and sixteen but that there were weaknesses in achievement for some vulnerable groups. Arguably it is this group that are the concern of the frontline educational psychologists in this study whose numbers had been significantly reduced. The inspectors also reported that more provision was good or better and less was inadequate compared with their last visit in 2010 and that general progress had been made. The Ofsted report stated that changes to secondary provision were underway with more schools becoming academies. Following government policy it was the case that certain primary schools that had been placed under special measures were also due to become academies in 2012. Ofsted judged safeguarding and services for looked after children and youth offending good.

Prior to and during the course of this research significant budget cuts had resulted in considerable re-structure and organisational change in the local authority, with changes in management and leadership structures. The turnover of senior officers

was considerable. Specifically for the educational psychology service there had been three different Directors as well as interim Directors of Children and Young People within a few years. In addition there had been a 'Better Offices Programme' resulting in local authority employees having to change their working environments and locations – an important change which had an impact on the present research.

### Methodological Orientation and Theoretical Significance

Billington and Todd (2012) writing in the Guest Editorial of Educational and Child Psychology argue that 'mainstream psychology' has associated itself with experimental methods and has:

*'tended to ignore those qualitative aspects of humans beings that do not easily surrender to the experimental method such as experience, meaning or value'.*(Billington and Todd, 2012 p.5)

Willig and Stainton –Rogers (2008) assert that there has been '*a steady growth*' in *the use of qualitative approaches*'. This reflects a shift in thinking arising from societal attitudes to knowledge (Billington and Todd, 2012, p 6).

This study is conducted from a social constructionist perspective:

*'which draws attention to the fact that human experience, including perception, is mediated historically, culturally and linguistically'* (Willig, 2001 p.7).

This study adopts a qualitative methodology and is in accord with the views of Willig (2001) who writes:

*'Qualitative researchers tend to be concerned with meaning. That is they are interested in how people make sense of the world and how they experience events. They aim to understand 'what it is like' to experience particular conditions...how people manage certain circumstances (e.g. how people negotiate family life or relations with work colleagues). Qualitative researchers tend, therefore, to be concerned with the quality and texture of experience, rather than with the identification of cause-effect relationships. They do not tend to work with 'variables' that are defined by the researcher before the research process begins...the objective of qualitative research is to describe and possibly explain events and experiences, but never to predict. Qualitative researchers study people in their own territory within naturally occurring settings.'* (Willig, 2001, p.9).

Qualitative research aims to examine individuals within their natural environment and is usually based on a constructivist epistemology (Christensen, 2007). Researchers who use qualitative methods are seeking to understand a problem or situation rather than establish causal relationships between variables. They will be inclined to methods of data collection, such as structured and semi structured interviews, rather than using numerical or statistical data (Robson, 2002). Qualitative research focuses on the subjective views of how individual participants perceive situations and consequently aims to explore phenomena in greater depth than quantitative designs. Additionally qualitative research is not limited by pre-chosen variables and

consequently more detailed information can be gathered (Kazdin, 2003). Kidder and Fine (1987) distinguish between two meanings of 'qualitative research'. On one hand there are open ended, inductive research methodologies that are concerned with theory generation and exploration of meanings – known as big Q – and methodologies which incorporate non-numerical data collection techniques into hypothetical-deductive research – little q. This study follows a big Q methodology. The methods of research in this study are underpinned by certain sets of conceptual and philosophical assumptions.

This study is based on what has been referred to as '*initial theory*' (Hamel, 1993, p.44) or '*study prepositions*' Yin (1994, p. 21).

*'Both study prepositions and initial theory guide the researcher's attention to what is to be examined within the framework of the study. In other words the researcher's selection of a case and the questions he or she chooses to ask about it are theoretical in that they identify particular concepts as relevant'*  
Willig (2001, p.76)

Yin argues that '*the design of a case study embodies a 'theory'*'. He proposes that:

*'all case studies should be preceded by statements about what is to be explored, the purpose of the exploration and the criteria by which it will be judged'*. (Yin, 1994, p.29)

Taking a qualitative stance, this study is concerned with how educational psychologists 'make sense' of the ethical issues they face in their work. The study is planned and developed using the qualitative research methodology of Appreciative Inquiry and it is interpretative (Reed, 2006). The rationale for selecting this research method is to better understand how applied educational psychologists manage ethical issues in their workplace.

The *methodology* planned for this research is Appreciative Inquiry (AI). AI is grounded in the theory and practice of social constructionism (Burr, 1995) which regards social and psychological reality as open to reconstruction from multi-perspectives. The proposed benefits of this approach are that AI approaches the understanding and analysis of organisations in a number of important ways. AI is affirmative which means that the research focus will be on an appreciation of the positives within the LA. The means of information gathering is not problem focussed. AI is improvisational and outcomes can be unplanned and unexpected whilst based on a set of principles.

A more extensive discussion on methodological orientation, research design and ethical issues is provided in Chapter 3.

## Questions of Definition and Terminology

It is essential from the outset that there is clarity about the terminology used in the study. For this reason some of the fundamental concepts used in the study are explained:

**Codes of conduct:** prescribes specific types of behaviour. They do not tell us any deeper values that could be used to resolve conflicts between duties. Codes give a relatively stable list of duties or rules on how to proceed in given contexts (Webster, 2004, unpublished).

**Ethics as a discipline:** Ethics is the study of morals. Ethics is a branch of moral philosophy which attempts to understand the nature of what is right and wrong conduct. *'Ethics can be defined as the science of morals or rules of behaviour'*, (British Psychological Society, 2009, p.6).

**Ethical issue:** refers to any aspect of professional life, in this study professional educational psychology, which has a moral or ethical dimension.

**Ethical dilemma:** this arises when there is a conflict between one or two courses of action. In this study the term ethical dilemma describes the sometimes conflicting actions facing a frontline educational psychologist.

**Ethical problem-solving:** refers to the strategies used, or reasoning process employed by the educational psychologist in order to help resolve an ethical dilemma.

**Frontline educational psychologist:** A frontline educational psychologist is directly involved with children, young people and families on a daily basis during the course of their work as opposed to non-generic, leadership or management activities.

**Morals:** explicit ideas about what is right or wrong, good or bad (Webster, 2004 p.5)

## ***Perception***

Schultz (2012) makes the point that internal perception, more commonly known as introspection, is the self-examination of one's conscious thoughts and feelings.

Within human psychology the process of introspection relies on the purposeful self-observation of one's mental state. For present purposes, perception is defined as an individual's introspective thoughts on a subject which are articulated to another through the means of language.

**Principles:** are guidelines for human conduct. These are seen as fundamental to the way in which people behave towards each other and have broad application across social groups or within a profession. Principles allow us to undertake the ethical analysis of a problem in professional practice (Webster, 2004).

**Professional Ethics:** is knowledge of what will enhance clients' development and well-being. Knowledge and skills are built incrementally and collaboratively by a professional group committed to furthering good practice. Professional integrity, or ethical practice, concerns whether individuals act in accordance with agreed group standards (Webster, 2004)

**Values:** values are rooted in individual and collective experience and indicate what is considered to be worthwhile or significant. Not necessarily moral (thieves may share the same values without being moral) (Webster, 2004).

## Chapter Summary and outline of the structure of the dissertation.

This introduction has provided the reader with an outline of the current interest and concern for ethical behaviour both in general societal terms and more specifically in professional educational psychology. This overview has shown how the ethical

dimension in decision making is of importance to frontline EPs. It is envisaged that the study into the perceptions of frontline EPs may provide a deeper understanding and offer a view into the support needed within an organisation to develop ethical awareness further.

Chapter Two will examine the literature on ethics and psychology, theories of ethics and concepts, professionalism in educational psychology, features of professionalism, organisations and ethical practice.

The procedures for carrying out the research, the methodological orientation, assumptions and ethical considerations will be outlined in Chapter Three. The presentation and discussion of findings will be presented in Chapter Four. The final chapter is the Conclusion of the study. The structure of the remaining chapters is as follows:

- Chapter Two: Literature Review
- Chapter Three: Methodological Orientation, Research Design and Ethical Issues
- Chapter Four: Presentation and Discussion of Findings
- Chapter Five: Conclusion.

The general research aims of this study are re-stated for the reader as follows:



## General Research Aims

- To investigate the perceptions of frontline EPs into ethical issues.
- To identify factors and conditions which contribute to effective support for EPs faced with ethical issues in one local authority.
- To offer to the Senior Management Team of the LA EPS a model envisioning possibilities for the future to support educational psychologists in the management of ethical issues.

The study will now turn to the Literature Review.

## Chapter 2

### **Literature Review**

The Introduction to this study suggested that concern with the field of ethics in professional psychology is a developing and expanding one (Lindsay, 2008). This is evident in a growing body of conceptual and research literature (Bersoff, 2003; Francis, 1999; Keith –Spiegel and Koocher, 1998; Webster and Lloyd-Bennett (Eds), 2002). The challenge to the present inquiry and more specifically to this chapter is to position the present study's aims, as identified on pages 8 and 16 of the introductory chapter, within a scholarly context and tradition.

First it is important to identify the systematic processes undertaken during the review of the literature and expand upon key sources.

#### **The literature search**

According to Fink (2005) the approach to a literature review should be systematic, explicit, comprehensive and reproducible. A number of measures to ensure the comprehensiveness of the review were taken. The electronic databases searched covered a broad range of relevant subject areas:

- Philosophy and ethics
- Psychology
- Education
- Medicine and Nursing
- Business

- Organisations
- Professionalism

The literature review for this thesis began in 2010, although the majority of literature was collected throughout 2011 and 2012. A variety of search tools were used including databases accessed through the University of Cardiff, Government websites and searches in individual journals known to include material of relevance to the thesis topic and the work of educational psychologists. The initial criteria for the literature search were those books, articles and documents published between 2002 and 2012 following the publication of the special edition of *Educational and Child Psychology* 'Ethics in Practice' in 2002. This search was then extended to between 1985 and 2012 to include publications since the first BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct was produced.

The main databases used to search for literature in relation to the thesis topic were: Ovid, ERIC, Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts (ASSIA); Psych Info and Educational Research Abstracts. Multiple field searches were carried out within abstracts as keyword searches or title searches seemed to be too narrow and yielded few results. The search terms used included; ethics, psychology, professionalism, professional ethics, ethical practice, educational psychology, applied psychology, business and coaching psychology and organisational ethics. This was followed by a manual search of the reference lists of review articles and of studies identified through the search engines.

Abstracts were read and articles were considered relevant if they included research about ethical issues including decision making, professionalism, educational

psychology, features of professionalism, supervision, trust and codes of practice and organisations. For articles to be considered relevant for the ethical issues search, the abstract had to refer directly to each key word. All the relevant articles were read and formed the basis of the literature review along with further documentation from government publications, secondary references and manual searches as described below.

The main website used to search for government related publications were from the DfE found through the Ofsted website, COPAC Academic and Specialist Library Catalogue, British Psychological Society (BPS), Health Professions Council (HPC) and Association of Educational psychologists (AEP) websites. Information on legislation was found through searching the following website: [www.opsi.gov.uk](http://www.opsi.gov.uk).

Individual journals were also searched using the key words 'ethics', 'ethical issues', 'ethical practice', 'professionalism' 'psychology' and 'organisations'. These included journals specific to educational psychology. Access to these journals and publications was via the University of Cardiff website and the British Psychological Society website. The journals used in this specific way included:

- Educational psychology in Practice
- The Psychologist
- Journal of School Psychology
- British Journal of Educational psychology
- Educational Psychology Review
- Educational and Child Psychology
- Journal of Business Ethics.

- International Coaching Review.
- Social Justice Research.

In addition to these search strategies, secondary references from published articles were also followed up and found via the journal search tool available through the University of Cardiff Portal website.

The following literature related to the general research aims and field of inquiry are critically appraised:

- Ethics and Psychology.
- Ethical theories and concepts.
- Professionalism in educational psychology.
- Features of professionalism.
- Organisations and ethical practice.

### Ethics and Psychology

The majority of research reports concerning the ethical nature of psychology has emanated from the United States of America. The studies tend to highlight inconsistencies in how ethical dilemmas are acted upon and resolved. The dilemmas described included situations where there were conflicts between ethics and the law or conflicting ethical principles; where there existed conflicting client interests and where potentially harmful educational practice was observed (Pope and Vetter, 1992; Garrett, 1994, Pope et al, 1997).

For the most part there is a dearth of published research literature on the experiences of practitioner psychologists in the UK. However, there are exceptions which are referred to in this chapter, notably a selection of papers in a special edition

of Educational and Child Psychology – Ethics in Practice (Webster and Lloyd Bennett (Eds), 2002).

A seminal event occurred in 1995 when the then president of the BPS, Professor Geoff Lindsay, raised the profile of ethics in psychology by devoting his presidential address to the topic. He argued that psychology and psychological practice is influenced by political and cultural factors and as such is not 'value free'. Lindsay (1995) postulated that psychologists had an element of choice not only in responding to political and cultural agendas but also in '*defining the values which should guide practitioner's responses and underpin their professional identity*'. He referred to empirical evidence in North America on types of ethically troubling dilemmas, (Pope et al, 1987; Pope and Vetter; 1992; Garrett, 1994). Lindsay and Colley (1995) replicated the earlier North American study by Pope and Vetter (1992). They investigated differences and similarities in the types and prevalence of ethical dilemmas facing BPS psychologists in the UK and North American psychologists. Lindsay and Colley (1995), through a questionnaire survey of BPS members, identified sources of ethical dilemmas experienced by BPS psychologists. Whilst a limitation of this research was that respondents were unable to seek further information about the authors' meaning, Lindsay and Colley (1995) identified ten categories of ethical dilemmas which appear to be relevant to current practice.

In summary, the dilemmas, referred to by Lindsay and Colley (1995) as 'ethically troubling incidents' were confidentiality, research, questionable intervention, colleagues conduct, sexual issues, assessment, organisational, dual relationships, payments and academic/training.

The relationship between ethics and psychology becomes even more complicated when it is considered that a number of studies indicate that psychologists vary in their understanding of, and agreement with, ethical positions (Haas, Malouf and Mayerson, 1986). As well as this, the research suggests that experienced practitioners do not always agree with their professional associations about ethical positions, sometimes believing that their own individual ethical stance is superior to that of their association (Kalichman, Craig and Follingstad, 1989).

Of direct relevance to this study is the research carried out by Carrington, Griffin, Hollis and Parry (2002) who investigated the ethical dilemmas faced by the authors who worked as educational psychologists in the same LA using two different approaches - 'a more fluid' approach and a six stage problem solving model of analysis conceived initially for counsellors (Bond, 2000). Carrington et al (2002) concluded that there were benefits in using the problem solving model but possible pragmatic disadvantages in the amount of time required for adequate reflection. The authors pointed out that there were implications for individual psychologists as well as for the local education authority in averting potentially difficult situations: a view shared by Bracher and Hingley (2002).

*'little attention has been paid in the literature to the ethical nature of the agencies in which educational psychologists have to operate: how organisational values emerge and develop, and how these values affect professional decision making' (2002, p.81).*

Beside the six stage decision making model of Bond (2000) referred to in Carrington et al (2002), there are a number of other decision making models, also usually involving following a series of stages and similar features, for example the models of Tymchuk (1986) and Koocher & Keith-Spiegel (1998). By way of contrast Kitchener

(1984) incorporates moral thinking and the use of ethical principles in his model of ethical justification. He suggests there are two levels of moral reasoning, the intuitive level and the critical evaluative level. He explains that immediate moral values may be a strong influence on an individual's reactions when under pressure but may not result in secure decisions. He argues that greater critical analysis and evaluation is needed in decision making using external standards, in the first place professional codes followed by ethical principles if the code proved unsuccessful in managing the decision.

The principles highlighted by Kitchner (1984) as being most essential for psychologists included those of autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, justice and fidelity. Kitchner (1984) emphasises that ethical principles are relevant as a set of guidelines or as a framework rather than an absolute. Other models include the sequential model of Haas and Malouf (1995) that put forward a decision making flowchart. Other models follow problem-solving approach, namely an eight step model (Koocher and Keith-Speigel, 1998), a process model (Nagle, 1987) and Packard's model (1997) based on components of an ethical decision. Packard's model refers specifically to and incorporates the American Psychological Association Code APA (1992).

In an unpublished doctoral thesis Bennett (2008) analysed 120 questionnaire responses of educational psychologists. Her research suggested that nearly all educational psychologists in the UK *'have a wide range of definitions of the term 'ethical' in terms of professional practice'*. In an earlier pilot study Bennett (2007) interviewed colleagues who were from the same local authority and their responses suggested that they shared similar ethical stance. Bennett urges that *'further research would be necessary to establish the 'reality on the ground'*. The current



study takes up this suggestion by investigating the perceptions of frontline educational psychologists working '*on the ground*' in one local authority.

Bennett's (2008) research suggested that the majority of the educational psychologists who responded faced a high incidence of ethical dilemmas, although it has to be borne in mind that this was a self-selecting sample so it is not possible to make a direct comparison with the earlier work by Lindsay and Colley (1995) who reported an incidence rate of 63%.

Whilst the empirical research on ethics and psychology is not clear cut, it is inescapable that ethical dilemmas are a feature of psychological practice, including that of educational psychologists. The prevalence and growing interest in ethics in the present zeitgeist means that ethical behaviour, and that of educational psychologists, will remain under public scrutiny.

### Ethical theories and concepts

The literature reviewed in the preceding section suggests that it is highly unlikely that contemporary EPs are not sensitive to the existence of ethical dilemmas. The range of ethical issues and dilemmas experienced by professional psychologists, including EPs has been highlighted. It is reasonable to speculate that the issues and dilemmas identified by individual psychologists in the literature reflect their personal values and socio-political contexts, be they in the UK or North America. This, in turn, brings into focus the centrality of values in ethical theory. Frankena (1973) goes as far as to suggest that ethics is largely about the processes individuals use to ascribe moral values to human actions, behaviours, institutions or character traits. Frankena's (1973) point about the centrality of values in ethical theory and practice may be well accepted, but it leaves the notion of theory and what is meant by it as problematic.

This will be addressed directly in the next chapter where an understanding of theory relevant to the present investigation is presented.

Returning directly to ethical theories and principles, Frankena (1973) suggested that all individuals, including psychologists, will draw upon their own personal theory of ethics influenced by their values. The importance of examining ethical theories is to locate them within a scholarly context and attempt to clarify the relationship between the present research and previous work in this area.

The study of ethics explores what is a right or wrong action or conduct. At the outset, whilst there may be an overlap, a distinction can be made between personal and professional ethics. The former is concerned with the moral values or choices made by the individual, whereas the latter describes the agreed standards and behaviours of a professional group which are set out in a professional group's code of conduct. To recap, 'ethics' is a generic term for understanding and examining the moral life (Beauchamp and Childress, 1994, p. 4). In this study the term 'ethics' (as defined in the Introduction) is used to refer to the personal and professional values, beliefs and practice of psychologists. Ethical conflicts exist in psychological practice, not least because of the complexity of values involved amongst teachers and professionals working with children, their parents and carers, young people and families in education. Individuals' values may be in conflict with the values of a particular social or political system at the time.

This literature review now provides a broad overview of theories of ethics and ethical traditions which underpin philosophical inquiry into ethics and which impact upon ethical principles and have relevance for the field of educational psychology.

Ethics has rich and varied traditions with different arguments, discourses, methodologies, principles and rules. The literature contains numerous different classifications of theories of ethics. Classical versus modern theories, western and eastern, normative and non-normative, consequential and non-consequential theories of ethics are amongst some of these. Classical theories of ethics include hedonism or 'good life' and stoicism, 'indifference to pleasure or pain'. Generally considered more modern theories are: naturalism, emotivism and intuitionism. More recently, there has been a revival of interest in virtue ethics and care ethics in relation to professional practice.

As implied above, ethical theories may be classified as 'western' or 'eastern'. Western theories of ethics are shaped by and have their foundations in Judaeo-Christian belief systems (Jecker, Jonsen and Pearlman, 2007) and are based on European and American philosophies. Similarly eastern theories of ethics may have their bases in religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam and are influenced by Arabic, Asian or Indian philosophies.

Professional ethics is a branch of applied normative ethics which includes the common moral theories classified by Fry and Johnstone (2008) and outlined in the table 1 below.

Table 1: Common moral theories used in normative ethics (Fry and Johnstone, 2008)

*Utilitarianism* – Theory that maintains that the moral rightness of actions is determined by the balance of good and bad consequences of those actions. Desired consequences are an increase in positive value produced by the action (increase in pleasure, health, friendship or knowledge, for example. Example : Jeremy Bentham or John Stuart Mill)

*Naturalism* – Theory that maintains that humankind has been created with identifiable tendencies towards certain values. These tendencies include the inclination toward community; respect for the right of others honesty and a just government. Ethical principles and rules about what people ought to do are derived from these tendencies. (Example :Saint Thomas Aquinas or John Calvin)

*Formalism* – Theory that maintains that the moral rightness of actions is determined by their nature or form. Desired nature and form includes the keeping of duties or special obligations (parent to child) and following certain rules (keeping a promise, for example). Actions are morally significant if their form honours duty or follows the principle/rule. (Example, Immanuel Kant).

*Pragmatism* – Theory that maintains that moral rightness of actions is determined by what works or is most useful. Desired results are those that are practically significant or that serve a useful function. An action has moral meaning or value if it is practically significant (Example: William James)

A further way of classifying theories of ethics is to consider them as either consequential or non-consequential based on the consequence of the act. A consequentialist view would argue that an action is right in so much as it produces good consequences or wrong in so much as it produces bad consequences. Utilitarianism is an example of a consequential ethical theory. Beauchamp and Childress, (2001) state that '*an action is right ...if it tends to produce the greatest value over disvalue*', or sometimes expressed differently, as an action that is right if it produces the greatest good for the greatest number. An action is considered to be wrong, if it does not achieve this.

Non consequential theories of ethics uphold that an act is right or wrong dependent upon the characteristic of the act. Deontology is an example of this theory of ethics.

It expounds that the 'rightness' of actions is dependent upon laws and rules regarding duties or obligations independent of the consequences of the actions (Fry and Veatch, 2006). Kant (1964) espouses this theory which maintains that '*an action is right if it is done from duty and can be willed to be universal law for everyone*'; sometimes referred to as the categorical imperative. Kant takes a religious perspective that society will work better if such rules are followed; for example, 'thou shall not lie'.

All of these branches of ethical thinking have relevance for the profession of psychology. British, European and North American Codes of ethics for psychologists are founded predominantly in both deontological and consequentialist or utilitarian approaches in ethical theory. Traditional theories of ethics have therefore had an important influence on psychological practice. The point is that ethical theory has shaped the principles and codes followed by psychologists in all fields of psychology.

The end of the twentieth century saw a resurgence of interest in virtue ethics with prominence given to the character of the individual rather than the morality of the action (MacLagan, 1998). Virtue ethics is concerned with the qualities of the person 'what sort of person should I be?' rather than 'what should I do?' This re-ignited interest in character and virtue partly arose from disenchantment with the usefulness of other rationalist theories, but possibly as a consequence of the concern with societal values more generally (Anscombe, 1958; MacIntyre, 1985; Hursthouse, 1999). Virtue ethics has deep roots laid down centuries ago in the theories of the ancient Greek philosophers, Aristotle and Plato. Modern virtue theorists include MacIntyre (1981) the author of 'After Virtue', Foot (1978) who was one of the

founders of Oxfam, and Anscombe (1958) who wrote 'Modern Moral Philosophy' on which it is suggested Macintyre's theory is based. With its concern for character and focus on the person's actions, virtue theory has direct relevance for professional ethics and psychology. Virtue ethics is '*a set of ideals to which professionals aspire and involve more than moral actions*' (Pryzwansky and Wendt, 1999). Meara et al (1996) suggest that virtues such as prudence, integrity, respectfulness and benevolence are the four most relevant to psychologists. Reference is made to personal conduct in both HPC and the BPS. The HPC Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics (2009), point 3 states: 'You must keep high standards of personal conduct' (2008, p.9). The HPC code states:

*'You must keep high standards of personal conduct, as well as professional conduct. You should be aware that poor conduct outside of your professional life may still affect someone's confidence in you and your profession' (2009, p.9).*

This reference to personal conduct is also made in the BPS Code and may reflect a concern with virtue as well as principle ethics.

A virtue- ethical stance is taken by Meara et al (1996) and Meara and Day (2003). They argue for the complimentary use of the two ethical approaches, principles and virtues, in counselling psychology, suggesting this would facilitate greater protection for clients and more secure ethical practice.

*'such an integrative view of principle and virtue ethics can improve research and instruction of professional ethics and result in a code and practices that are more cognisant of cultural pluralism (Meara et al, 1996, p.5).*

The argument has been made for the use of a virtue-ethics approach in a range of professions including medicine (Beauchamp and Childress, 2001; Morrell, 2006 ) and psychiatry (Bloch et al, 2006). Bloch et al (2006) make the argument for a synthesis of the principles of care ethics which are based on the relationship between patient and client, together with virtue ethics in caring for psychiatric patients.

Criticisms of virtue theory focus mainly upon the difficulties inherent in the definition and construct of virtue, but also in the interpretation and use of its rules (Miller, 1991; Bersoff, 1996; Louden, 1997; Everitt, 2007). A further criticism levelled at virtue ethics is that it does not provide clear responses to ethical dilemmas because every individual may respond differently to a given situation. Bennett (2008) argues that virtue ethics may well be advantageous for educational psychologists when faced with two courses of action.

Further approaches to ethical thinking pertinent to the practice of educational psychology are relationship-based and care ethics which arose out of virtue theory. Writing about the relationships between nurses and patients, Bergum (2004) asserts that *'the quality of the relationship between the nurse and his or her patients or colleagues needs as much attention as the quality of clinical competence'*.

Relational ethics is concerned with the kinds of relationships that allow for *'the flourishing of good rather than evil, trust rather than fear, difference rather than sameness, healing rather than surviving'* (Bergum, 2004, p.487). Doing what is morally right or wrong is involved in the quality of every situation, encounter and with every patient. As a further branch of virtue ethics, philosopher, Nell Noddings (1984), put forward an ethic of care theory encompassing ideas about moral obligation, moral good and justification. Ethical theories of care and relationships could be viewed as alternative moral theories for deciding what is right and wrong and therefore have relevance for professional ethics in educational psychology.

As can be seen from the broad overview of ethical theory there are many approaches to ethical thinking. Those most relevant to educational psychology are applied normative theories, as they have influenced professional ethics, including the ethical codes of ethics, conduct and principles in educational psychology. Traditional normative theories of ethics such as deontological and consequentialist theories, mentioned above, are based upon principles; whereas more modern theories of ethics expressed in modern versions of virtue theory, relationship and care ethics, do not focus on principles. Both may have potential benefit to educational psychology.

In the next section the ethical principles considered most relevant to EP practice will be explained in more detail.



## Ethical principles

Haas and Malouf (1995) argue that ethics is founded on universal principles, sometimes referred to as principle ethics, which generally affirm what behaviour or actions should follow. The concept of ethics *'encompasses five primary facie duties – non-maleficence, fidelity, beneficence, justice and autonomy'*, (Bersoff, 1996 p.87). Ethical principles act as guides for decision making and moral judgements. They *'provide an array of moral choices and can be applied flexibly in relation to the context of a dilemma'* (Bersoff, 1996, p.89). There are four overarching ethical principles applied to practising psychologists in the BPS (2009) code of ethics and conduct which include respect, integrity, competence and responsibility. Ethical principles allow an ethical analysis of professional practice to be carried out and act as points of reference. Ethical principles are not universal and are culturally embedded. Given the range of ethical issues educational psychologists face it is likely that more than one principle or conflicting principles will apply to a presenting situation. Webster (2004) suggests the principles of autonomy, beneficence; non-maleficence, justice; fidelity and integrity are the most relevant for educational psychologists. This highlights some overlap with the prime facie duties listed above.

There are fourteen statements in the HPC Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics (2009) detailing duties as a registrant ranging from 'high standards of personal conduct' to 'respecting confidentiality' to 'keeping accurate records'. The important point to be made here is that ethical principles do not derive from a vacuum. As Jecker, Jonsen and Pearlman (2007) explain, in the West, ethical principles derive from Judaeo-Christian concepts and ethical theory. It is no accident then that similar principles are laid out in codes and guidelines applied to practising

psychologists in the UK, including those of the BPS, DECP guidelines, as well as in the European Meta Code developed by European Federation of Psychologists Associations (2005). The American Psychological Association has its own code of conduct, which like the BPS code is predicated mainly on deontological ethical theories.

## **Professionalism in educational psychology**

A review of the literature appertaining to the profession of educational psychology is pertinent. There is much debate in the theoretical literature on what constitutes a profession. Lindsay (2008) asserts that *'the question of what is a profession is problematic and contentious.'* Pryzwansky and Wendt (1999) have suggested that features of a profession include:

- Existence of a formal professional member organisation
- Systematic training
- Body of knowledge 'to profess'
- Code of ethics
- Regulation of the members who provide a service

In addition Lindsay (2008, p.7) argues that there are factors such as the specificity of knowledge and skills, the level of skill application and self and societal interest to be taken into account when arriving at a definition of a profession.

Hoyle and John (1995) write:

*'Professional is an essentially contested concept. Despite its widespread use in the media and in the everyday discourse of those who would be regarded as professional people, and despite the best efforts of sociologists, philosophers and historians, it defies common agreement as to its meaning.'*(p.61)

Carr (1999) asserts that one of the key features of a profession, (as opposed to a job or a trade) is that it is regulated by a distinctive set of ethical values or principles.

There is a view that educational psychologists have duties and rights which are different to everyday morality. Gerwith (1986) states that:

*'professionals, by virtue of their experience and consequent roles, have rights and duties that are unique to themselves and that may hence be not only different from, but even contrary to, the rights and duties that are found in other segments of morality' ( p.282).*

In traditional terms medicine, law and the church have been recognised as the time-honoured professions and often serve as models for other aspiring occupations. Hoyle and John (1995) identify knowledge, autonomy and responsibility as the most consistent criteria applicable to the question of what constitutes a profession. Arguably all professional groups, whether traditional or newly emerging, are influenced and arise from the socio-political context. The twentieth century gave rise to a number of new professions. It could be claimed that one of these 'new' professions was educational psychology.

Webster and Hoyle (2000) argue that there has been an improvement in professional practice since the new millennium due to changing conceptions of a profession. They cite increased accountability, extended professionalism and greater interprofessional collaboration as ways in which professional practice has improved. They go on to suggest negative consequences of this, including *'a reduction in practitioner autonomy, (and)... a substitution of accountability for responsibility'*. (2002, p.93)

Other characteristics associated with professions include professional integrity, ethical conduct and moral probity. Professions have typically sought to self-regulate and monitor professional behaviour and have developed codes of ethics to uphold standards and to discipline members. Freidson (2001) states that *'part of the purpose of...codes of (ethics) is without doubt to persuade the public that the formulation of ethical standards justifies trust'* (2001:214). It can be contended that educational psychology is a relatively new profession where practice has to be based on public trust and codes of ethical conduct improve levels of trust in the profession.

Lindsay (2008) suggests that the professions have much in common as well as variation between them. Whilst acknowledging the views of Lindsay (2008) and Hoyle and John (1995), the contention of this study is that, in accord with the views of Pryzwansky and Wendt (1999), educational psychology, although lacking the history of medicine, law and the church, can be deemed to be a profession.

Certainly, its collective self-identity is one of a profession.

## **Features of professionalism**

Webster and Hoyle (2000) refer to the changing conceptions of a profession. An extension of this is that there will be variation between professions about the nature, balance of activities and features within a particular profession. A review of the literature highlights that the following features; supervision, codes of conduct and trust, are of key importance to educational psychology. These will be discussed in more detail.

### **Supervision**

As mentioned, educational psychology is a relatively young profession compared to the traditional professions of law, medicine and the church. Cyril Burt's appointment in 1913 as the first school psychologist to the London County Council is often cited as the birth of the profession in the UK. The following section will focus on supervision as a feature of professional educational psychology. It will look at what is meant by supervision and identify key factors, advantages and disadvantages to the individual and the organisation. The evolving argument is that professional supervision is an important feature in supporting educational psychologists as members of a profession.

Fleming and Steen, (2004) argue that supervision is:

*'the process where practitioners and skilled supervisors together reflect on practice. Supervision aims to identify solutions to problems, improved practice and increase understanding of professional issues' (2004 p.53).*

Supervision is used within a range of professions, including professional psychology, mental health, social care, speech and occupational therapies. There are plentiful definitions of supervision which stem from the theoretical and professional background from which they derive. The various definitions share certain similarities and commonly refer to supervision as a means or tool by which to support those working with others. As Nolan (1999) points out, supervision is 'a complex, multi-functional concept'. Scaife (2001) asserts that arriving at a single definition of supervision is complex because it is used differently depending on the country and context. She puts forward the following definition:

*"...what happens when people who work in the helping professions make a formal arrangement to think with one another or others about their work with a view to providing the best possible service to clients and enhancing their own personal and professional development." (Scaife, 2001 p.4).*

Other definitions of supervision include:

*"a quintessential interpersonal interaction with the general goal that one person, the supervisor, meets with another, the supervisee, in an effort to make the latter more effective in helping people." (Hawkins & Shohet, 2006 p.225)*

Knoff (1986) writes that supervision is:

*'an intensive, hierarchical, interpersonally focussed relationship involving a supervisor who oversees the development of a supervisee's professional knowledge, skill confidence, objectivity, and interpersonal interactions on behalf of or with a specified client for the purpose of facilitating and/or*

*improving competence and effective service delivery and promoting accountability within the field' (p.66).*

The Division of Educational and Child Psychology (DECP, 2002) emphasises the importance of supervision in professional educational and child psychology. It defines supervision as:

*"...the opportunity to explore and learn from the practical, experiential and theoretical elements of professional practice and is an **essential** component of the psychologist's continuing development." (DECP, 2002 p.19)*

More recently, Dunsmuir and Leadbetter (2010) in the DECP publication Professional Supervision: Guidelines for Practice for Educational psychologists refer to Hawkins and Shohet's (2007) process model of supervision which outlines three main functions: managerial, educative and supportive.

The DECP position on supervision is that it is an essential part of continuing development. The DECP places responsibility on professional EPs to bring controversial issues or those with uncertain ethical connotations for supervision. In the USA Knoff (1986) explores the concept of supervision and puts forward a definition which resonates with the British context. It includes the themes of competence, effective service delivery and accountability. It is relevant to the practice of educational psychologists because it does not underplay the professional reality whereby professional supervision *'is often provided by a line manager within a hierarchical organisational system which in turn brings with it concomitant tensions'* (Pomerantz, 1993).



As Nolan (1999) indicates, supervision is not a single activity. Referring to social work supervision, Kadushin (1976) pre-dated the recent DECP (2010) publication on supervision describing three salient functions or roles which he terms as educative, supportive and managerial. These functions are mirrored in educational psychology practice and are elaborated upon by Nolan (1999):

*'The supportive function allows the supervisee to deal with the emotions and stress that are part of being in a helping profession. The educative function concerns developing the skills, understanding and abilities of the supervisee. The managerial function induces a form of quality assurance (removed e) for the organisation but also a shared responsibility for the individual '.* (Nolan, 1999 p.99).

Hawkins and Shohet (1997) accurately depict the complex nature of the supervision process:

*'Thus supervision as educative, supportive and managerial components although in different setting some aspects will be more prominent than others....the different aspects are not totally separate but are combined in much of the supervisory focus...a good deal of supervision takes place where managerial, supportive and educative considerations all intermingle...'*(1997, p.8)

The literature suggests that there are benefits of supervision for the individual and the organisation. Dowling and Osborne (1994) argue that benefits for the individual include the availability of emotional support by exploring and accepting the

supervisee's feelings allowing the supervisee to develop a greater awareness of the stressors and challenges that are intrinsic to professional life. Within this viewpoint is the contention that individual support can act as a defence to professional 'burn-out' as conceptualised by Fineman (1985) and understood as emotional and physical exhaustion, low morale and depersonalisation of clients. Others cite the opportunity to develop reflective thinking which in turn affects professional practice (Jennings, 1995).

It can be best left to Cherniss and Eganatio (1978) to succinctly put the case for the benefits of supervision for the individual:

*'First, supervision is a central form of support, where we can focus on our difficulties as a worker as well as have our supervisor share some of the responsibility for our work with clients. Second, supervision forms part of our continual learning and development...supervision...can also help us to manage our own resources better, manage our workload and challenge our inappropriately patterned ways of coping...there is research to show good supervision correlates with job satisfaction', ( 1978, p.223).*

A review of the literature also suggests benefits of supervision for the organisation. As previously mentioned, a compelling aspect of Knoff's (1986) definition still relevant in 2012 is the acknowledgement that the supervisor-supervisee relationship is not isolated from issues as fundamental as client benefit, effective service delivery and accountability. The gains for psychology services as organisations having skilled supervision as part of its culture are directly related to these important notions. Educational psychology service managers can legitimately utilise supervision as a

means of ensuring implementation of policy and practice. This does not necessarily mean that the supportive and educative functions of supervision are undermined by service managers using supervision as a vehicle to ensure consistency, and monitor established whole-service procedures in the wider interest of client benefit. It would be important though for there to be a clear and mutual understanding between supervisor and supervisee as to the purposes of supervision.

What does the empirical literature tell us about supervision in professional educational psychology? The work of Lunt and Pomerantz (1993) provides a comprehensive account of the practice of supervision within educational psychology in the research literature, suggesting at the time that supervision was not of primary importance within educational psychology. Lunt and Pomerantz (1993) found that only 44% of educational psychologists were receiving supervision and nearly 25% of these felt supervision did not take place in an atmosphere of trust and confidentiality.

The work of the DECP Training Committee's Standing Committee on Supervision is reported in the literature by Pomerantz(1993). Evidence about supervision was obtained from the work of individual educational psychologists pursuing an interest in either supervision during induction, or supervision for educational psychologists in training. It confirmed the belief that supervision at this time (1993) was not highly valued within the profession. The research literature reviewed also indicates that supervision during induction varied across psychology services (Frederickson, 1994).

Past research pertinent to this section in the review of literature is presented by Nolan (1999) who notes that the focus in educational psychology tends to be on the

use of supervision at the early stages of an EP's career as a trainee or when newly qualified, rather than reflection on supervision as a tool within practice or the outcomes of supervision. Webster, Hingley and Franey (2000) conducted research with 53 newly qualified educational psychologists who had completed their training between 1995-6 and found that supervision was not viewed as having high status within the profession's prestige system;

*'...many EP services made no time available for formal supervision, or placed the onus on individuals to request supervision when they needed it.'*  
(2000, p. 433)

Whilst Nolan (1999) concludes that the provision of supervision for maingrade EPs appears to be improving, she suggests further developments were necessary in order to ensure quality supervision is available to all EPs on a regular basis. Similarly, Webster, Hingley & Franey (2000) highlight that although supervision is stated to be essential by the DECP, and there are examples of good induction and supervision practices for some newly appointed EPs, there is a lack of consistency across and within services with great variation in the amount and type of supervision being given. Interestingly, they also note that non-existent, infrequent and fragmented supervision in educational psychology services served to reduce confidence, self-esteem and commitment to the job, thereby highlighting an outcome from a lack of supervision. In a later study, Carrington (2004) highlights the importance of supervision in professional development. She states:

*“Supervision represents a key step along the path towards becoming a professional.....” (Carrington, 2004, p.32).*

Since the work Lunt and Pomerantz (1993) there has been little, if any, in depth empirical evidence about supervision in the profession, although the publication of the recent DECP Guidelines (2010) on supervision attests to its growing importance within educational psychology. As Atkinson and Woods (2007) point out, the move towards three year doctoral training has brought supervision into sharper relief within the profession. Today it could be argued the cumulative influence of the main professional bodies (AEP, BPS and HPC) and the impact of their promotion of supervision within educational psychology have resulted in supervision being recognised as an essential feature of professional practice.

### Codes of Ethics

The next feature of professionalism to be examined is Codes of Ethics. As referred to earlier, a code of ethics is typically an important characteristic in the definition of a profession (Pryzwansky and Wendt, 1999). In this section a brief discussion of the emergence of ethics in professions will introduce the topic on the need for an ethical code.

The notions of standards and accountability emerged in ancient Egypt around 2000 BC as evidenced in the Code of Hammurabi, (American College of Physicians, 1984). Better known is the Hippocratic Oath written about 400 BC which mentions the obligation of the professional, not only to the profession, but also to the public. Sinclair et al (1996) suggest that many of the ethical principles and values in modern

codes of ethics can be traced back to the Hippocratic Oath. It is therefore possible to trace a linkage between the Hippocratic Oath and the first BPS Code of Conduct published in 1985.

Whilst codes have a long history the question remains why have an ethical code? Lindsay (2008) addresses this question by arguing that codes are '*means of translating beliefs regarding necessary behaviour into statements which specify how the professional may act appropriately*'. He goes on to argue that codes are essential as a mechanism of exposing inappropriate practice and behaviour and have a certain advantage as they are written with practice with clients in mind. It is suggested that what is important is that whilst codes do not tell us how to resolve conflicts between duties they give a relatively stable guide on how to proceed in a given context. Codes exist to regulate members of a profession whose actions digress and to help guide professionals in their behaviour. Although it is impossible for codes to be sensitive to every feasible circumstance, as a feature of a profession a purpose of codes is to justify public trust in professional practice. This suggests that the notion of trust is an important element of professionalism.

### Trust

Friedson (2001) is of the view that a purpose of codes in professional ethics is to justify public trust in professional practice. At a time when traditional deference to the professions is a thing of the past, Webster and Hoyle (2000) commented '*the old concept of a profession has undergone a radical transformation in the last 20 years.*' For them the challenge to the traditional concept of a profession can be traced back to the 1960s and 1970s when commentators such as Larsen (1977) argued that

professions sought to monopolise knowledge, power and legitimacy. Webster and Hoyle (2000) write:

*'the critics of professionalism as a self-interested ideology came from the political left and the political right...the professional was seen as making all the decisions in relation to the services to the client who was seen as a passive recipient of these services with few rights'. (2000, p.97).*

Whereas Webster and Hoyle (2000) go on to suggest that this critique of the professions led to increased accountability which they believe has been beneficial. They do not address what may be the crux of the relationship between professional and client, the importance of trust. Trust remains paramount within a professional relationship. However, what is meant by the term trust?

James (2006) refers to trust as a multidimensional concept. It has different formulations depending upon its epistemological context. Trust has emerged as a subject of study across a number of disciplines, in sociology and education (Bryk and Schneider, 2002; Coleman, 1990, in economics (Fukuyama, 1995) and in organisational science (Kramer and Tyler, 1996; Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt and Camerer, 1998). Its attraction as a subject amongst philosophers has been long standing and continues (O'Neill, 2002; Uslaner, 2002). This lack of consensus means that it is important in this discussion to define what is meant by trust in professional life. Thomas (1999) is helpful here. He argues persuasively that the concept of trust in professional life 'is an example of fiduciary trust'. This appears to apply to professional educational psychology.

*'In fiduciary relationships, individuals are trusted to carry out their duties in regards to others while not taking excessive personal advantage of their privileged position. The greater the asymmetry, the more the relationship depends on this moral obligation'.(Thomas, 1999, p.170).*

The importance of trust in professional relationships is heightened further when it can be argued that there is a 'crisis of trust' in society. To quote from the 2002 Reith Lectures, Onora O'Neill posed the questions:

*'Are we facing a crisis of trust? What does it take for us to place trust in others? Are human rights and democracy the basis for a society in which trust can be placed, or does trust need other conditions? Does the revolution in accountability support or undermine trust? (O'Neill, 2002, p.5).*

In her lectures O'Neill refers to a 'culture of suspicion' characterised by a diminution in public trust which has led to an 'audit explosion' and new concepts of accountability.

*' the new accountability culture ... requires detailed conformity to procedures and protocols, detailed record keeping and provision of information in specified formats and success in reaching targets'(O'Neill, 2002, p. 46).*



The suggestion is that the introduction of performance management and targets has replaced trust in professional judgement. O'Neill's view, relevant to this study, is that in general, individuals operate on the basis of a relationship of trust when professional expertise is required albeit with caveats as attested by the search for second or third opinions. Trust remains a crucial feature in professional relationships between members of a profession and in the relationship between professional and client.

The previous section has examined the literature concerning the features of educational psychology considered the most pertinent for managing ethical issues, those of supervision, codes of practice and trust. In the following and final part of the literature review the relationship between organisations and ethical practice is explored.

### **Organisations and ethical practice**

The final section of this chapter examines organisational life and ethical practice with reference to professional educational psychology. However, it is of value from the outset to amplify what is meant by an organisation. Having done this, by drawing upon the literature, the relationship between organisations and ethical practice will be explored. The section will conclude with a discussion on contemporary organisational life and the present and future employment of EPs.

Katz and Kahn (1966) refer to organisations as '*social devices for efficiently accomplishing through group means some stated purpose*'. They point out that the

difficulty with this definition is that the stated purpose of an organisation may be different to the functions it fulfils in reality. Instead, Katz and Kahn (1966) consider organisations as social systems that coordinate behaviour in terms of roles, norms, and values. Within this view roles relate to the particular place and function of an individual: norms are attitudinal and behavioural prescriptions associated with roles; whilst values are higher level principles intended to guide behaviour and activity. The interaction of roles, norms and values creates a distinctive organisational culture. A further difficulty of Katz and Kahn's definition is that it fails to account for the individual psychological perspective, unlike Smith (1995) who foregrounds the individual's psychological reality. For Smith (1995) within organisations there has to be:

*'an awareness of membership or self-categorisation is critical in that we cannot, from a psychological point of view, attribute the effects of organisational life to the organisation unless we can be sure that the organisation is psychologically 'real' for its members' (1995, p.425).*

It is also essential to recognise that individuals belong to different groups within organisations, and that there is an internal system of social relations between such groups with some groups having greater power and status. Thus in a local authority the leadership and management team comprising of a chief executive and senior officers will be distinct in their roles, norms and maybe values from the local authority psychology service.

Statt (1994) identifies a number of defining characteristics of organisations from a range of definitions. He suggests that an organisation is:

- A group with a social identity which has psychological meaning for individuals
- Characterised by coordination in order that the behaviour of individuals is arranged and directed.
- Goal directed so that the direction is oriented towards particular outcomes.

Whilst Statt's defining characteristics provide a degree of cogency on the meaning of the term organisation, a more fundamental question is: 'what is the relationship between an organisation and ethical practice'? The question of how organisations respond ethically is a complex one. A useful approach to this has been put forward in a key paper by Reidenbach and Robin (1991) who argue that organisations like individuals are faced with complicated decisions. Their typology of organisational moral development will now be examined in order to illuminate the topic of organisations and ethical practice. They suggest that organisational morality can be classified into five stages. Reidenbach and Robin (1991) proposed that behaviour in organisations is based on an interaction between both the outcomes and objectives of the organisation and the manner/course by which goals were achieved.

Reidenbach and Robin (1991) put forward the view that in order for an organisation to become more ethically mature it needs to move towards integrating the objectives and goals of the institution with concern for the values and principles involved in professional decision making and intervention.

Reidenbach and Robin (1991) proposed a five stage model to describe the classification of moral development of an organisation. The model is hierarchical in

structure with moral development increasing at higher stages. Stage One is described as the amoral organisation because little or no attention is given to ethical issues in decision making. Bracher and Hingley (2002) describe this type of organisational culture as being 'value-less', where the 'end justifies the means'. Stage two is referred to in the model as the legalistic organisation. It describes an organisation which is slightly more developed in terms of its ethical stance. Organisations at this level are chiefly concerned with the law and more formal customs and standards. Reidenbach and Robin (1991) report that '*in this culture law equates with justice and there is no difference between what is legal and what is right or just*'. Organisations at this stage in their moral development are likely to have strict legal codes of practice. Like an 'amoral' organisation at stage one, a 'legalistic' organisation at stage two is likely to consider ethical issues retrospectively.

A slightly more ethically aware organisation is called a 'responsive organisation' according to the model. At this third stage an organisation may be characterised by some concern with responsibilities towards society as well as being driven by targets and the law. At this stage Bracher and Hingley (2002) suggest the organisation takes a pragmatic view of the role of ethics in decision making. It may be the case that a local authority as an organisation may be said to reflect this level of moral development in that it is driven by targets and seeks to avoid publicity for low examination results, poor OFSTED inspections, disapproval and criticism from councillors. It is concerned with the needs of the people it serves in the community and in providing services to council tax payers in the county council. It is pre-occupied with meeting social and educational objectives or targets, for example raising levels of achievement and narrowing the gap for the most vulnerable groups.

It is also judged to be successful by these goals. Local authorities are concerned with targets and have minimum standards to meet. As an organisation the LA is focussed upon legalistic issues such as meeting statutory deadlines regarding statements of special educational needs. However, organisations at stage three are concerned more with doing the 'right thing' for society than both stage one and two organisations. Organisations at level three demonstrate high sensitivity for 'legality and goal dominated behaviour' and some sensitivity towards societal concerns. The research of Raelin (1987) and Robin et al (1989) suggested that USA codes of practice in level three organisations are used to shield the organisation rather than to protect the community and other stakeholders. Some individual professionals, for example educational psychologists who are employed within the local authority, operate within codes of conduct or practice in the UK. However, other professionals in the organisation may not have codes of conduct, or they may operate within different codes of practice. Arguably professional practice is affected to some extent by the organisation's values. Tragic events such as the cases of baby Peter Connolly and Victoria Climbié have highlighted lack of communication between different professional groups such as social workers, police, doctors, and educational professionals. All have come under criticism and all operate within different professional codes. Arguably one advantage of the HPC requirement for regulation is that it offers an overarching code of practice for certain professionals to operate within with patient protection at the core. Evidence of ethical codes of conduct policies for local authorities as organisations is harder to find in the literature. Examples of social and ethical responsibility policies are found in commercial and retail organisations, for example, B&Q's social responsibility policy of employing a

growing proportion people over sixty years old

[[http://www.diy.com/diy/jsp/corporate/pdfs/social\\_responsibility.pdf](http://www.diy.com/diy/jsp/corporate/pdfs/social_responsibility.pdf). ]

In Reidenbach and Robin's (1991) typology of organisational development, stage four represents the emergent ethical organisation where there is less discrepancy between ethics and outcomes of the organisation. Organisations with values based on the protection of the environment, such as Innocent Smoothies and the Body Shop, or those with religious values and family based values, (Fry's Cadbury's, and Rowntree) are examples of emerging ethical organisations in the UK. Government policy is increasingly focused on addressing ethical issues in the commercial world which underlines the national and international concern with ethics mentioned in the introduction.

Reidenbach and Robin (1991) admit that they know of no organisations that have reached the fifth and final stage of moral development - the ethical organisation. They explain that an ethical organisation would share a common morality and culture where all activities within the organisation would be characterised by clearly defined core values. Reidenbach and Robin (1991) comment that '*we know of no examples of organisations which have reached this level of development*' (p.283).

Given Reidenbach and Robin's (1991) suggested typology of ethical development existing in organisations, it is not unreasonable to assert that organisations will vary enormously in their ethical development. It is self-evident that organisational life is influenced by the socio-political context and the economic environment which prevails at any given time. The employment of educational psychologists is no

exception to this. Professional educational psychology which is mostly located in local authorities, but not entirely, faces the combined challenge of local authorities losing power and influence along with the development of market forces which means that the profession is having to develop in a new employment landscape.

The erosion of the influence of local education authorities (LEAs) which were incorporated into local authorities (LA) by the 2004 Education Act could be said to have begun in 1988 with the passing of the Education Reform Act. These reforms aimed at creating a new balance of power within the education system with a much stronger role for central government, marking the start of the diminution of locally run education. Since 1998 successive governments have restricted the role of local authority education services to the extent whereby the present coalition government proposed a significant increase in the number of free schools and academies receiving funding directly from the government rather than from LAs. This was a direct challenge to local authority maintained schools. These changes were outlined in the green paper 'School Funding Reform – proposals for a fairer system' (DfE, 2011). These proposals, along with economic stringency have an important impact on traditional educational psychology service delivery. In a paper published by the AEP, titled the Future Delivery of Psychology Services, it was estimated that approximately 200 substantive educational psychologists' posts were lost as a consequence of reductions in budgets for children's services between autumn 2010 and autumn 2011 (AEP, 2011).

The cuts to the LAs since 2010 have led to many educational psychologists experiencing changes in their terms and conditions, including annual leave

entitlements, payment of annual increments, access to car user allowances, car parking charges and occupational sick pay. In addition some educational psychologists have had pay cuts and funding for CPD cut (AEP, 2011).

There is discussion about the future funding of educational psychology services in the UK in the light of new legislation. Both the SEN Green Paper 'Aspiration for All' (2011) and the Open Services White Paper encourage and give endorsement to delivery of services from non-LA organisations and contest the idea that LAs are the sole providers of services. Additionally, the recent publication of the consultation paper on school funding reform 'School Funding Reform – Proposals for a fairer system' (DfE, 2011) puts forward changes to the funding arrangements for educational psychology , placing responsibility for the funding for all maintained schools and academies under the responsibility of the LA for the time being. It is proposed that the delegation of funding to schools for educational psychologists will be decided locally. This could lead to further reductions in LA budgets for funded educational psychologists and would necessitate an increase in trading if the profession is to continue to survive and flourish.

The Association of Educational Psychologists (2011) referred to above highlights the range and diverse nature of current services along with the implications of assorted models of service delivery. The paper 'The Delivery of Educational psychology services' states that current educational psychology services range from:



*'The effect on EPSs in total has been very varied. Some services have experienced only minor changes; others have been faced with the demolition of their previous structures. The nature of the current services ranges from:*

- i) A Traditional Local authority Model (Fully core funded): A small number of EPSs where the whole of their budgets continue to be funded directly by the LA*
- ii) The Local authority Plus Model (semi-traded): Those where 'core/statutory' functions are funded directly by the LA whilst trading with schools and other organisations provides enough generated income to maintain the level of establishment and activity which existed before budgets were reduced (and sometimes a larger establishment and wider range of work as school are able to buy in additional time)*
- iii) Other Models (Fully traded/commissioned): A small number of services which have become part of 'stand-alone' organisations which generate all their income via trading with 'stakeholders' (this includes Las as well as all schools who wish to buy the services of educational psychologists).' (AEP, 2011, p.3).*

A growing number of educational psychologists are now employed in a traded or self-employed capacity, both independently and as associate educational psychologists working freelance for maintained educational psychology services. The current situation is therefore complex and has given rise to tensions between non-LA educational psychologists and local authority psychology services sometimes for work in schools which traditionally received a service from the LA. This changing

landscape of employment for educational psychologists brings with it new and different ethical issues as acknowledged by the establishment by the DECP working party on Ethical Trading. With the contraction of local authority status and recent radical changes in employment in educational psychology there have been consequences for the working environment for educational psychologists. Related to the AEP's concerns about terms and conditions is the specific factor of environmental change in the workplace. The business and day to day activity of practising educational psychologists takes place for a proportion of time within the organisation's offices and workplace environment. Within the context of rapid change, economic austerity and professional insecurity, certain LAs have introduced 'Better Offices Programmes' which directly affects the internal organisation of office layout and environmental conditions. This makes it relevant to examine the research literature into workplace environments.

Office layouts whether in public or private sector share certain resemblances and features (Knight, 2009). Depending on how the office space is used, the amount of privacy provided is different. Knight (2009) argues that:

*'space is a critical medium through which both personal and social identities are expressed and developed' (2009, p.2).*

Depending on the office layout there may be an effect on the social identity of professional groups working within the organisation. Dixon and Durrheim (2003) have investigated the effect of the physical environment and organisation of office

space on group identities. They found that the development of group identities is affected by the ways in which space is organised. Knight (2009) concludes that:

*'levels of surveillance, contact, social interaction, autonomy and so forth vary considerably as a function of the way office space is designed and manipulated' (2009, p.2).*

Dixon and Durrheim (2003) argued that the formation of group identities is affected by the way space is organised with the consequences for each group. The same issues, such as whether employees seek to express their social identities at work and whether the social identity is taken into account when designing office space, may be true for educational psychologists as a professional group as those employees in Dixon and Durrheim's (2003) research. The findings of Haslam (2004) and Haslam, Eggins & Reynolds (2002) have suggested that there can be negative effects of not managing employees with their shared ambitions and objectives in mind. It is argued that office space is often designed by those in positions of power within the organisation whereby those employees deemed to be most important are allocated a more conducive environment (Bain et al, 2003). There is limited empirical data regarding the effect of office space within public sector organisations. Nevertheless, the point being made is that educational psychologists, like all employees, are influenced by the physical workplace environment.

## Position

The Literature Review has aimed to cover the pertinent literature related to ethics and psychology, ethical theories and concepts, professionalism in educational psychology, features of professionalism, and organisations and ethical practice. As the literature on ethics in psychology as a discipline is broad, this literature review has focused upon certain areas of professional psychology, specifically educational psychology. The position adopted as a result of this literature review can be summarised briefly for each topic selected as follows:

1. The research evidence reviewed related to ethics and psychology suggests that professional psychologists, including EPs, face a wide range of ethical issues in their practice in the UK and worldwide. Some ethical issues are more frequently occurring whilst others are presented as more problematic.
2. The literature reviewed on ethical theory and concepts indicates that professional ethics is rooted in applied normative theories of ethics.. Professional Codes of Ethics and Practice are influenced by normative theories of ethics, including deontological and consequentialist theories. However, there has been a resurgence of interest in virtue ethics from which care and relationship ethics stem, with prominence given to the character of the individual. The related literature from the nursing profession points out that is it important to be able to provide 'the strongest moral reasons behind decision-making'. This could be said for psychologists too.
3. The literature pertaining to the third topic reviewed; professionalism in educational psychology, suggests that there are key features of a profession, including systematic training, a body of knowledge, a code of ethics and

regulation of its members. According to these criteria professional educational psychology constitutes a profession

4. The fourth area of the literature review focussed on features of professionalism. It identified codes, trust and supervision as areas of importance. Within this complex professional background, supervision is an important feature in developing professionalism. Trust is an important feature in relationships in both professional practice and between individuals and the organisation.
5. The fifth topic covered in the literature review concerned organisations and ethical practice. The literature suggests that ethical awareness is related to the ethical culture of the wider organisation. The workplace environment may be an important factor for professional practice in providing support and in helping maintain a sense of professional and social identity. EPs may have a growing sense of isolation and a reduced sense of professional identity within the host organisation, the local authority, because of changes in funding, the role of LAs and the new employment landscape.

This position based on the literature review leads onto a re-statement of the general research aims of this inquiry and will inform the methodology.

## General Research Aims

- To investigate the perceptions of frontline EPs into ethical issues.
- To identify factors and conditions which contribute to effective support for EPs faced with ethical issues in one local authority.
- To offer to the Senior Management Team of the LA EPS a model envisioning possibilities for the future to support educational psychologists in the management of ethical issues.

## Chapter Summary

This chapter focused upon a review of the theoretical and research literature related to the topic of this study, ethical issues amongst educational psychologists, and on key studies relating to the research aims of the proposed study. The literature reviewed included an examination of ethics and psychology, ethical theories and concepts, professionalism in educational psychology, features of professionalism, organisations and ethical practice. It provided a position statement for each of the topics selected for the literature review.

The aims of this research study stated above will be explored through the following research questions.

## Research Questions

- What do frontline educational psychologists perceive as ethical issues in their practice?
- How do frontline EPs manage perceived ethical issues?
- What support do frontline EPs perceive as desirable when managing perceived ethical issues?
- What organisational arrangements would EPs wish to see implemented to support the management of ethical issues?

## Unique and Original Contribution

Arising from this systematic literature review, the research questions above derive from a gap in the research literature and evidence base of applied professional educational psychology. There are no examples in the literature of a case study in a local authority psychology service involving all frontline educational psychologists. This research is a unique and original contribution to knowledge as it aims to understand the perceptions of frontline EPs. The study seeks to comprehend how EPs currently manage the ethical issues they face and what they identify as effective support.

The next chapter will discuss the methodological orientation, research design and ethical issues of the present study.

## Chapter 3

### Methodological Orientation, Research Design and Ethical Issues

#### Introduction

The focus of this study, as stated in the introductory chapter, is the perception of frontline educational psychologists into ethical issues faced in their daily practice: how they manage ethical concerns and what they perceive as essential and desirable supportive organisational characteristics.

The literature review examined five key areas: ethics and psychology; ethical theories and concepts, professionalism in educational psychology, features of professionalism, and organisations and ethical practice.

The key issues that emerged included:

- There is a growing interest in professional ethics in all fields of public life.
- Concepts and theories of ethics influence the professional decision making process. Codes of conduct whilst important cannot address all circumstances involving ethical issues.
- Trust remains an important feature in professional relationships.
- Supervision is an important feature in professional educational psychology.
- Organisational cultures influence ethical awareness and behaviour.
- The workplace environment impacts upon professional life. There is a relationship between professional behaviour and the environment.



This current chapter has the following aims:

- To provide an explanation of the theoretical assumptions relevant to this study.
- To explain the study's methodological orientation and its epistemological stance, and to present reasons for its selection.
- To provide a chronology of action and detailed outline of the research design.
- To address ethical issues in the research.

### Methodological Orientation

The choice of methodological approach and research design is guided by the stated aims of the study, personal and professional knowledge of and sensitivity to the context, and the research questions emerging from the literature review. The study seeks to understand how frontline educational psychologists perceive the ethical dilemmas and issues they encounter and to ascertain how they are best supported.

Gray (2009) states that methodology is the process by which theoretical and philosophical assumptions are justified for the methods and analysis selected for the research. Silverman (1993:1) argues that methodology refers to 'a general approach to studying research topics' which is based upon the researcher's epistemological position. This study follows a qualitative methodology .

Ontology is concerned with the nature of reality. Oliver (2008) suggests that it refers to what it means to exist in the world. Willig (2001) puts it slightly differently and proposes that ontology asks the question 'what is there to know?' This study is

rooted in social constructivism. It takes an ontological position that there are multiple realities of events and experiences. Understanding the ontological position of the researcher helps to identify what form of knowledge is being sought as a consequence of the research being carried out. The ontological position in this research that multiple realities exist is in contrast to a positivist approach which views the world to be governed by physical laws (Bryman, 2004). Willig (2001) explains *'the same phenomenon or event can be described in different ways, giving rise to different ways of perceiving and understanding it'*, and Gray (2009) argues that individuals construct their own reality. In the present research the perceptions from participants are explored and are likely to have different views and ways of understanding their own realities.

Epistemology is concerned with the nature of knowledge. This present study is strongly inductive, but it also has deductive elements. The epistemological stance in this study is based in an interpretative paradigm because it aims to understand better and explore the experiences of participants related to the topic being researched (Bryman, 2004). Cresswell (1994, p.21) describes studies that are exploratory in nature as those undertaken when *'not so much has been written about the topic or population being studied and the research wants to listen to informants and to build a picture based on their ideas'*. A qualitative approach is appropriate to this study because of its concern with listening closely to the individuals relating their perceptions of their own organisational context (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994).

### Theoretical assumptions

Campbell et al (1982) emphasize the importance of theory in carrying out applied research by suggesting that without theory research outcomes may well be of little value. Lewin (1951) suggested '*there is nothing so practical as a good theory*'. Such views are contested. For example, Scriven (1991) views theories as redundant in evaluation research, while Thomas (1997) goes as far to argue for the abolition of all theory because of its repressive influence on practice. As Robson (2002) comments, "*theory can mean very different things to different people.*" Nonetheless he goes on to offer a definition:

*'in very general terms it (theory) is an explanation of what is going on in a situation, phenomenon or whatever we are investigating'. (Robson, 2002 p.61)*

In keeping with the study's aims the present research is inductive in nature with the intention that theory, as defined by Robson, is derived from the data. In other words theory is constructed or generated from the data. With this understanding the intention is that the product of the research is to offer to the Senior Management Team of the LA EPS a model envisioning possibilities for the future to support educational psychologists in the management of ethical issues.

The relationship between theory and qualitative methods is both complex and controversial. While theories provide a framework, or lens, through which researchers can plan and conduct their studies (Anfara and Mertz 2006), the multiplicity of theoretical and philosophical approaches presented as underpinning

qualitative research can sometimes seem confusing. Therefore there is an onus to be as clear as possible when discussing a study's methodological approach.

More specifically, this research has been planned and carried out using an Appreciative Inquiry (AI) framework within a case study format.

### Positive Psychology

Aspects of Positive Psychology (Seligman, 2002) have resonance with those of AI.

*'The message of the positive psychology movement is to remind our field ...psychology is not just the study of disease, weakness and damage; it also is the study of strength and virtue'. (Seligman, 2002; p.4)*

Positive Psychology emphasises the importance of research based on strengths and asks questions about *'what works, what is right and what is improving?'* (Sheldon and King, 2001, p.216). It offers a language to discuss many aspects of strength-focussed study. Linley, Joseph, Harrington and Wood (2006) consider that one of the most important impacts positive psychology can bring is a grouping of positive factors and a framework where different elements of a strength focussed research and practice can be positioned. Educational psychologists increasingly use a variety of tools in their practice which focus on the positive qualities of an individual or system. The use of solution focussed brief therapy (de Shazer, 1985) and motivational interviewing are just two approaches. An increasing focus on strengths and factors that promote flourishing, rather than deficit and disorders, has led to

strong implications for research in the field. Positive psychology with its theoretical and practical basis could be viewed as being in sympathy with *'the needs and aspirations of many practising psychologists'* (Linley et al, 2006; p.7).

The body of knowledge contributing to the positive psychology movement could also have significance for organisational behaviour as it highlights the strengths of an organisation by *'...discovering, understanding, and fostering innovations in social-organisational arrangements and processes'*. (Cooperrider and Srivastva, 1987)

For the purposes of this study positive psychology is considered to be:

*'...the scientific study of optimal human functioning. At the meta-psychological level, it aims to redress the imbalance in psychological research and practice by calling attention to the positive aspects of human functioning and experience, and integrating them with our understanding of the negative aspects of human functioning and experience. At the pragmatic level, it is about understanding the wellsprings, processes and mechanisms that lead to desirable outcomes. (Linley et al; 2006, p.8).*

Later in this chapter it is argued that AI resonates with the theoretical stance of positive psychology by focussing on positive, life-affirming experiences to create potential developments, making it a suitable choice of method for this topic of study. In the following section an overview of appreciative inquiry as a methodology approach is provided.

## Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry is a relatively new methodological approach in research which has become an important tool in organisational change both as a methodology and method. It came to prominence in the 1980s with the doctoral research of David Cooperrider at the Cleveland Clinic – ‘Appreciative Inquiry: Towards a methodology for understanding and enhancing organisational innovation’. The historical and chronological background of AI can be traced back to the work of social psychologist Kurt Lewin and his work on Action Research in the 1940s with its emphasis on ‘*a spirit of inquiry rather than a mechanistic analytical study*’ (Lewis, Passmore and Cantore, 2008). The publication of ‘The Social Construction of Reality’ (Berger and Luckmann, 1966) added further discourse and understanding about the nature of knowledge. A few years later Gergen’s work in the 1970s on social constructionism added yet further robust theoretical underpinning to AI.

Gergen (1990) describes AI in epistemological, methodological and theoretical terms.

*‘...a methodology that takes the idea of a social construction of reality to its positive extreme – especially with its emphasis on metaphor and narrative, relational ways of knowing on language, and on its potential as a source of generative theory.’ (1990 p. 162)*

AI has philosophical and theoretical underpinnings in social constructionism which ‘*aims to account for the ways in which phenomena are socially constructed*’. (Lewis, Passmore and Cantore (2008). Social constructionism adopts a relativist rather than

positivist position in which the nature of reality is dependent upon the perceptions, thoughts, language, beliefs and desires of individuals.

AI is a way of thinking about change in a positive framework. It has been described in a number of ways. Reed (2007) describes the basic principle of AI as follows:

*'a simple but radical approach to understanding the social world. Put simply, AI concentrates on exploring ideas that people have about what is valuable in what they do and then tries to work out ways in which this can be built on – the emphasis is firmly on appreciating the activities and responses of people, rather than concentrating on their problems' (Reed, 2007, p 2).*

As described in the background to this study the research was conducted within a rapidly changing and uncertain context. The methodology was selected with this in mind.

The literature contains many definitions and descriptions of Appreciative Inquiry. White (1996) views AI as a radical approach to change that shuns problem based management. Bushe and Pitman (1991) suggest that AI is considered to be the most important advance in social research in the past generation. All researchers agree that AI can be identified with a constructionist paradigm. This reflects the belief that social systems contain many realities and that a 'reality' is created through 'the meanings and classifications which people attach to the world' (Robson, 2001 p. 22). AI has been described as social constructionism with 'a positive spin' (Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros, 2003).

Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) first introduced the term 'Appreciative Inquiry' in their research. They take a sociorationalist view of science which they consider to be: '*an interpretive form of inquiry that connects organised action to its contextually embedded set of meaning*' (Cooperrider and Srivastva, 1987). This perspective on behaviour argues that meaning is:

- Socially constructed,
- Historically and contextually embedded,
- Continually evolving and
- Influenced by the interpretations of those involved in its construction.

The classic AI model for organisational development can be represented by a '4-D' cycle of Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny:

#### The classic 4 –D Model

- **Discovery:** Inquiry into positive properties of the organisation: uncovering and valuing the best of 'What is'. This is where information is generated through Appreciative Interviews conducted with the people within the organisation.
- **Dream:** Articulation of Possibilities: Envisioning 'What Might Be'. The inquiry uncovers themes that were discovered from the interview process and envision possibilities for the future.
- **Design:** Consensual Validation/Agreement: Determining 'What Should Be'. Participants begin to focus in on a vision that is pragmatic, rooted in the strengths uncovered, and is achievable.



- **Destiny:** Co-construction of the Preferred Future: Growing 'What Will Be'. The organisation begins the planning and implementation process to bring the vision to life. Members are committed to do what is needed and plan accordingly.

The current study focuses on the Discovery and Dream stages of the AI model. The Design and Destiny stages of the model are not entered into and consequently the full research potential of the research is curtailed. This is in sympathy with the present study's research aims after the research design of Walker and Carr-Stewart (2004).

#### Rationale for the use of Appreciative Inquiry - the current study

Appreciative Inquiry has been used as a methodological approach in previous published research related to educational psychology (Woollam, 2010). AI has been chosen as a methodology in a variety of educational research settings, (Quintanilla & Packard, 2002; Smart & Mann, 2003; Calabrese, 2006; and Clarke et al, 2006). Van Vuuren & Crous, 2005) state that AI is '*a philosophical orientation and a way of thinking, and, it is a process, a method and an intervention*'. It was selected as the most appropriate methodological approach and research method for the present study for the following reasons:

1. Its focus on the positive. This was a primary consideration for participants' welfare in an organisation experiencing budget cuts; low morale and undergoing significant restructure and change.

2. Embedded within AI is the epistemological stance that individual perceptions are recognised and dignified, and create social reality. AI accepts that the 'primary purpose of action research is to produce practical knowledge that is useful to people' (Reason and Bradbury, 2008; p.4). This is in keeping with the aims of the research to put forward a model to the Senior Management Team of the LA EPS envisioning possibilities for the future to support EPs.
3. AI is an empowering and highly inclusive approach. Its focus is on participants' experiences of success and acknowledges the importance in research of 'participation as method' (Reason, 2005, p.2).
4. Its promotion of the reflection on past and current achievements endorses the professional validity of the interviewees.
5. Its focus on change. The constructionist assumption of AI supports a change agenda.
6. The emphasis on research ethics, not only in terms of confidentiality, interviewee safety, but also in terms of acceptance and authenticity for researchers and interviewees alike.
7. In relation to social and educational research, the choice of AI can be identified with 'autonomous dedicated practical research' (Hammersley, 2002, p.123) designed to meet the needs of a particular group or organisation. In this study the group comprises twelve frontline educational psychologists employed by the same organisation as the author.

## Alternative Approaches Considered

Alternative methodologies were considered when designing this research study before selecting AI. All methodologies were qualitative. These were:

- Ethnographic approaches
- Grounded theory
- Interpretative Phenomenological Approaches (IPA)

Ethnographic approaches may have been appropriate as I was an employee of the organisation. Traditional ethnographic studies are conducted over a number of years (Robson, 2002) and this would not have been possible given the changing employment landscape and future uncertainty. A micro-ethnographic study may have had potential; however, access to the participants may have been problematic given different working locations across a large county and a range of working patterns. Furthermore, in order to obtain the views of all frontline EPs who were my colleagues my presence as a researcher may have been inhibitory for the participants.

Grounded theory was also considered but its limitations for current purposes outweighed its benefits. The intended aim of Grounded Theory is to create theory based on the emerging data, a theory grounded in the data. Different epistemologies of grounded theory are put forward. Some researchers have argued that grounded theory does not address questions of reflexivity (Stanley and Wise, 1983:152) and is 'a form of inductivist positivism' (Willig, 2001, p.45). These concerns have been addressed by Charmaz, (1990, 1995) who has attempted to introduce reflexivity into grounded theory taking into account a social constructionist perspective. Grounded

theory is also concerned with uncovering social processes which perhaps would confine its use when asking about individual experiences of educational psychologists practising on the 'frontline'. Willig (2001) argues that; '*when applied to questions about the nature of experience, as opposed to the unfolding of social processes, Grounded Theory method is reduced to a technique for systematic organisation*'. (Willig, 2001 p.46). As stated in the introduction, this study aims to better understand the meaning of the experiences that individual educational psychologists make when faced with ethical issues in their practice. With this in mind phenomenological research methods were also considered.

IPA '*is concerned with experiences and meanings*' (Willig, 2001, p.62) and allows people to make sense of them (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2009). IPA uses small sample sizes that are reasonably homogenous and as such might have been appropriate for the current research. However, it has a number of theoretical and pragmatic drawbacks with its emphasis on the interpretation of individual accounts as opposed to description.

In this section the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings to the methodology were explained. A consideration to some alternative methodologies was provided. On balance, given the sensitivities of the participants and the changing climate within the organisation at the time of the study, the advantages of AI for the current study outweighed those of ethnographic, Grounded Theory and IPA methodologies. Next a chronology of events is given. The research design and methods used to illuminate the aims and research questions listed at the end of the Literature Review are discussed.

The meaning of methodology in relation to this study has already been referred to at the beginning of the chapter. The following section provides a chronology of events and covers the research design of this enquiry relevant to its methodology.

### Chronology of Events

This chronology identifies the key actions taken by the researcher and associated timeline.

<b>Action taken by researcher</b>	<b>Date</b>
Origins of the study	Summer term 2010
Background reading	Summer and autumn term 2010
Consideration of methodological orientation, research design and methods.	Summer and autumn term 2010
Initial identification of research aims and questions	Spring term 2011
Thesis proposal	Spring term 2011
Ethical approval sought from Cardiff University ethics committee	Spring term 2011
LA and gatekeeper approval	Spring term 2011
Pilot study conducted and amendments made to appreciative interview schedule	Spring term 2011
Completion of literature review	Spring and summer term 2011
Data collection and transcription	Summer term 2011
Data analysis and write up	Autumn term 2011 and Spring term 2012
Conclusions drawn and reflections on the strengths, limitations and implications	Autumn term 2012

### Research Design

This study has been designed following an Appreciative Inquiry approach which has developed rapidly as a research and organisational development approach (Reed, 2007). Whilst remaining true to the underlying philosophical and theoretical bases of the approach it is argued that it is important to adopt methods that meet the demands of academic scrutiny (Miles and Huberman, 1994). An AI approach can be viewed as a subset of educational case study research. This section aims to

describe and provide a rationale to the research framework within which the study was conducted and how the perceptions of frontline educational psychologists were investigated.

This outline covers a number of 'design considerations' (Lincoln and Guba, 1995) for qualitative research:

- Case study as a research strategy.
- Gaining access to the research population
  1. Informed consent
  2. Anonymity
  3. The research setting
- Methods of data collection.
- Interviewing
  1. Interview schedules
  2. Interview ethics
- Data analysis.

The final section of this chapter will address ethical considerations.

### Case Study

There are many different definitions of what a 'case study' is (Simons, 2009).

*'Case study is an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, programme or system in a 'real life' context (Simons, 2009; p.21)*

Robson (2002) explains that case studies 'are very various' in their design. Robson writes:

*'the 'case' can be virtually anything...they (case studies) can be done on a group, on an institution, on a neighbourhood, on an innovation, on a decision, on a service, on a programme and on many other things'. (2002, p.180).*

Roberts et al (2004) make the point that the purpose of a case study is to offer a

*'telling case' from which theory, concepts and hypotheses can be extracted. Insights from the research can then be applied to other situations where similar conditions exist'. (2004, p.11).*

Case studies have been used increasingly in social care (Shaw and Gould, 2001) and nursing (Anthony and Jack, 2009). This is due partly because they are suitable for use in a wide range of settings and programmes and also because of the extensive knowledge held by practitioners in a particular area.

The 'case' in the present study is a group of twelve frontline educational psychologists working for one LA educational psychology service.

Moriarty (2011) provides many advantages of case studies. These include:

- *Evaluating change and innovation, organisational support and new organisations.*
- *Inclusion of multiple perspectives*
- *Flexibility in data collections*
- *Accessibility to readers.* (2011; p.15)

Robson (2002) advocates the use of case studies in the exploratory stages of research.

The aim of the current study is to develop as complete an understanding as possible of the experiences of frontline educational psychologists working for an LA EPS. The 'case' in this research is the group of professionals which comprise all twelve frontline EPs and the advantages outlined of the research design were established. The next section examines potential criticisms of case study approaches.

### Criticisms of the Case Study Approach

Although there are many advantages of case study designs there are a number of criticisms. The most foremost claim is that it is impossible to generalise from a single case. Lack of generalisation and a propensity for researchers to 'verify' their preconceived ideas are cited as criticisms of case studies (Simons, 1996; Flyvjerg, 2006). Some researchers have suggested that there is a 'lack of rigour' in case study designs (Yin, 1984). Others argue that case studies are time consuming and that



the development of case study protocols or plans of analysis during the research is variable (Yin, 2009).

In spite of these criticisms it is argued that there is value in the use of a case study approach if it can illuminate the experiences of educational psychologists faced with ethical issues at a time of rapid change within the profession, as this could make a significant contribution to our knowledge of professional educational psychology.

### Gaining access to the research population

This study may be considered unusual in that the research population offered their support for the proposed study following a service training and development day which arose from complex case work. In order to gain access to the educational psychologists involved, the principal educational psychologist's permission was sought. This research was undertaken when the LA was undergoing major restructuring in a climate of significant budget cuts. The sensitivities of educational psychologists were of paramount consideration throughout the research process as a result of the changing professional landscape and local context.

The principal educational psychologist was supportive of the research especially given the interest and support from the educational psychologists. An outcome of discussions with the leadership and management team of the psychology service was that I would offer a model envisioning possibilities for the future to support EPs. This offer was in keeping with the spirit of AI (Hammond and Royal, 1998) and new paradigm methodology (Reason and Rowan, 1981).

At a subsequent training and development day I approached the educational psychologists in the service. This was appropriate for the following reasons:

- The educational psychologists were colleagues of mine, which would have made written communication over formal.
- It provided the opportunity of explaining and clarifying the purpose of the research, of responding to individual questions and facilitating greater understanding.
- The essential tenets of AI could be explained.
- The rationale for defining and identifying frontline educational psychologists could be explained.
- Assurances could be given that the study would ensure confidentiality and anonymity, avoiding use of identifiable features but still convey the perceptions of educational psychologists in keeping with the aims of the inquiry and its methodological approach.
- Informed consent could be obtained on the basis of full understanding and information about the nature and purpose of the research.

Without exception, participants expressed their interest and willingness to be participants in the research study. Following discussion with the participants, it was agreed not to include individual vignettes of each participant's background because this could identify them and reduce confidentiality. All participants held similar responsibilities, contracts and lines of accountability.

## Methods of Data Collection

Willig (2001) makes the point that '*strictly speaking, there are no 'right or wrong' methods. Rather methods of data collection and analysis can be more or less appropriate to our research question*' (2001, p.19).

However, it is important to use methods of data collection which encourage the participant to engage in the research process by avoiding un-naturalistic or highly structured methods (Sapsford and Jupp, 1996). With this in mind semi structured interviews were conducted within the participants in locations chosen by participants.(Appendix K).

## Interview Methods

There are a range of interview methods varying in their degree of structure. Semi-structured interview methods usually follow an interview agenda consisting of open ended questions. In contrast, structured and survey style interviews consist of predetermined interviews which follow a similar format and which follow the researcher's agenda. Willig (2001) states that '*semi-structured interviewing is the most widely used method of data collection in qualitative research in psychology*' (p.21), largely because data can be analysed in a variety of ways and are compatible with various methods of data analysis. Bryman (2004) describes interviewing in qualitative research as a flexible process where the researcher is interested in gaining the interviewee's point of view. The ontological position of this research is that multiple realities exist and that knowledge is socially constructed. It is the aim of this study is to capture the perceptions of the educational psychologists who are the participants and discover a detailed view of what is relevant to them and

how they construct the ethical issues they encounter in their practice. Thus a flexible technique was deemed necessary which permitted participants to talk frankly whilst following the guiding format of an appreciative inquiry. A semi structured interview was considered most appropriate as it allows the researcher to prompt and probe at relevant times and ask open ended questions related to the research questions. The flexibility of the approach allows the interviewee to talk openly about the issues they consider pertinent.

Interviews are the cornerstone of AI. Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) argue that :

*'At the heart of AI is the appreciative interview, a one on one dialogue among organisations members (2003; p.14)*

The interview questions used in this research were devised incorporating the guidance of Cooperrider et al (2003), an appreciative stance; my in-depth knowledge of the current context of the LA workplace of the participants and maintaining at all times full sensitivity towards the participants. Following the chosen methodological orientation, the interview schedule included key characteristics of AI as suggested by Watkins and Mohr (2001) who state that AI interview questions:

- Are phrased in affirmative language describing what is wanted rather than unwanted.
- Are preceded by an explanation of its positive intent.
- Permit all-encompassing definitions so that individuals can make their own meaning of the question.
- Respect individual responses as to 'what is' and facilitate the identification of affirmative experiences.

- Communicate unconditional concern and encouragement for the individual and their involvement.
- Bring out essential values and inspirations.

Three further additional characteristics of an AI interview protocol were followed in this research.

1. Participants were given an outline of Appreciative Inquiry for reference and for purpose of personal CPD.
2. A thesis proposal containing key issues was emailed to all participants by way of introduction.
3. Questions were introduced by an explanation of the affirmative nature of AI.

Responses provided by the participants were investigated in more depth using open ended follow up questions suggested by Holloway and Jefferson (2000), and addressed issues raised in the interviewee's responses, using their own language and phrasing.

Interviews took place at the participants' office or place of choice and lasted between forty five minutes to one and a half hours.

As described under the heading Case Study, the 'case' in this research comprised all frontline educational psychologists employed by the LA EPS. Further details about the research setting have been provided in the Introduction.

As stated, given the sensitivity of the changing employment landscape, my relationship with the participants who are colleagues, the use of tape recording was constantly under review and participants were offered the opportunity to switch off the recording at any point. Notes were also taken throughout the semi-structured interview to guide and prompt further questions.

The interview questions were piloted with another EP who had worked for the same LA EPS. This was important as it meant they had experience of the organisation as well as first-hand experience of the same conditions as the participants of working on the 'frontline' as defined in the Introduction.

As well as practice in use of the interview schedule and some amendments made, the pilot phase involved use of the letter to the participants; the participant information, debrief sheet and consent form ( Appendix A,B,D). The interviews were recorded, notes taken and times noted in order to explore the materials and process. The pilot interview was not transcribed or included in the data analysis.

### Methods of Data Analysis

The ontological and epistemological positions adopted in this study have been outlined previously. To recap, this research is conducted within a constructionist and interpretative framework. The choice of research tools and data analysis was guided by these theoretical perspectives allowing for data analysis following an inductive approach. Thematic analysis was selected as the method of data analysis in this study because it is consistent with the methodological approach taken, specifically

that of Braun and Clarke (2006), as it is one of the very few peer reviewed and published articles which lays out a structured framework to follow for inexperienced qualitative researchers. The analysis was conducted manually rather than using a qualitative research software package such as NVivo, although consideration was given to this. The rationale behind conducting the analysis manually was that it allowed me to familiarise myself with all of the data. Ryan and Bernard (2003) advocate manual analysis of data when conducting inductive research with a small sample, such as in the current study. Furthermore, it facilitated the collating and moving of codes by hand into potential groups or developed themes.

Thematic analysis is described as follows:

*'a process of segmentation, categorisation and relinking of aspects of the data prior to final interpretation'* (Grbich, 2007: p16).

*'Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data'* (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 6).

Matthews and Ross (2010) describe it as *'a process of working with raw data to identify and interpret key ideas or themes'*. As Matthews and Ross (2010) point out the purpose of thematic analysis which is relevant for the present study is that it allows for:

- A description of the data.
- Access to the meaning of the data for the person who produced it.
- Exploration of the data for meanings.
- Consideration of relationships between different parts of the data.

- Tentative explanations of the similarities and differences and the apparent relationships.

Braun and Clarke (2006), writing about thematic analysis comment:

*'Through its theoretical freedom, thematic analysis provides a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data' (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.6).*

A thematic analysis method searches for themes which emerge from the data set as being important to the phenomenon under scrutiny. Attride - Stirling (2001) put forward a method for conducting thematic analyses of textual data. They suggest that web-like illustrations which they term, thematic networks, are useful in summarising the main themes and in presenting the analysis. Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) argue that thematic analysis is a method where the emerging themes become the categories for analysis. An advantage of thematic analysis is that is a useful tool which can be used both to organise and categorise data as well as a means of interpreting it (Boyatzis, 1998). Braun and Clarke (2006) contend that thematic analysis *'offers an accessible and theoretically flexible approach to analysing qualitative data'*. They argue that thematic analysis can be used as a rigorous tool. One of its key strengths is the flexibility in its use. Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that thematic analysis can be utilised from either a constructionist or positivist perspective and can be applied to a data collected from interviews, focus groups and questionnaires. Thematic analysis is in keeping with an inductive approach where a large number of initial codes derived from the data are collated



into potential descriptive themes from the ‘bottom up’. The process of analysis undertaken is now described in greater detail.

### The Process of Analysis

The method outlined in a clear and detailed framework by Braun and Clarke (2006) was followed to gain meaningful and useful findings. The process is in six phases summarised below:

Table 2: Phases in thematic analysis

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Description of Process</b>
1. Familiarisation with data.	The researcher listens to audio recordings, transcribes them, reads and re-reads transcripts, reading and re-reading noting down initial ideas.
2. Generation of initial codes.	Interesting features are coded across all the data in a systematic way.
3. Search for themes	Codes are collated into potential themes, and all data relevant to the each potential theme is gathered.
4. Review of themes	Researcher checks if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set generating a thematic map of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes	Continuing analysis is undertaken to refine the specific nature of each theme and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Production of themes	A selection of vivid compelling extracts is distilled with final analysis of selected extracts, relating back to the analysis to the research questions and literature.

Although thematic analysis is a widely used data analysis method, there is no definitive consensus about how to go about it. Further examples are provided in Attride-Stirling( 2001), Boyatis (1998) and Tuckett, (2005).

For the purposes of this study and following Braun and Clarke’s (2006) approach to thematic analysis a code is defined as a ‘unit of meaning’ which could be a word, short phrase or sentence. A code is *‘the most basic segment or element of the raw*

*data*' (Boyatzis, 1998, p.63). It identifies '*latent, content or semantic features of the data that may be of interest*' (Braun and Clarke, 2006). A theme is a recurring pattern of response. A main theme is one which centres on larger shared issues (Attride-Stirling, (2001). An example of the process of analysis and a coded transcript is contained in the Appendix. A fuller description of how the current research has followed each of the phases of analysis is given in Chapter Four – Presentation and Discussion of Findings. There are a number of choices a researcher makes when undertaking thematic analysis of the data, which need to be made explicit (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This research adopts an inductive approach as outlined above. To recap, inductive analysis is strongly linked to the data. The approach in this study is data driven and not by a pre-existing interest. Deductive or top down analysis tends to be driven by the researcher's interest and may provide a less rich picture of the data overall. It may focus on a specific aspect of the data. A deductive approach is used when the researcher holds a specific question.

### Semantic or Latent thematic analysis

Braun and Clarke (2006) make a distinction between semantic and latent thematic analysis. Within a semantic approach, themes are identified within the explicit meaning of what has been said or written. The surface meaning is represented and the researcher does not attempt to go beyond this. Data is organised to show patterns of the semantic content within the data. Latent approaches go beyond the surface meaning and are often embedded within a constructivist paradigm. The present research aims to better understand the perceptions of educational psychologists in greater depth and therefore a latent approach is adopted.

Each phase of the thematic analysis adopted in this study is explained more fully below:

### Phase 1 – Familiarisation with the data

The appreciative inquiry interviews were recorded using a tape recorder. These were then transcribed verbatim. This, according to Bird (2005) is a key stage of the analysis when approached from an interpretative epistemology. Codes were generated when transcribing pauses because they were considered important in understanding the affective features in the participants' responses. A pause of three seconds was transcribed as '...' The process of listening and re-listening to the tape recordings during transcription; followed by reading and re-reading of the transcripts, enabled familiarisation with the data. Notes of initial thoughts and ideas were recorded to highlight initial patterns in the data in a research journal.

### Phase 2

Each transcript was typed in double line spacing into a similar format with line numbers in the left hand margin for ease of reference. The right hand side was left blank for initial codes to be recorded manually. Four copies of each transcript for each of the twelve participants were photocopied. Each transcript was coded into 'chunks' of meaningful text using different coloured highlighter pens. Some interesting features of the data were coded for more than one research question as the meaning or importance of a comment only became clearer in the presence of further responses. Units of meaning 'codes' relevant to the four research questions were identified.

See Table 3 below for an example of the how interesting features of the data were coded for a short segment of data.

Table 3: Coding extracts

Data extract	Coded for
'Yes another procedural and ethical dilemma is where schools say 'oh well I know the parents haven't signed the form but I know they really want you involved, I am sure it's fine. And there have been times when I was less confident when I said 'oh alright then'.EP2	1. Informed consent. 2. Confidence with experience.

Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that codes may be data or theory driven. In this study they were data driven. For example, the number of participants who talked about specific ethical issues surrounding 'informed consent' was recorded. At this phase, care was taken to ensure the transcript codes were contained in the context of the data (Bryman, 2004) and were not cut too short.

### Phase 3

Analysis at this phase involved using a broader level of analysis using the initial codes – 'what is the descriptive property of this group of codes?' Initial codes with similar properties were grouped together into initial themes. Transcripts were cut into segments of text so that they could be moved and collated into potential themes with their respective codes. These cut out extracts were stored in labelled wallet files for subsequent analysis. In this phase of data analysis a beginning understanding of potential initial themes was possible. It became more evident which themes were more significant looking at the evidence displayed in a thematic map visually on the

wall. Initial themes whose meanings did not appear to correspond were grouped into a theme referred to as 'miscellaneous'.

#### Phase 4

Initial themes were first reviewed at the level of coded data segments to establish whether there was a coherent pattern of extracts for each of them. This was achieved by creating a large flip chart showing the developed theme, coding and an extract from the data. This allowed me to check that the developed themes represented the extract from the transcript and to make any changes. The trustworthiness of individual themes was considered in relation to the whole data set and then from individual transcripts to confirm that the themes reflected the overall meaning of the data set. To improve trustworthiness, an educational psychologist, who was equipped with definitions of all themes and who had experience of using thematic analysis in their own doctoral study, checked a random selection of the coded segments of the transcripts and their fit with developed themes. Thematic maps were reviewed together.

#### Phase 5

To ensure a systematic approach, once the thematic map was produced and the initial themes had been reviewed, a table was created providing an extract from the transcript, the theme title and a description of the theme. In this way, consideration was given to how each theme fitted with the '*story each theme tells.*' (Braun and Clarke, 2006 p.92).

## Phase 6

The sixth and final stage of thematic analysis is the final analysis presented in the Presentation and Discussion of Findings, Chapter 4. A selection of the most striking extracts is provided, relating back to the analysis to the research questions.

## Trustworthiness

Shenton (2004) argues that concepts such as validity and reliability are inappropriate in qualitative research. Instead the idea of 'trustworthiness' is put forward. Guba (1991) suggests criteria in establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research:

- Credibility (in preference to internal validity).
- Transferability (in preference to external validity and generalizability)
- Confirmability ( in preference to objectivity)

To address issues of 'trustworthiness' the following steps were taken:

- A clear and systematic framework was used to counter balance criticisms of thematic analysis that 'anything goes' in qualitative research (Braun and Clarke, 2006 p.78).
- A checklist of criteria was used to improve the data analysis.
- A reflexive account is provided at the end of the research to improve the rigour of the analysis and to add trustworthiness to the findings (Cohen et al, 2003).
- A research journal was written throughout the different stages of the research which provides further evidence for the rationale for thoughts and decisions taken.

- A data driven approach to thematic analysis was employed. The study was intentionally designed to offer maximum exposure of the data. Following Braun and Clarke (2006) this was done through the presentation of initial, developed and final themes supported by data.
- A coded transcript is provided in the appendix for subsequent researchers attempting future research.
- A CD of all transcripts is provided in Appendix L.

The issue of trustworthiness is returned to in detail in Chapter Five of the study.

### Ethical Considerations

The present study follows the professional and ethical standards required of a researcher and practising educational psychologists. In particular this research adheres to the following guidelines:

- British Psychological Society (BPS) Ethical Principles for Conducting Research with Human Participants (BPS, 2000).
- BPS Guidelines for Minimum Standards of Ethical Approval in Psychological Research (BPS, 2004)
- The Health Professional Council (HPC) Standards of Conduct and Performance and Ethics (HPC, 2008)
- The University of Cardiff Code of Research Conduct.

Ethical considerations were assimilated into the research design and guidance was sought from the British Psychological Society (BPS, 2000) for conducting research

with human participants. The four overarching ethical principles contained in the BPS Code of Conduct of responsibility, respect, integrity and competence acted as guides to the research as did those of the HPC. BPS and HPC guidelines were adhered to throughout the present research, as were issues of privacy and confidentiality, deception and consent and trust and betrayal as proposed by Rossman and Rallis (1998).

### Ethical Approval

A dissertation proposal and ethics approval form were completed and submitted following the regulations of the University of Cardiff. Ethical approval for this research was awarded in April 2012 by the researcher's supervisor and ethics committee at the University of Cardiff contained in Appendix. The next sections consider some of the main ethical issues arising from the study regarding privacy, confidentiality and anonymity, risk of harm, distress to participants and informed consent. It outlines how the current research aimed to address these issues.

### Privacy, Confidentiality and Anonymity

This research was set in the work environment of colleagues who are educational psychologists in the LA EPS. It was of utmost importance to assure all participants of confidentiality. This covers guaranteeing privacy, and maintaining confidence about the contents of the interview. All recordings, transcripts and knowledge remain confidential. All records such as consent forms, transcripts were stored in a locked cabinet or as protected data. Information kept on computers was protected via



passwords and secure ID. The educational psychologists who volunteered to take part in the study were informed of their right to confidentiality throughout the research study and were given a participant consent form, outline of the study and names of the researcher's supervisor and University of Cardiff ethics committee. All tape recordings were played and transcribed in privacy by the researcher. All tapes were confidential until transcribed. Tape recordings were then deleted. Interviewees were anonymised and are referred to as EP and were assigned numbers 1-12 at random rather than in sequence of interview. The transcripts will be untraceable after transcription has been checked by the participants.

### Deception and Consent

It is imperative that all possible precautions are taken to ensure that no harm could result as a consequence of the study, especially given the changing landscape and context of budget cuts prevalent at the time of the data collection. The ethical principle of non-maleficence acted as a 'moral compass' throughout this research (Webster and Bond, 2002). Participants provided written informed consent for their involvement (BPS, 2004; HPC, 2008). Participants were provided with a letter explaining the research, a debriefing sheet, and an explanation of the methodology chosen: appreciative inquiry (Appendices A, B, D).

### Right to Withdraw.

Participants were advised of their right to withdraw (Appendices B, D). They were provided with a letter and were assured that their interview transcript would remain anonymous.

### Trust and Betrayal

The participants are colleagues of mine and have bestowed their trust in me as a researcher. In acknowledgement of this trust it is critical to uphold the ethical principle of integrity.

The study now progresses to Chapter Four, the Presentation and Discussion of Findings.

## Chapter 4

### **Presentation and Discussion of Findings**

#### Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the findings into the perceptions of educational psychologists into ethical issues. It focuses on the study's four research questions:

- What do frontline EPs perceive as ethical issues in their practice?
- How do frontline EPs manage perceived ethical issues?
- What support do frontline EPs perceive as desirable when managing perceived ethical issues?
- What organisational arrangements would EPs wish to see implemented to support the management of ethical issues?

The four research questions arose from a review of the literature in Chapter Two. Of particular relevance was the work of Pryzwansky and Wendt (1999), Lindsay et al (2008), Pope and Vetter (1992), Lindsay and Colley (1995), Bennett (2008) and a collection of research papers in the special Edition of Child and Educational psychology 'Ethical Practice' (Webster and Lloyd Bennett Eds, 2002).

As stated in Chapter Three, Methodological Orientation, Research Design and Ethical Issues, the data gathered were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The terminology used when identifying, refining and reviewing themes reflects those of Braun and Clarke, (2006). Themes, or 'patterns of meaning', are referred to as initial themes, developed themes and final themes.

Following Braun and Clarke (2006), codes (defined as ‘features of the data’) were grouped into an initial thematic map during the third phase of the data analysis. The next phase (phase 4) produced fewer, developed themes which are presented in thematic maps for each research question addressed. The themes to emerge from the fifth and final phase of analysis, (refining and naming themes) are presented in final thematic maps.

Table 4 presents an overview of the initial themes, developed themes and final themes for each of the four research questions.

Table 4: Summary of initial, developed and final themes (with main themes in bold)

<u>Research Question</u>	<u>Initial themes</u>	<u>Developed Themes</u>	<u>Final Themes</u>
RQ1. What do frontline Educational psychologists perceive as ethical issues in their practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Report writing.</b></li> <li>• Psychometric testing and assessment</li> <li>• Children’s views</li> <li>• <b>Consultation</b></li> <li>• Confidentiality</li> <li>• Informed Consent</li> <li>• Actions of parents</li> <li>• Working in schools</li> <li>• Questionable interventions</li> <li>• <b>Transparency</b></li> <li>• Working with other agencies</li> <li>• Being drawn in</li> <li>• <b>Trading</b></li> <li>• Equal access to EPS</li> <li>• Fairness</li> <li>• <b>Integrity</b></li> <li>• Conduct of EP</li> <li>• Tribunals</li> <li>• Placement decisions and provision.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Difficult Situations ‘Hotspots’</b></li> <li>• Working with other agencies</li> <li>• Direct Work</li> <li>• Working in schools</li> <li>• <b>Communication</b></li> <li>• Reporting</li> <li>• Transparency</li> <li>• Consultation</li> <li>• <b>Trading</b></li> <li>• Fairness</li> <li>• Integrity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Difficult Situations ‘Hotspots’</b></li> <li>• Communication &amp; Reporting</li> <li>• Direct Work</li> <li>• Consultation</li> <li>• <b>Challenges to Professionalism</b></li> <li>• Trading</li> <li>• Integrity</li> </ul>
RQ2. How do frontline EPs manage perceived ethical issues?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Personal Characteristics</b></li> <li>• Values and beliefs</li> <li>• Principles</li> <li>• Experience</li> <li>• Self-knowledge</li> <li>• <b>Personal Effectiveness</b></li> <li>• Being upfront and honest</li> <li>• Being clear about EP role</li> <li>• Keeping records</li> <li>• Developing relationships</li> <li>• <b>Support</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Support</b></li> <li>• Informal support</li> <li>• Formal support</li> <li>• Developing relationships</li> <li>• <b>Personal Effectiveness</b></li> <li>• Organisation</li> <li>• <b>Character</b></li> <li>• Values</li> <li>• Experience</li> <li>• <b>Professional Guidance</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Character</b></li> <li>• Experience</li> <li>• Personal values and beliefs</li> <li>• <b>Relationships</b></li> <li>• Qualities in support</li> <li>• Informal support</li> <li>• Formal professional support</li> <li>• <b>Features of Professionalism</b></li> <li>• Professional guidance</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Backup</li> <li>• Qualities in support</li> <li>• Emotional support from family</li> <li>• Use of written procedures</li> <li>• <b>Talking to Others</b></li> <li>• Parents</li> <li>• Other professionals</li> <li>• Sharing anxieties and problem solving</li> <li>• EP colleagues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Backup</li> <li>• Written procedures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct</li> </ul>
RQ3: What support do frontline EPs perceive as desirable when managing perceived ethical issues?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Supervision</b></li> <li>• Authority</li> <li>• Responsiveness</li> <li>• External supervision</li> <li>• <b>Personal Qualities of Supervisor</b></li> <li>• Confidence and trust</li> <li>• Chalk face experience of managers</li> <li>• <b>Policies and Guidance</b></li> <li>• Transparency</li> <li>• Service Level Agreement</li> <li>• <b>Workplace Environment</b></li> <li>• Proximity of EP colleagues</li> <li>• Time to reflect and meet</li> <li>• Professional identity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Protected and regular supervision</b></li> <li>• External</li> <li>• Line</li> <li>• Peer</li> <li>• <b>Personal Qualities</b></li> <li>• Experience</li> <li>• Competence</li> <li>• Trust and respect</li> <li>• <b>Workplace Environment</b></li> <li>• Proximity to colleagues</li> <li>• Office space</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Workplace Environment</b></li> <li>• Professional identity</li> <li>• Conducive conditions</li> <li>• <b>Supervision</b></li> <li>• Peer</li> <li>• Line</li> <li>• Personal qualities</li> <li>• Protected regular &amp; responsive</li> </ul>
RQ4: What organisational arrangements would EPs wish to see implemented to support the management of ethical issues?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Supervision</b></li> <li>• Office design and facilities</li> <li>• Valued and protected time</li> <li>• <b>CPD</b></li> <li>• Training</li> <li>• Team work</li> <li>• Self-knowledge</li> <li>• <b>Leadership and Vision</b></li> <li>• Policies</li> <li>• LA guidance and procedures</li> <li>• Organisational follow up</li> <li>• Good people management</li> <li>• Transparency on expenditure</li> <li>• <b>Ethical Knowledge Base</b></li> <li>• Modelling of ethical practice</li> <li>• Ethical discussions and forums</li> <li>• Formal recognition of parents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Supervision</b></li> <li>• Valued, regular and protected</li> <li>• Workplace environment</li> <li>• <b>Leadership and Vision</b></li> <li>• Modelling</li> <li>• Good people management</li> <li>• Policies, procedures and guidance</li> <li>• <b>CPD</b></li> <li>• Ethical discussions</li> <li>• Training</li> <li>• Team work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ethical Direction of the Organisation</b></li> <li>• Leadership and vision</li> <li>• CPD</li> </ul>

Whilst Keeves (1997) observes that *'there are few agreed procedures of established conventions for the reporting of human research'*, Oliver (2004) argues that this puts an even greater responsibility on the researcher to provide a cogent framework.

A rigid distinction between Presentation of Findings and the Discussion in qualitative research can sometimes be difficult for the researcher. Therefore to aid cogency this chapter is organised in the following manner with the intention of maximising the exposure of the data to the reader and to enhance the trustworthiness of the research.

The findings for each of the four research questions are presented in turn. At each phase of theme development, main themes, which have been explained as themes which centre on larger shared issues (Attride-Stirling, 2001) are presented in thematic maps adhering closely to Braun and Clarke (2006). The sequence of presentation will be:

- The presentation of an initial thematic map showing initial themes supported by relevant illustrative quotations from the data.
- Arising from the initial themes, a thematic map of the developed themes is then presented.
- The final themes, derived from the developed themes, will be represented by a final thematic map.

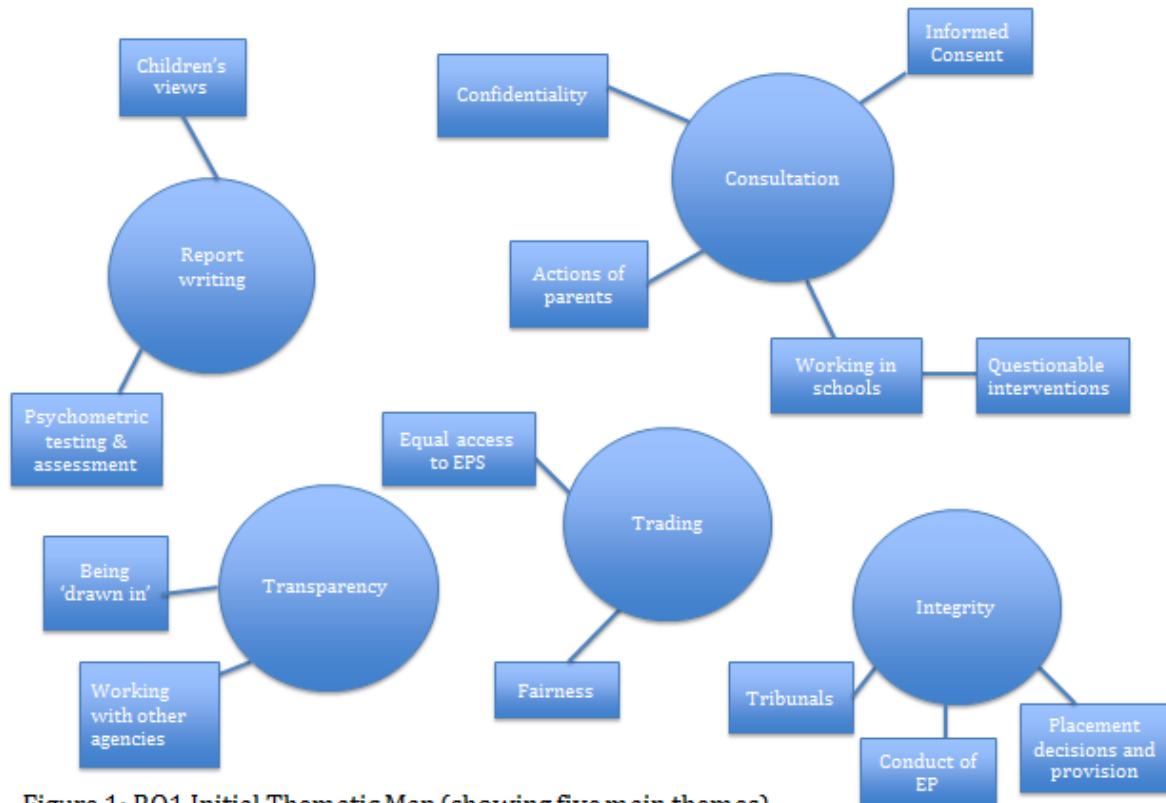
After the presentation of results as outlined above, the final themes are discussed in relation to each of the four research questions.

## Research Question 1: Presentation and Discussion of Findings

### Research Question 1: Presentation of Findings

#### **RQ1. What do frontline EPs perceive as ethical issues in their practice?**

Nineteen initial themes were identified following data analysis.



**Figure 1: RQ1 Initial Thematic Map (showing five main themes)**

The initial thematic map above (Figure 1) demonstrates how the codes collated from the data were organised into nineteen initial themes, with five main themes.

By means of a preface to the presentation of initial themes, with relevant supporting quotations from the data, it is noteworthy that, without exception all twelve EPs interviewed reported that they faced a range of ethical issues in their practice.

As one educational psychologist explained:

*'Every conversation, contact, report and so on has the potential for an (ethical) issue of some sort or another.'* EP 7

Another EP added that the only difference was:

*'They vary in degree of ethical dilemma'*. EP2

The same EP commented that:

*'I would hope that ethical practice is a part of everything you do so it's not an 'add on'. One of things we don't do is to acknowledge the work we do well most of the time. And so we must handle ethical dilemmas well most of the time'*.EP2

Following the framework above, what follows is a presentation of initial themes as findings. Themes are presented in no order of relevance or importance.

### **Initial theme: Report Writing (a main theme)**

Three educational psychologists perceived ethical issues when formulating and writing reports and when providing verbal feedback.

EP 3 discussed her involvement in a 'Team Around the Child' meeting where it became evident that the child was unaware that the person she believed to be her father was not. The educational psychologist explained that she took great care in



her own report not to record this fact to prevent the child being distressed from reading what would have been potentially very upsetting information.

*'She (the child) thinks that the man she calls her father... isn't... and the Mum hasn't told her. I was writing my statutory advice about the parents' and child's views and I didn't want to put this significant event in my report because I felt the child was very bright and a good reader and that if she saw my report lying around the house she could find out. That was not the way for her to find out that sort of information and I think it was a crucial bit of information'.EP3*

EP 5 reported that some of the ethical issues around report writing arose because of lack of clarity about the structure and content of recorded information in pupil files which meant that some pupil files may not present a full picture of a child's special educational needs.

*'We are not clear what is appropriate to write in reports, notes and files. Some pupil files do not give a full picture of the SEN of a pupil and important things are glossed over and not tackled'.EP5*

Another educational psychologist believed it was not always in the child's best interests or appropriate to report findings of some assessments because of the way the information may be used or interpreted. The comments of EP9 reflect this issue:

*'My frequent dilemmas seem to be about reporting information – sometimes it is not in the child's interests to report everything they tell you, or indeed to*

*report some findings of assessments because it can give a negative picture of a child's abilities and affect the way they are seen by their parents and school.*

*EP 9*

#### Initial theme: Psychometric testing and assessment

Three of the twelve educational psychologists (EP1, 6, 7,) interviewed expressed strong views about the use of psychometric assessments and some diagnostic questionnaires and tests. There is some overlap between this initial theme and the initial theme: report writing. Report writing is concerned with how to report information, whilst this theme, psychometric testing and assessment, is focussed on the assessment itself. EP 9 discussed the use and interpretation of a Connors checklist assessment:

*'You don't want to collude if your observations are different and depend on the context. It's the same with a cognitive assessment – it is about how the results are or could be used or interpreted'. EP 9*

In particular, these educational psychologists perceived ethical issues as relating to the interpretation and validity of standardised assessment results and questionnaires.

*'... there are major issues nowadays about using supposedly diagnostic tests because... in many cases it is not at all clear that the standardised tests are testing what they claim to test. Nowadays I think children's language*

*difficulties give them a severe disadvantage by limiting their capacities to be represented in tests' .EP6*

*'I guess I am not a huge fan of psychometric or any sort of testing because I don't see how that is going to help unravel or understand or even in some cases, 'fix' the child. EP1*

*When it's about managing my personal reluctance for tests with the best interests of the child. I prefer to look at monitoring over time and a conclusion you come to after putting in interventions and reviewing them'.EP7*

One educational psychologist perceived that the results of psychometric assessment information were sometimes used by schools to deflect responsibility for the child's difficulties away from inadequate support in school.

*'I have a particular difficulty with parents or schools who dig their heels in and just want a diagnosis, probably because they feel they have done all the intervention and want a view 'yes or no'. And sometimes schools have not put the interventions in place or the IEP isn't done'. EP7*

Another educational psychologist reported that she was often asked to conduct a cognitive assessment specifically to access resources from other agencies or support decisions regarding provision.

*'I am frequently asked to provide an IQ score to allocate provision both by Health and SEN officers, or I am asked does this child have moderate or severe learning difficulties. There is some confusion over the terminology used, for example a moderate learning difficulty is similar to a mild learning disability. When you look on government and other websites, all mention an IQ 70 or above. One parent was alarmed by a report from one professional who said his child had a moderate learning difficulty, not a mild one because of the difference in terminology used and I was called in by the school to explain this. He saw that this was preventing his child from going to a particular school he wanted. The problem is that if an EP does not do the assessment it may lead to the child, young person or family being denied respite care, support from the learning disability team, and so forth and you don't want that to happen.'* EP 12

#### Initial theme: Children's views

Three educational psychologists interviewed explained that one of the most common dilemmas they faced surrounded how to report a child/young person's views whilst maintaining a trusting relationship with that child/young person and keeping their confidences.

*'Well I suppose the most common dilemmas I come up against are in individual work with youngsters. There is a fine line between them needing to talk in confidence and sharing information...usually it is about a child talking about one parent or another or when there are*

*family breakups and they might be reluctant for the other parent to know'. EP11*

Another educational psychologist commented that she faced conflicting ethical principles in one situation regarding reporting the voice of the child. The EP commented:

*'...a young pupil told me that he missed his mother very much and wanted to go and live with her. I heard from the SENCO later that after I had left he was very upset in school and was worried what would happen if his father found out. Luckily at this stage I had not written up the visit, but given his young age and how unhappy he was, I might have reported his views saying something about it, and this could have made things difficult with his father and step mother. This is when it is so important to meet the parents and having the chance to feedback face to face. I was torn between on one hand I wanted to try to improve things for the child, and to help him express how unhappy he was and his wishes and on the other hand not wanting to make things worse. In the end we did find a way round it. There can be a real judgement call in knowing how far to record a child's voice which is very important, how far to act as an advocate.' EP 12*

This view is echoed by another psychologist who also commented upon the extent to which information provided by a child or young person was shared:

*'My frequent dilemmas seem to be about reporting information – sometimes it is not in the child's interests to report everything they tell you, or indeed to report some findings of assessments because it can give a negative picture of a child's abilities and affect the way they are seen by their parents and school'.EP9*

### **Initial theme: Consultation (a main theme)**

Two educational psychologists perceived the existence of ethical issues in consultations.

*'if a school wants a professionals meeting to start before the parent arrived and that makes me feel uncomfortable. If it can't be shared I wonder what the purpose of having that meeting is. ...I arrived at the school, parents were already waiting and I told the receptionist I was there and I saw them (the parents) and I introduced myself and it was nice. We were due to meet at 1 o'clock and it was 1 o'clock and then the SENCO came up and said 'we'll just go down and come back up in a minute. And I said 'no we can all go and I knew she wanted to talk to me about some other things any way but the face validity of it would look like she was walking away to talk about them and their son and that would not have been good in any way, shape or form' EP2*

Another EP talked about the difficulties of schools involving parents in consultations:

*'My most common ethical dilemmas are around consultations and to do with schools not involving parents. My view would always be to involve parents,*

*but schools do not always invite them to meetings – more so now I find that we are trading and schools have bought in a number of days' visits. There is an issue for me in that my work feels incomplete without parents in the consultation. EP12*

#### Initial theme: Confidentiality

As a topic, confidentiality raised itself on a number of occasions. One educational psychologist expressed concerns when a senior manager in another service had requested the names of pupils who had received EP involvement for an evaluation exercise. EP 3 perceived this ethical issue to be about the sharing and use of information about particular children with other professionals where this had not been agreed in the consultation agreement form with the children's parent. This raised the principles of confidentiality and ensuring fully informed consent. EP 3 was passionate in her views:

*'I didn't think this was right to share their names with an unrelated service because the parents had not signed any permission form for their children's names to be released and I did challenge that because I felt it was wrong from a moral point of view.'* EP3

#### Initial theme: Informed Consent

The issue of informed consent was discussed by EP 8 who described how a school had misled the parents of a pupil to agree to the involvement of an educational psychologist on the basis that it would provide their child with additional support. In reality the school wished to seek a diagnosis of ASC from Child and Adolescent

Mental Health Services and the protocol was that CAMHS would not accept a referral without an EP report.

*'...the school were finding the child's parents very difficult to engage and thought the father of the pupil was also on the spectrum and reluctant to look for a diagnosis. This makes it difficult for us.'* EP8

#### Initial theme: Actions of parents

Two educational psychologists (EP1, 2,) reported they faced difficult situations as a result of comments made by parents about their parenting behaviour. EP 1 gave an example:

*'I think the biggest dilemmas that I face are around situation where a parent tells me something that is not necessarily harming their child, but is not necessarily helping their child. ...For example, when a parent said they were going to call their child 'a girl' because they were sucking their thumb or something like that. I did feel that was causing harm to the child'.* EP1

EP 2 gave the illustration of a parent she had met who talked about smacking their child.

*'I had another dilemma recently around smacking. So I was with a SENCO, parent and grandparent and the parent was saying 'well they're no trouble for me, I give them a quick smack and they are straight back in line'.*EP2



Initial theme: Working in schools

Casework involving pupils and young people whose difficulties related to BESD presented perceived ethical issues for educational psychologists (EP 7,12) mainly because of the teacher's attitudes and use of language towards the children and young people concerned.

*'It tends to be where the class teacher is possibly unskilled, or untrained, or just not warm. I find it hard when teachers use emotive language such as 'he's violent, evil (in some cases), and worse'.EP7*

The conduct of a SENCO was raised by EP12:

*'...and also of a school photocopying the EPs signature of joint agreement forms without their knowledge'.EP12*

One psychologist interviewed perceived an ethical issue to arise in situations where a school had not acted upon EP advice:

*'when we know a school is failing children, where families have been let down and you know a parental complaint is valid about the amount of support a child is getting or not...where paperwork does not exist e.g. IEPs, PSPs etc ... when there is no evidence of interventions in place,... It is trickier when the paperwork is in place but the school is not putting the intervention in place'*  
EP7.

Several educational psychologists talked about ethical issues during the course of working in schools. EP3 talked about the difficulty of finding a quiet, uninterrupted room to work with pupils:

*'There are issues when you are asked to meet or work in a staff room or place where there is a constant stream of people walking through, potentially putting the child off, but also listening to private and confidential information being discussed.'* EP3

Another EP expressed annoyance when she described how the SENCO in one school was regularly unprepared for her visit so that parental permission had not been sought or pupils were not in school. Furthermore she perceived a reluctance to put strategies in place and a lack of willingness to follow advice and a disregard for parents concerns. She explained how a SENCO then complained about lack of EP support to the Headteacher who complained in turn to the EPS.

*'... on more than half of the visits we had arranged I was left to wait for 15 minutes or more at reception. I can think of three pupils who were initially discussed at our planning meeting as being at risk of permanent exclusion and high priority, but then were not in school when I visited and had already been excluded. I also received telephone calls from a number of parents at the school saying their children were not getting support and that the SENCO said he was not going to provide individual reading interventions, even though this was part of the provision on the statement and still very necessary for them to make progress...the headteacher of the school then had the nerve to*

*complain to my manager about the poor service the school had received from the EPS'. EP7*

**Initial theme: Questionable Interventions**

EP 6 commented upon perceived ethical issues concerning interventions conducted in schools. The issue she faced was what to do when she was aware that a therapeutic intervention referred to as cognitive behaviour therapy was being delivered by an unqualified or untrained member of school staff or educational psychologist.

*'...there are ethical issues around 'therapeutic' interventions going on in schools and the nature of our interventions'.EP6*

**Initial theme: Transparency (a main theme)**

EP 12 used similar language to EP 7 to describe situations where she perceived she was 'being drawn in' to support one position or another. She reported that she often faced ethical issues at annual review meetings and tribunals as a result of lack of transparency about her role.

*'Very often there is conflict between the SEN Officer, parents and schools during annual reviews and tribunals. This is usually because people are unclear about our (EP) role and purpose and there has been some negotiation where not everyone's involved. When something (a situation) is difficult or problematic it feels uncomfortable. Also there can be a conflict between what the SEN officer wants to happen and the EP's decision as to*

*what would be in the child's best interests. This is where personalities and relationships are very important and the better you know the personalities in SEN the better these kind of conflicts turn out. It also raises the question of who are we working for.' EP12*

#### Initial theme: Working with other agencies

One EP talked about her frustrations when working with other agencies including social and health care and the police.

*'...it reminds me of another problem I faced when a pupil ... told me that his Dad hit him on the head, and my experience of the follow up from Social Care is so rubbish that it really makes me think about how I want to do, you know, you have to refer because it is a hit on the head, 'um' I said to the SENCO, 'can you make sure that the safeguarding person is aware of this?'. Because if there is a log and there are lots of different things, it could be really significant. They didn't really take it seriously. So I contacted the duty team and they told me it would have to be me that would need to refer and that it was no good to just pass it on. I had to do a referral, not 'no names' and Social Care said they would get back to me and they never got back to me. So I didn't know if they had spoken to the family or anything. All I knew from the school was that they had been out and had spoken to the parents and that actually everything was fine. But Mum then moved the child the week after to another school which she had been thinking about but you wonder if that precipitated things. I still feel this is open and that is about a year ago'.EP2*

### Initial theme: Being 'drawn in'

One educational psychologist explained that she often perceived that she was 'drawn in' to a dispute or conflict between parents, schools and SEN officers and an ethical issue for her is what do with the information she is provided with.

*'A big ethical dilemma for me is when a parent rings outside of school and makes up stories which may or may not be true about a pupil's treatment, a parent's treatment etc by the school or another professional . It is difficult to know what to do with that information. As an EP you are often 'piggy in the middle'.EP7*

### Initial theme 13: Trading (a main theme)

One educational psychologist discussed a recent situation she had faced regarding terms and conditions of service and traded work. Her perception of this was that there was a tension between her professional colleagues regarding future working in the changing professional landscape. There was a sense of anxiety in her comments:

*'The most recent ethical dilemma I faced recently was when I was with some other EPs and an LA officer... I said we might have to give up on the idea of Soulbury – I made it clear that this was my view. Other people might have said 'well I don't want to give up on Soulbury'. It was only an ethical dilemma because I did have to think about whether to say it or not because of the impact of other people. I can speak for myself but I had to be clear that I wasn't making that point on behalf of others. I did say I might not be thanked*

*for saying this but I felt it was important to say because it was important to protect our livelihoods generally and we might have to let go of some terms of service and conditions. It's probably a minor dilemma in a sense'.EP2*

Another educational psychologist questioned perceived potential ethical issues arising from traded working:

*'...it begs the question of who are we writing reports for? Parents, the child, SEN Officers. We need to understand the audience. Again an ethical dilemma because with traded services and the need to be bought back in to keep our jobs will we write for the paying party and give advice to please?' EP7*

#### Initial theme: Equal access to EPS

Whilst discussing her perceptions of the most problematic ethical issues she faced, EP1 explained that access to the EPS was dependent to a large extent on the school's ability or willingness to buy in EP support. She expressed concern and unease about equality of access for all children with SEN to the EPS.

*'Going back to the most problematic ethical dilemmas I face I would say one of the big issues is equality of access for all children with SEN. Especially since the cuts, because as we are moving forward with the reorganisation, children with statements of SEN are going to have more access to Educational psychologists through the statutory assessment procedure, annual reviews etc, whereas other children at SAP who may have as significant needs and who have not been identified, may not have access*

*depending on the ability of schools to buy us in or the ability of the parents. Some schools have more money than others. I worry that schools could ask parents to pick up the bill. Those parents who lack confidence or don't know educational psychologists exist and what they do probably won't push forward'.*

### Initial theme 15: Fairness

EP 3 summarised a situation where there was an issue of fairness in prioritising one child or another in school based work as follows:

*'There was one where the child's mother was a GP and the child was adopted. The school said that the child was at School Action and was not a priority to be seen by the EP because they had several other children who needed to be statemented and you know it's that dilemma because all parents have a right to our service as council tax payers so I didn't say 'no' but said that there would be a wait. So I think I met them half way and acknowledged what the concerns were. I did take the telephone call and I did get back to the school to talk about their child. I then went back to the parents about it'. EP3*

### Initial theme: Integrity (a main theme)

Two educational psychologists referred to the need to stay honest and independent in giving advice and alert to collusion with either schools or the local authority when issues of resourcing or provision were concerned.

*'I did not want to collude with the LA about resourcing and tried to focus on the child's needs'.EP5*

*'I guess the most common dilemmas I face are around conflicts between what suits school personnel arrangements and what the child's needs are' EP8*

### Initial theme: Conduct of EP

Two EPs referred to the issues arising from the conduct of other educational psychologists. One reported a situation where an educational psychologist did not follow LA procedures or guidance. She recalled what she considered to be a very disquieting situation:

*'...probably the most tricky was a dilemma involving a colleague. It was about report writing not in line with the LA guidance and procedures. It caused me a lot more worry and I lost sleep over it'.EP5*

Another described a related incident where an EP did not follow the guidance for access arrangements laid down by the examinations body:

*'another example was when I discovered that there had been a history of an EP signing examination concessions without conducting the assessments in person'. EP12*

One educational psychologist explained that she had encountered an ethical issue resulting from the actions of a private psychologist.



*'Yes I have (experienced an ethical issue) with regard to a private EP's report. Where it (the code) states that a psychologist must not criticise another's work. In this case the report was written by someone claiming to be a qualified psychologist but who was not. They produced a clever and misleading website where the qualifications were unclear. They had carried out test and came to spurious conclusions which were questionable. I was involved in clearing up the mess that this person had created by their questionable conclusions from national averages regarding statistical norms on tests. It didn't really help me because I was aware it was pretty clear cut. I must not criticise their work.'* EP7.

#### Initial theme: Tribunals

One educational psychologist perceived ethical issues related to giving advice regarding resources in tribunal hearings.

*'Of course there is the conflict between the individual and the system as in tribunals. There is a gap in the provision the LA has to offer'*.EP8

#### Initial theme: Placement decisions and provision

The educational psychologists quoted below had experienced ethical dilemmas over placement decisions where there were conflicting loyalties to the LA and to parents.

*'I find cases around placement in special provision can be difficult. Especially when the parents of a child with a disability have named a special school and*

*are appealing against a LA decision. I feel a lot of angst because I want to maintain the relationship with parents and can often see their point of view'.*

EP5

The educational psychologist gave further details of the situation:

*It concerned a girl with a severe disability. She met all the criteria for the special provision but there were more pupils than places. I researched information about the disability to inform me better. I did not want to collude with the LA about resourcing and tried to focus on the child's needs'.EP5*

Following the study's framework for the presentation and discussion of findings: the preceding section has presented the initial themes and illustrative quotations with regard to RQ1. Following Braun and Clarke (2006), these were refined into developed themes. These are presented below in the developed thematic map (Figure 2).

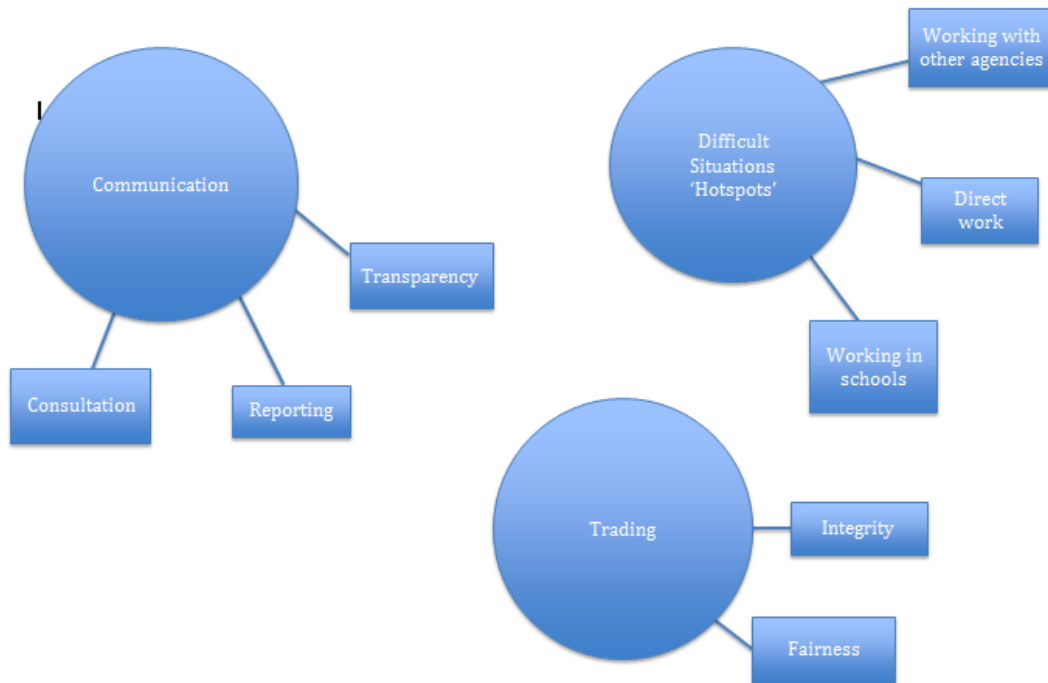


Figure 2: RQ1 Developed thematic map (showing three main themes)

The developed themes underwent further and on-going analysis to refine specifics of each theme in order to convey the ‘overall story’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This resulted in the definition and naming of two final themes – Difficult Situations ‘Hotspots’ and Challenges to Professionalism and are presented in the final thematic map, Figure 3 below.

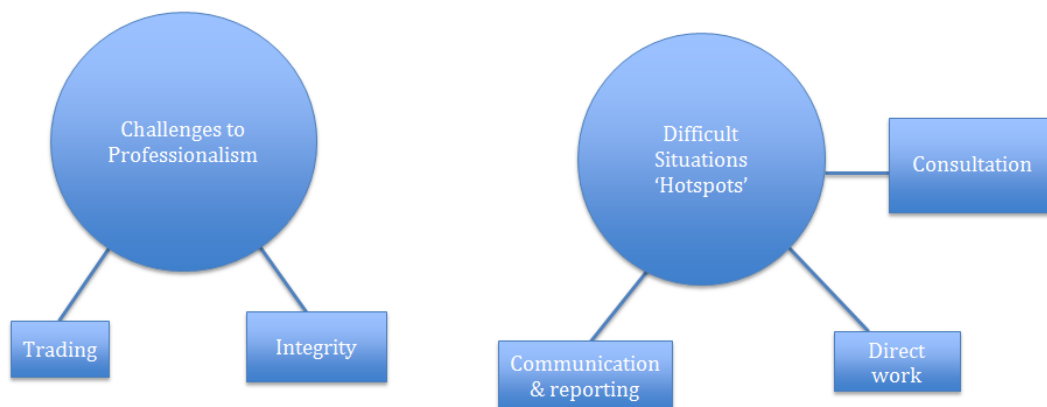


Figure 3: RQ1 Final Thematic Map (showing two main themes)

These final main themes, difficult situations 'hotspots' and challenges to professionalism, form the source of the Discussion of Findings for RQ1 with reference also to the developed themes.

## **Research Question 1: Discussion of Findings**

### **RQ1. What do frontline Educational psychologists perceive as ethical issues in their practice?**

The preceding section has, through the use of illustrative quotations and thematic maps, presented the study's findings with regard to research question one. What follows is a discussion of these findings, which were analysed, reviewed and named as two final main themes – Difficult Situations 'Hotspots' and Challenges to Professionalism.

The aim of this section is to discuss research question one by linking the findings of the current study to the literature reviewed in chapter two.

#### **Difficult Situations 'Hotspots'**

All educational psychologists interviewed reported that they perceived ethical issues in their frontline practice. EP 5 expressed this simply:

*'Everything we do has an ethical implication of one kind or another.'*

The educational psychologists' responses suggested that their perceptions of ethical issues tended to congregate around particular areas of activity or conduct. These have been referred to as 'at risk' situations or 'ethical hotspots' (Franey, 2002). Koocher and Keith-Speigel (1998) describe a range of broad situations which often involve ethical deliberations but they are not specific. Drawing on the available

literature Franey (2002) provides a typology of potentially troubling issues and situations an EP might encounter in their practice and argues that a number of studies highlight that psychologists may disagree over ethical standards (Glaser and Thorpe, 1986; Haas, Malouf and Mayerson, 1986; Pope, Tabachnick and Keith-Speigel, 1987).

The educational psychologists in this study perceived situations in common with those ethical 'hotspots' identified by Franey (2002). As well as these, the educational psychologists indicated additional areas or situations where they encountered ethical concerns. These areas related to the actions of parents towards their children. EP2 referred to a parent smacking his child, and EP 3 gave the example:

*'queue jumping when a more articulate parent makes contact and and the pressure to respond'*

EP5 explained how the advent of traded EP services had prompted new and different ethical concerns. She asked:

*'how do we ensure that the most vulnerable children in schools that are not buying in EP involvement are being identified and accessing support.'* EP5

Research studies conducted in the US (Pope and Vetter, 1992) and the UK (Lindsay and Colley, 1995) have suggested that ethical dilemmas occur frequently for psychologists. The educational psychologists in this study had no difficulty in recalling ethical issues in their practice and spoke at length about incidents. The data

from this study indicated that ethical conflicts occur frequently for all educational psychologists in this local authority. EP7 began the interview by reporting that *'I don't know where to start...'* with reference to her ethical experiences. The findings of this study suggested an increase in the frequency of ethical dilemmas experienced compared to the findings of Lindsay and Colley (1995) where 63% of respondents to the survey reported ethical concerns and a slight increase compared to the finding of Bennett (2008) where 85.6% of respondents reported ethical dilemmas. In his Presidential Address to the BPS, Lindsay (1995) anticipated that the prevalence of ethical dilemmas would rise as the delivery of psychological services became more affected by socio-political factors and funding. The current results from this case study tend to support Lindsay's (1995) claim.

One educational psychologist (EP9) referred spontaneously to the BPS Code of Ethics when discussing the ethical issues she faced. When prompted, EP1 replied that she would know where to find the codes if she needed them:

*'I know where they are and how to access them online etc., so no I don't actually use Codes regularly'.EP1*

EP4 spoke frankly when she replied:

*'To be honest I cannot recall them (ethical principles) off hand. One is about confidentiality...another is about getting permission...(sigh)...no... go on, give me a hint, you'll have to tell me.'*

EP 2 commented '*I didn't think about it*', when asked if she had referred to Codes of Practice or Conduct.

The findings indicated that perhaps reference to Codes of Conduct was not an immediate response. Lindsay (2008) argues that ethical challenges require a similar problem solving approach to other areas of educational psychology practice such as assessment. Problem solving models such as those outlined in Chapter Two may be of use in this respect, although Carrington et al (2002) suggested that such models, whilst helpful, may be time consuming and impractical for routine use.

The data collected in the appreciative interviews with educational psychologists in this study indicated that they had all experienced a range of ethical situations as evidenced in the initial themes. However, in contrast to the findings of earlier studies where confidentiality was of greatest concern, (Pope and Vetter, 1992; Lindsay and Colley, 1995, and Bennett's unpublished study, 2008), areas where ethical issues occurred frequently in this study included report writing, consultation, transparency, trading and integrity. In this present study a possibly different collection of perceived ethical issues emerged to those in the studies reported above. This may be a reflection of the method of data collection used. Whilst informative in comparing the responses of members of both APA members (Pope and Vetter, 1992) and BPS members (Lindsay and Colley, 1995), one of the limitations of a purely questionnaire study is that questions are structured in a way that may not have elicited responses of particular concern for the psychologists involved. A direct comparison of the study cannot be drawn with Pope and Vetter, (1992), Lindsay and Colley (1995) or Bennett (2008) for several reasons including sample, selection and qualifications of



participants, as well as methods of data collection. Nonetheless the present study identifies the contemporary phenomenon of trading as a potential ethical issue.

The findings of this study suggested that consultation meetings involving a combination of parents, those working in schools, other agencies and SEN officers are often inherent with ethical challenges for the educational psychologists. The findings indicated that ethical issues tended to arise around the principles of informed consent and confidentiality. Confidentiality was also discussed by two educational psychologists in connection with the sharing of information with other agencies, and to the availability of privacy whilst working in schools. Confidentiality is specifically addressed in the BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct 1:2 (2009) and the HPC Standards of conduct, performance and ethics (2008), and was the principle most educational psychologists recalled when prompted. There was some commonality in the present findings and those of Lindsay and Colley (1995). In this present study ethical issues arose around confidentiality for a number of educational psychologists. For EP6 involved in a complex safeguarding case which involved working with the police, the level of sensitivity in the case meant that EP 6 was unable to discuss the case with colleagues. EP 6 suggested there were '*layers of confidentiality*', where sharing of information might have affected a potential conviction and caused potential harm. In the example provided by EP6 the ethical issue was so serious and complex that she was unable to discuss it with her professional colleagues or in the school concerned because of legal restrictions. This raised ethical issues for her because she perceived that she was bound to maintain confidentiality and not to disclose aspects of the case to colleagues whom she would usually work collaboratively with.

Working with other agencies and a range of professionals has become an even greater feature of educational psychology practice in schools since the Children Act (2004) and the Every Child Matters Agenda (2003). There has been greater intervention for children and young people with mental health needs with many benefits (DCSF, 2008). However, one of the educational psychologists in this study commented that she encountered a practitioner who was delivering an intervention referred to in a child's pupil profile as 'cognitive behavioural therapy' who was unqualified. The psychologist concerned had no evidence that the intervention was causing harm to the child or young person. Indeed the school concerned was appreciative that the child was receiving individual attention outside of the classroom. However it raised an ethical issue for one educational psychologist, who despite her qualifications and experience, would not have felt confident to describe herself as a cognitive behavioural therapist even though she had received a day's recognised training and had used similar approaches.

*'We all had a day's introductory training from APT and I have some resources I use... but I would not call myself qualified in CBT.' EP5*

This 'ethical hotspot' raised issues of competence for EP6 also and questions surrounding knowing the limitations of professional knowledge and skills.

Educational psychologists commented upon their own values in their perceptions of the types of issues they faced in the course of their work which may account for the severity and the continuum of ethical issues reported. Studies by Haas, Malouf and

Mayerson, 1986) suggested that psychologists will differ in their agreement with ethical positions itemised in Codes of Ethics and Conduct. Other research has suggested that psychologists may also disagree with the ethical stance as stated in their professional code (Kalichman, Craig and Follingstad, 1989). Carrington et al (2002) make the point that dealing with ethical issues necessitates greater emphasis on training of educational psychologists and it is of interest that one of the educational psychologists in this study commented upon her initial training in ethical issues as the last time she had discussed ethical issues. Another educational psychologist (EP 2) talked about her initial training in the use of consultation.

Situations which presented problems of an ethical nature were evident in the perceptions EPs described of the ethical challenges they faced, partly as a consequence of the multiple relationships educational psychologists have with CYPF, other professionals and the LA. The course taken by the educational psychologists depended upon who they considered to be the main client. Where parents' actions towards their children were a source of ethical concern for the educational psychologists, there appeared to be some balancing between different ethical principles. The principles were not named specifically and only one educational psychologist (EP9) referred spontaneously to the BPS Code of Practice to assist her with ethical conflicts in her practice. The educational psychologists discussed a range of skills they used, but of paramount importance was the 'golden rule' of doing what was best for the child.

A further initial theme from the findings related to placement decisions and provision. For the educational psychologists in this study the principles of fairness and justice were key. As EP 8 commented:

*'Fair distribution of resources is an ethical issue'.EP8*

A similar dilemma was reported by school psychologists in Lindsay and Colley's (1995) survey. There was some political debate following the Lamb enquiry (2009) surrounding parental concerns about the independence of EP advice where resourcing issues and provision were at stake. A proposal that systems of assessment and provision should be separated followed in the House of Commons: Children, Schools and Families Committee: Second Special Report (2007-8). However this was never taken forward by policy makers and legislators.

The ethical issues which were perceived as the most common concerns were not necessarily perceived as the most problematic. This may have been because clear procedures existed in the form of safeguarding legislation, local authority and educational psychology policies, BPS and HPC codes of Ethics and Conduct.

As seen earlier in the Presentation of Results, an ethical issue encountered by one educational psychologist concerned the conduct of a colleague and the response of her line manager. EP 5 reported:

*'the most tricky was a dilemma involving a colleague. It was about report writing not in line with the LA...I discussed the report and the issues it raised*

*during supervision. Although it helped that she felt concerned in the same way, I felt more angst because she tore up the notes of our discussion presumably because she felt she couldn't take it further'. EP5*

This was an example of one of the more problematic ethical issues. How educational psychologists managed ethical issues is discussed further in relation to RQ2, but as Lindsay (2008) comments, such issues '*will not go away by not addressing them*'. Other ethical concerns described by participants in this study and which are covered in the initial themes related to the principle of integrity which is concerned with honesty, fairness and respect for others. For example in this study an educational psychologist described an ethical issue she faced when a SEN officer requested an IQ test to use as evidence in support of a placement decision which went against the parents' wishes. In this case the educational psychologist involved had to make a moral choice whether to comply with the SEN officer's request or not.

Certainly, the educational psychologists in this study who were faced with a wide range of difficult situations or 'hotspots', would have made a decision of how to act or not to act. An interesting idea emanating from research in business ethics is pertinent. Once the EP is no longer involved in a case or it reaches a conclusion, or possibly further work takes over, the ethical issue which originally caused the concern may be forgotten or left unfinished. This was evident for EP2 who had made contact with another agency but had received no call back. Arguably the ethical issue became less pressing as time went on.

*'I still feel this is open and that is about a year ago'. EP2*

This experience is referred to conceptually as 'ethical fading'. Tenbrunsel and Messick (2004) argue that moral implications of a decision may fade through the psychological process of self-deception. It may or may not be a surprise that ethics training in banking, as well as other businesses is offered, to try to address unethical issues in the same way that ethics training in professional educational psychology is part of the core curriculum on doctoral training (Kelly et al, 2008). An argument of this study is that training in ethics is of paramount importance in educational psychology, not only in doctoral training but as part of on-going continuing professional development. EP 9 was alone in referring to codes of conduct spontaneously. EP1 commented that she would look up codes of conduct if she considered them to be useful in managing an ethical issue, but only when specifically asked, and another educational psychologist (EP4) reported that she could not recall ethical principles during the interview and EP2 added that she 'didn't think' about referring to codes of ethics or conduct. One of the implications of this study might be to question whether training in ethics and knowledge of codes of conduct might benefit from refreshment and extension into organisational practice within psychology services, a point made by Carrington et al, (2002).

Tenbrunsel and Messick (2004) question whether scandals such as Enron, Worldcom and Adelphia would have been averted if executives of the companies had received more ethics training. Other researchers have argued that training is short lived (Richards, 1999) and codes of conduct have resulted in little change in behaviour (Badaracci and Webb, 1995). Indeed a survey conducted in 2003 revealed that half of the MBA graduates of business schools did not feel ethics training was very useful in addressing the ethical issues they faced in the workplace.

However, in educational psychology it is suggested that discussions about ethical issues may be kept 'vibrant' by means of regular supervision within the context of an ethically aware organisation, perhaps as a means of preventing ethical fading from occurring.

Tenbrunsel and Messick (2004) argue that individuals do not 'see' the moral components of an ethical decision, asserting that this is because psychological processes 'fade' the ethical perspective of a dilemma. They argue that for education in ethics to be of benefit individuals need to perceive a decision has 'ethical colouration'. Tenbrunsel and Messick (2004) argue that self-deception is at the root of ethical fading suggesting that this is affected by 'the use of language euphemisms'. A number of EPs in this study referred to the actions of schools. A common argument, particularly in some secondary schools, is that pupils at risk of permanent exclusion would benefit from '*a fresh start*' or '*a managed move*' when their behaviour often becomes unmanageable. Such euphemisms were present in the replies of the participants of this study. By commenting or failing to comment during a multi-agency meeting an EP might be considered to have colluded with the school in its decision to permanently exclude the pupil. Collusion with SEN Officers by school staff over this decision may be likened to '*the slippery slope of decision making*'; (Tenbrunsel and Messick, 2004). A child or young person's difficulties are put down to 'within child' factors such as low IQ, mental health difficulties, attention deficit and so on. These are described as errors in perceptual causation by Tenbrunsel and Messick (2004). This argument that ethical issues 'fade' over time might hold true for the psychologists who are the subjects in this study who, despite

their background in psychology, may not be aware of this happening in their day to day practice.

### **Challenges to Professionalism**

The findings of this study highlighted a range of situations with an ethical dimension faced by educational psychologists. It is suggested that these situations present undeniable challenges to professional practice. This section will aim to answer research question one further.

Francis (1999) asserts that one of the hallmarks of professionals is their ability '*not only do things well, but do them consistently well*'. This resonates with the comments of EP 2 who explained:

*'One of things we don't do is to acknowledge the work we do well most of the time. And so we must handle ethical dilemmas well most of the time'.EP2*

Her comment illustrates perhaps that the educational psychologists in this study may not articulate, or possibly underestimate, their professional skill in handling ethical situations. This could be something of a lost opportunity in terms of developing ethical practice and learning from experience as a professional group. The findings of this study and others (Carrington et al, 2002) indicated that a potential challenge to professionalism for educational psychologists is to keep ethics at the foreground of their practice through greater awareness and discussion as an educational psychology service. (This will be commented upon further in the Presentation and Discussion of Findings in response to RQ4).



The developed themes; trading, fairness and integrity represented potential challenges to the future of professional practice in the case study of this local authority and was due in part to the significant uncertainty surrounding future service delivery at the time of this research.

The findings of this study indicated that a major challenge to professionalism amongst educational psychologists was the need to ensure fairness and equality of access to the EPS in a proposed model of traded service to schools. EP 9 commented that there could be positive implications of traded services in being able to sustain a longer commitment to a child or young person:

*'Traded working has raised ethical issues for example regarding additional funding. If schools want to apply, they need EP support and those schools who are not trading are not likely to get support. So the issue is about some children in those schools and children being unable to benefit from EP support. Children could be discriminated against. So there is a principle of fairness to think about. EP9*

She continued further in the interview that:

*'Another issue is building up a rapport with a child and not being able to promise to maintain the relations. Parents have assumptions sometimes that the EP will continue to be involved regularly and for as long as is necessary. This could be a positive outcome of traded working in that we could have*

*more sustained involvement. It could lead to greater consistency in our practice'. EP9*

In a presentation 'Enhancing Parental Confidence and Generating Income: Ethical Dilemma or Golden Opportunity?' to the National Association of Educational Psychologists in 2010, Lindsay argued that educational psychology as a profession has a *'huge amount to contribute but is under-selling'*. He suggests that the profession needs a public service ethic whether state or private together with strong committed and professional leadership. Furthermore he asserted that educational psychologists needed to practise as independent, ethical professionals.

Lindsay argued that the question of trading EP services was not a new issue. He commented that it began with the Education Reform Act of 1988. Many EPs in this study indicated that they felt threatened by the move to trading services and the changing employment landscape. However, Lindsay (2010) urged the profession to see financial delegation as an opportunity rather than a threat. A number of educational psychologists in the current study explained that the LA EPS needed to present a well-considered service level agreement. Lindsay (2010) put forward the requirements needed to take advantage of delegated funding: a business plan, financial management, tendering skills, marketing, publicity and unique selling points.

One of the features of professionalism examined in the Literature Review is the existence of professional codes, but what use is a Code of Ethics and Conduct which has its origins in circumstances where psychological services were not expected to

trade? When asked if she found Codes of Conduct helpful in her practice EP 2 replied:

*'No, not particularly, because they are very general in terms of the way you go about things and I would hope I would apply these all the time.'* EP2

Codes of Ethics and Conduct should reflect the socio-political context of current professional practice. It is somewhat encouraging that the DECP has recently established the working party into ethical trading. Of central importance however are the findings of this study which suggested that the educational psychologists only occasionally referred to professional codes, usually when prompted, but not as a guide or embedded in the practice or guidance of either the EPS or LA. Quite clearly the majority did not mention professional codes of the BPS or HPC in their responses, although they were aware of them when asked directly. EP 9 was the exception and commented:

*'I have also referred to guidance – the BPS – but that is self-driven.'*EP9

One of the final themes to emerge from RQ1 concerned difficult situations or 'hotspots' where ethical issues often occurred. As mentioned, only one of the psychologists interviewed talked about the ethical challenges they faced in terms of their codes of conduct and several educational psychologists asked to be reminded of the ethical principles contained in the BPS Code.

EP 3 asked:

*'Can you remind me of them (the principles in the BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct).'* EP3

EP 4 was unable to recall the principles. She suggested:

*'To be honest I cannot recall them (ethical principles) off hand. One is about confidentiality...another is about getting permission... (sigh)...no... go on, give me a hint, you'll have to tell me.'* EP4

Professional life for the educational psychologists in this study involved multiple relationships whether working with children, young people and their families, with staff working in schools, other professionals and local authority SEN officers. The findings of this study suggested that these multiple relationships presented major challenges involving ethical issues requiring negotiation and effective communication both face to face and when reporting information to a variety of audiences.

*'In the example about the use and reporting of a cognitive assessment I try to talk about it with the teachers, and make sure they understand what is was for and why we did it, and then it's the battle of trying to write the report without the battle of an essay so that parents can understand it and SEN Officers, or CAMHS don't use it to refuse funding or support, or suggest special school'.EP1*

This brings into sharp relief the nature of the client and commissioner business relationship and perceived pressure on EPs to deliver requested services for fear of

losing 'trade'. This presented EPs with concerns over whether children in all schools would have equal access to a service from the local authority educational psychology service. Many responses to RQ1 reflected this challenge to professionalism.

The Literature Review examined how national policy relating to education and the role of local authorities is rapidly changing. The recent Academies Act (2010) is evidence of this and the changing relationship between schools and local authorities. In addition, the Government's aim is that within the lifetime of the current parliament every school will become an academy (Academies Act, Section 1, 2010). As a main provider of universal services, schools are responsible for their own continuous improvement and have increasing autonomy and control of budgets, resources and partnership arrangements. It is widely believed that schools will commission their own services and there will be a national policy expectation that schools will be able to exercise choice from a wide range of providers, including psychology services.

One of the challenges to professionalism will undoubtedly lie in continuing to offer highly professional services as part of a part traded local authority educational psychology service where there is likely to be competition from other services, possibly educational psychologists in private practice as well as neighbouring local authority educational psychology services. Francis (1999) argues that:

*'professionals who operate with substantial good will (and offer highly professional services) derive incalculable benefit over those who do not observe such practice'. (Francis, 1999, p.109).*

He continues to point out where continuing relationships are the goal of professional practice then it is important to maintain an ethical stance. In the local authority where this study was conducted it was already the case that a small number of schools had employed private psychologists.

With the arrival of the SEN Green Paper 'Aspiration for All' (DfE, 2011) which proposes further changes in legislation; bringing together Health, Education and Social Care into one plan with particular greater emphasis on a quicker assessment and personal budgets for parents, it is unlikely that ethical issues will disappear. Indeed, there may well be growing challenges to professionalism as a result of legislation stemming from the Green Paper.

How do these radical changes to the national management of education affect psychology services? The future of the educational psychology service in the LA was uppermost in many interviewees' minds in this study. The AEP paper (2011) 'The Delivery of Educational Psychology Services' highlights the fact that those educational psychology services in receipt of funding from the LA only would find it difficult to meet all the principles outlined in the document and urged local representatives to be proactive regarding the LA policies and terms and conditions. The principles in the AEP paper of interest with regard to the responses of the educational psychologists who were participants in this study were those concerned with levels of supervision, CPD, management, equality of access for service users, levels of administrative support and office accommodation. (These principles will be addressed in RQ3 and 4 more specifically).

## **Research Question 2: Presentation and Discussion of Findings**

### **RQ2: Presentation of Findings**

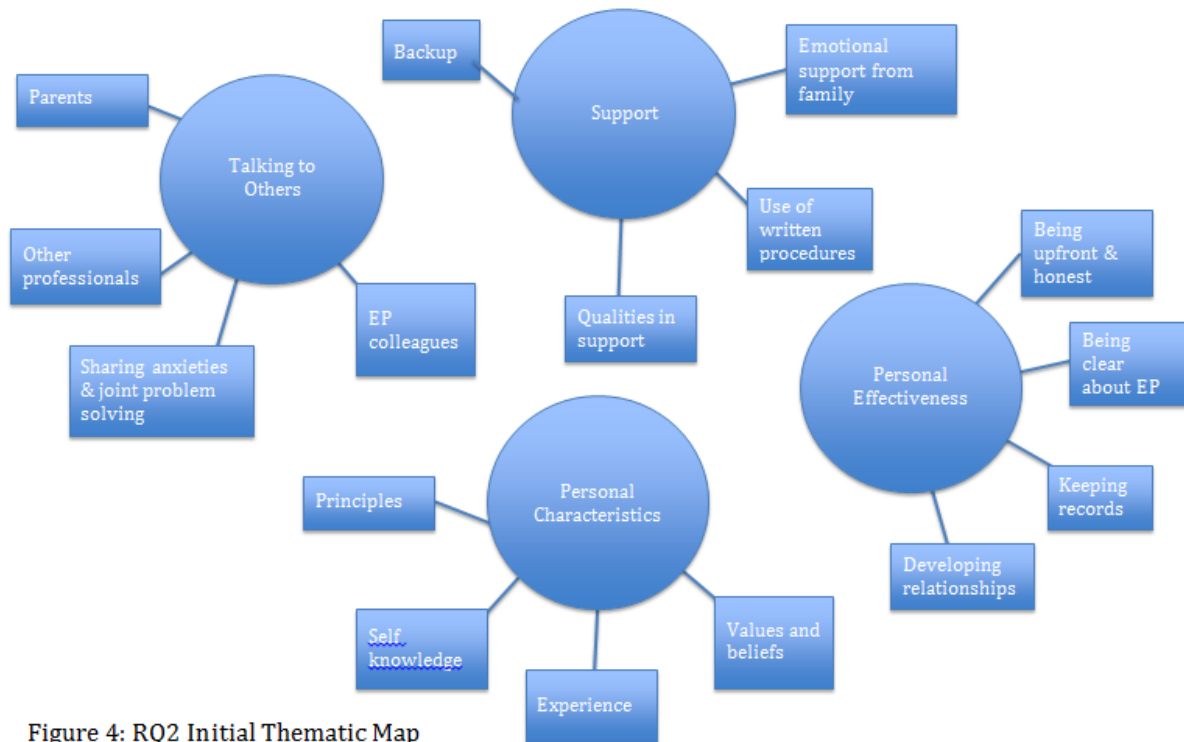
#### **RQ2. How do frontline EPs manage perceived ethical issues?**

To recap: the sequence of presentation of findings in relation to research question two will be:

- The presentation of an initial thematic map showing initial themes supported by relevant illustrative quotations from the data.
- Arising from the initial themes I will then present a thematic map of the developed themes.
- The final themes, derived from the developed themes, will be represented in a final thematic map.

After the presentation of results as outlined above the findings will then be discussed.

During the interview educational psychologists were asked to focus on occasions when they had managed ethical issues. Coded extracts were collated into twenty initial themes.



**Figure 4: RQ2 Initial Thematic Map (showing four main themes)**

**Initial theme: Personal characteristics (main theme)**

Some EPs interviewed commented that they managed ethical issues drawing upon their own personal characteristics. When asked how she managed ethical issues in her practice, EP 1 reported:

*‘through my own knowledge and experience...support from myself really’ EP1*

Referring to a past case, EP 3 commented:

*‘In the end I did resolve it myself. I did check it out with the school to see what the concerns were from the school’s point of view and things were in place to meet the child’s need. So I then discussed this through with the parent and tried to be reassuring.’ EP3*



EP 6 commented that she found her training in another role was helpful in managing ethical issues when working with families:

*'I have that experience of working with families and training in counselling...my personal experience and background of working with children where there are safeguarding and child protection concerns helps...if you haven't worked closely with families personally it is quite hard to get the different order of stress and strain involved'. EP6*

Educational psychologists were able to reflect upon what they valued most about themselves in order to manage ethical conflicts in their practice. EP 3 explained that she valued her ability to work independently and her organisational skills.

*'I think a huge strength most of us has is the ability to be very well organised and to work independently and to prioritise our involvement and largely we have had to get on with it with little support'. EP3*

In addition, one educational psychologist commented:

*'my own sense of enquiry to find out more about the disability, literature research skills and my experience and training and knowledge of the Code of Practice, LA procedures and so on' EP 5*

Another remarked that she used:

*'my knowledge of the schools and people...I have been in XXX quite a long while now...I've got to know them' EP12*

Initial theme: Values and beliefs

Educational psychologists 4 and 9 commented upon their personal values in managing ethical situations. For example EP 4 reported that she had a strong sense of right and wrong.

*'Well I guess I do have a strong sense of what is right and wrong and followed my thoughts that I must be independent and represent the needs of the child first'. EP4*

Another educational psychologist referred to her personal interests as a source of support for her managing possibility of collusion in her practice:

*'I am interested in philosophy and I find some of it helps to have at the back of my mind – such as wishing good will to people and not saying unkind things. ...I try to keep this in mind and not to collude with other professionals or the LA. I keep positive and impartial when I can. So this supports me.'* EP9

### Initial theme: Principles

A further educational psychologist talked about her principles which led her to refuse to act as a witness for the LA in a tribunal. She was adamant in her views:

*'Well with respect to my EP role I guess it is a combination of justice, acting in the best interests of the child but being torn because of the need to represent the LA (sometimes against the parent) and overall I guess integrity. I have refused in the past to be called as a witness if I feel my advice would be contradictory. For us, there is always the tension that we must be independent. Also schools want us to rubber stamp their decisions and do their procedural stuff. I can't stand it. It is often statutory stuff. It's not because school want to know what you think, they just want a signature on the request form. It's not really an ethical issue but it is part of our job'.EP4*

Another participant refused to pass on the name of a child and family to an education officer because the educational psychologist had not agreed this at the time the parents had signed the consent form. The educational psychologist felt this would be contrary to her professional principles and personal values.

*'I felt there was a real conflict there and I was happy to stand my ground on that and I did feel it wasn't right. I was not clear either how the information was going to be used or I am still not'. EP 3*

Initial theme: Experience

Educational psychologists (EP 6,7,) referred to their varying experiences, both in their careers and personal lives, as helping them manage ethical conflicts:

*'And my experience of being a mother of a child with SEN has helped me manage some difficult conversations with teachers and parents.'* EP 7

Another educational psychologist referred to her training as a teacher and counsellor as important:

*'my experience of working in schools as a teacher and counsellor helped.'*  
EP 6

Initial theme: Self knowledge

EP6 also identified self-knowledge and knowing the limitations of her role as a means of managing ethical concerns in her practice. EP6 commented:

*'Self-knowledge about your beliefs is quite important I think in giving me confidence to make decisions'.EP6*

### **Initial theme: Personal effectiveness (a main theme)**

A large number of coded extracts were collated into this initial theme. EP 2 and EP5 expressed the view that the ability to empathise with parents; to communicate and explain procedures clearly, and the capacity to be aware of the audience when writing reports or communicating in meetings were all important factors in being able to manage ethical issues effectively. This was summed up by EP5:

*'Mainly I relied on my communication skills, relationships with the SEN officer and schools. Also I think I was able to empathise as a parent and the parents knew I was genuinely putting their child first'.EP5*

EP 2 commented that she valued self-reflection on the process of consultation. This helped her to manage ethical situations in her practice:

*'I have thought about what I want consultation to be and how I want them (people in the consultation) to feel and when they have finished I don't want people to feel uncomfortable. I am able to put people at their ease so that they are able to share things. This is true for teachers and parents. There are ways that I have thought about how I go about greeting people.'* EP2

Initial theme: Being upfront and honest

EP10 was direct in her view about the importance of honesty in her relationships:

*'I guess where it has gone well I have **been** open and honest in my relationships with schools and parents about what I can deliver – I have been realistic'.EP10*

In a similar vein EP 2 remarked:

*'I also try and hold in mind, in terms of ethical practice, is the way I try and **be** not just in work in life (I don't always manage it) but the circle of respect. In my initial training I remember talking about having the same respect for the person you are talking to as you do for yourself.EP2*

The same initial theme, being upfront and honest, can be seen in the comment by EP1:

*'In the example about the use and reporting of a cognitive assessment I try to talk about it with the teachers, and make sure they understand what is was for and why we did it, and then it's the battle of trying to write the report without the battle of an essay so that parents can understand it'.EP1*

Initial theme: Being clear about EP role

EP12 explained that most ethical difficulties arose from lack of transparency about her role and that by making this explicit from the start she was able to manage situations for the better.

*'I find I can manage situations better by preventing them from happening or making my role very clear to everyone in the first place and writing it clearly on the joint agreement form. For example I was asked to go to a Pastoral Support Plan meeting in a secondary school to discuss a managed move for a pupil, or as the school said 'a fresh start'. What they really meant was that they wanted to exclude him. The parents thought I was there to help him stay in school and that is what the SENCO has led them to believe. It was very clear from the start that the school and inclusion officer had got it all sewn up to suggest a managed move and that made it really difficult for me.'* EP12

#### Initial theme: Keeping records

An educational psychologist commented that she valued her ability to keep clear records and to be well prepared and organised. She considered this was important in helping her to manage some ethical issues to do with ensuring equal access to pupils.

*'If I have a clear record or evidence of my discussions with school I am able to ask questions about progress of pupils who were initially concerns and have then been pushed down the list. I also find having detailed review meetings to discuss priorities helpful. I tend to plan ahead and rely on my own planning and organisation. I think I can resolve this because I know the schools well by now.'* EP10

Initial theme: Developing relationships

EP8 explained that developing relationships with staff in schools, SEN officers and professionals from other agencies was important in managing ethical conflicts. As well as developing positive relationships, she commented that having a good knowledge of both her colleagues and the case helped her managed difficult situations:

*'I best resolve tribunals with the SEN Officer concerned, we get on well and have a good relationship, we've known each other a long time. It works best when we have good knowledge of the case'.EP8*

**Initial theme: Support (a main theme)**

EP 3 referred to the need for support from a variety of sources to manage difficult situations:

*'I suppose you find support from wherever you can ... with family, talking it through over lunch in the office with x or y , looking information up, going onto the intranet, spending time looking back over similar cases, I suppose it depends what the issue is.' EP3*

Initial theme: Backup

Two educational psychologists (EP 2, 6) also reported that it was important to check with a professional line manager that they had 'backup' for their decisions:



*'I think the more backup you have; the more likely you are able to help...I requested supervision and it made a huge difference because it meant that I could then act with some confidence, not just because I had permission to do things, but it felt right to respond in the way I needed to'. EP6*

*'Certainly I think if I have checked things through with someone who is my senior in some form or other, and then followed something through, it gives me confidence'.EP2*

#### Initial theme: Qualities in support

The personal qualities of professional colleagues were cited by the majority of educational psychologists as important features in helping the interviewees to manage ethical situations. EP 9 illustrated this theme when she referred to the listening skills, experience and agreement of her colleague:

*'I tend to talk it through with a colleague; in particular I talk to XX because she is a good listener and has lots of experience of working with families. It is supportive to have the agreement of colleagues that you are doing the right thing and it's useful to share your judgments'.EP9*

#### Initial theme: Emotional support from family

Educational psychologists referred to support they received from their family and friends. This support ranged from talking through concerns or upsetting incidents, such as critical incidents, that they had been involved with. EP 12 captured this view point:

*'It can be a lonely job sometimes and you take it home. I find myself talking things through with X in the evening'. EP12*

Initial theme: Use of written procedures

Written documentation and guidance provided another source of managing ethical issues. In particular the Code of Practice, the SEN Inclusion Handbook, and other procedures were mentioned. One educational psychologist (EP9) mentioned the BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct spontaneously. The following quotation from EP 9 refers to the BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct in relation to traded working.

*'I have also referred to guidance – the BPS – but that is self-driven. Traded working has raised ethical issues for example regarding additional funding. If schools want to apply (for additional funding) they need EP support and those schools who are not trading are not likely to get support. So the issue is about some children in those schools and children being unable to benefit from EP support. Children could be discriminated against. So there is a principle of fairness to think about'.EP9*

Another interviewee referred to the SEN Code of Practice and LA procedures to help in the management of an ethical issue over resourcing:

*'I did not want to collude with the LA about resourcing and tried to focus on the child's needs. I also used the Code of Practice. The case went to a moderation panel and then to appeal'. EP5*

EP 9 commented that she referred to LA guidance as a way of neutralising ethical issues:

*'I use the criteria for statements and special provision' EP9*

### **Initial theme: Talking to others (main theme)**

EP 5 summarised a range of conversations which helped her manage and resolve situations. She explained:

*'I manage things by talking to people mainly, other educational psychologists, staff in schools, by getting things clear with parents, other professionals...you name them...if I think it will help, I talk to them. It makes things clearer.'*EP5

### **Initial theme: Parents**

Talking to parents about their perspective helped more than one educational psychologist to manage possible ethical issues. One interviewee talked about her approach:

*'I suppose checking it out first with school and then talking it through with the parent to see what the level of concern was and making a judgement on that'.*

*EP3*

Another educational psychologist explained:

*'I try to meet the parents and really take a good look at their child's needs. But I don't think we take parents into account enough on the whole. That's interesting'.EP8*

Initial theme: Other professionals

Talking and learning from other professionals was referred to by a number of educational psychologists. In particular EP 7 explained that she had learned how to handle potentially difficult ethical situations by observing a specialist teacher:

*'I have learned a lot ...learning from other skilled colleagues, such as one person from behaviour support'.EP7*

EP8 commented that she discussed difficult ethical issues during multi-agency meetings. In relation to a particular case she recounted:

*'Well, we have had lots of meetings in school and it is good to talk about cultural values and the ethical issues that raises. We have had school consultation meetings, multi-agency meetings – the lot. He has been assessed by the Learning Disability Team and we are getting Health on board. The police are involved because of the safeguarding concerns. So we are more successful in getting inter-agency working going faster'. EP8*

Initial theme: Sharing anxieties and problem solving

EP 11 explained that she manages difficult situations by sharing her anxieties and problem solving jointly with a colleague.

*'Being listened to without interruption, having the opportunity to share anxieties, have the chance to problem solve together...and reassurance I am taking the right course of action'.EP11*

Initial theme: EP colleagues

All twelve educational psychologists interviewed stated that they managed ethical issues by talking to EP colleagues. EP 11 puts this succinctly:

*'Well I have shared cases with a senior EP colleague or on a 'no names' basis with social services. So not supervision, just reflection with another professional'.EP11*

The twenty initial themes outlined above were reviewed and analysed further looking for patterns of meaning. Following this, four main developed themes became apparent and are represented in the developed thematic map below:

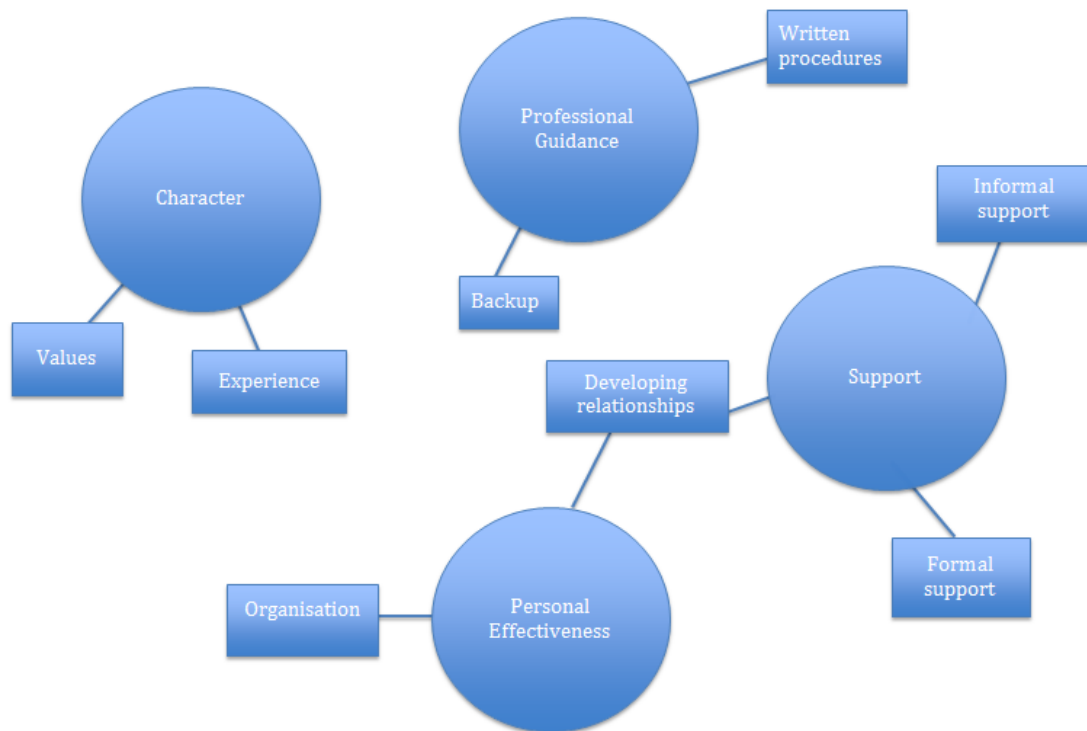


Figure 5: RQ2: Developed Thematic Map (showing four main themes)

The four main developed themes of support, personal effectiveness, character and professional guidance, underwent further analysis to refine specifics of each theme in order to convey the ‘overall story’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This resulted in the definition and naming of three final main themes – Character, Relationships and Features of Professionalism. These are presented in the final thematic map below:

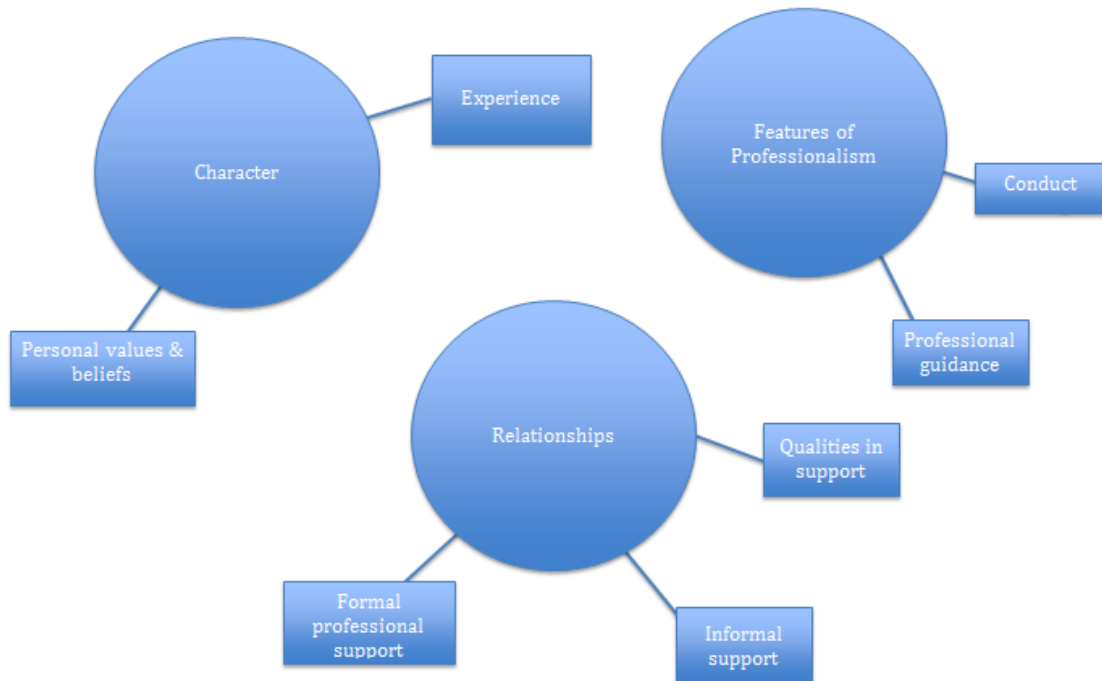


Figure 6: RQ2 Final Thematic Map (showing three main themes)

## RQ2: Discussion of Findings

RQ2: How do frontline EPs manage perceived ethical issues?

The preceding section has, through the use of illustrative quotations and thematic maps, presented the study's findings with regard to research question two. What follows is a discussion of these findings, which were analysed, reviewed and named as the final main themes – Character, Relationships and Features of Professionalism. The aim of this section is to address research question two by linking the findings of the current study to the literature reviewed in chapter two.

### **Character**

A final main theme to be defined and named in the management of ethical issues was Character. All twelve educational psychologists interviewed referred to their own

skills, knowledge and experience, and to their personal values and self-knowledge as a source of support for managing ethical issues. EP 1 referred to *'support from myself'* and EP 3 explained that *'each of us has the ability to work independently'*. EP 7 commented that she had developed the ability to manage ethical concerns more effectively with practice but that *'no two cases are the same'* as educational psychologists in her view are often faced with unpredictable situations.

The Literature Review provided a broad description of traditional and modern ethical theory. The findings in response to RQ2 may be understood with reference to branches of ethical thinking. In particular the findings indicate that educational psychologists relied upon their personal values and beliefs, characteristics and experience. Personal qualities referred to in the study's findings are related to personal ethics and to virtue (not virtual) theories of ethics referred to in the Literature Review (MacIntyre (1985), Meara et al (1996) Meara and Day (2003). Following the definition of theory given earlier in the study, virtue theory may offer a set of explanations for the finding that a number of educational psychologists relied upon their personal values and beliefs to manage ethical issues.

Virtue ethics, sometimes referred to as character ethics, is concerned with the practice of moral virtues in everyday thinking and action, in particular wisdom. It is connected with the inner qualities of the individual. When faced with difficult situations involving ethical issues most of the educational psychologists in this study considered information about the child or young person and their families within a framework of values both of the educational psychologist concerned and the child, young person, family and school. Flew and Priest (2002 p.415) define a theory of



values as being about *'what things in the world are good, desirable and important'*. A number of the educational psychologists interviewed referred to their personal values, both moral and non-moral, and one educational psychologist in particular (EP4) commented that she *'followed'* her *'own thoughts'* and relied upon her *'strong sense of right and wrong'* to guide her in managing ethical issues in her practice. Several psychologists perceived that it was *'good, desirable and important'* (Flew and Priest, 2002) to consider the interests of the child first and in so doing were clear in the view that the primary 'client' was the child in the examples they talked about. In virtue ethics the focus is on the person making choices (Beauchamp and Childress, 2001) each with her own set of personal and professional values. It was not uncommon for educational psychologists in this study to express the view that they wanted to do what was best or right for the child or young person concerned. In order to do so these educational psychologists sometimes needed to display what are considered to be the moral virtues e.g. sincerity. Rest (1994) argues that there are four moral components involved in behaving morally. These are moral sensitivity, moral judgement, moral motivation and moral character. The findings of this study suggested that the educational psychologists were aware of these components in managing ethical situations. They were *'ethically mindful'* (Webster and Bond, 2002). This is illustrated by EP 12 who made the comment that she had developed the ability to manage situations through experience and practice.

*'the longer I have been doing this job, in a way, it has become easier through experience...I make judgements better than I used to but try to hang on to my own values as best I can'.EP12*

## Relationships

A number of the educational psychologists interviewed referred to managing ethical issues by 'talking to' a variety of people they worked with, including EP colleagues, SEN officers and teachers. They also referred to support from family and friends. This finding is similar to that of some of the views expressed by respondents in Bennett's (2008) unpublished study where educational psychologists referred to support from family and friends also.

In the present study this point is well made by EP 6:

*'a very good friend from way back, ...is a great support in helping me think these ethical conflicts through. In the past we have spent a lot of long nights discussing such things. You need to know the language of ethics in order to realise that there are issues to be discussed. EP6*

Educational psychologists highlighted the importance of relationships in managing ethical challenges. They referred primarily to their relationships with colleagues, but also professional relationships with parents.

A number of educational psychologists commented upon the personal characteristics of their EP colleagues who they tended to seek out for informal support. An important feature in a relationship-based approach to ethics is trust in colleagues' expertise, knowledge and being available to each other (Rodney, Brown and Liaschenko, 2004). The responses of a number of interviewees suggested that trust

was an important factor in the relationship with a supervisor when faced with difficult ethical situations. EP 4 illustrates this well:

*'I think when you have one to one supervision, unless you take turns it's becomes a hierarchical situation and you have to really respect your supervisor and trust them. They have to be good at their job... I think peer supervision can be fine because I respect most of my colleagues but I don't necessarily respect my manager more. I don't think he is necessarily better at his job. He might be very good at being a manager but does not mean he necessarily knows about my professional work more than I do. But I have been doing this job for many years so it is important for me to have supervision with someone with experience of doing the job'.EP4*

Trust as a multi-faceted concept was discussed in the Literature Review. As a notion it can sometimes lack precision. Here 'trust' seems to be referring to a colleague who is reliable and competent as well as honest and open, (Hoy and Tschannen-Moran, 1999, p.186).

What was important for educational psychologists in this study was the positivity of their relationships with their colleagues. Reference has already been made in the literature review to Beauchamp and Childress (2001 p.369) who explain that relationship-based theory stresses '*traits valued in intimate personal relationships, such as sympathy, compassion, fidelity, discernment and love*'. Relational ethics is concerned with the kinds of relationships that allow for '*the flourishing of good rather than evil, trust rather than fear, difference rather than sameness, healing rather than*

*surviving*' (Bergum, 2004). Professional ethics is concerned with the quality of each situation whether it is direct work with children young people and their families, or with other professionals and schools. It was evident in the interviews conducted in this study that educational psychologists saw themselves as responsible for their actions in relationships. This resonates with Lindh, Severinsson and Berg's (2007) suggestion that *'ethics is thus concerned with the quality of every situation and every encounter'*. The findings of this study suggested that educational psychologists are motivated by their character and relationship based ethics when managing ethical issues. Importantly, both character and relationship ethics have their basis in theories of virtue ethics. The findings suggested that educational psychologists' actions were less likely to be influenced by principle or consequential based theories of ethics which are embodied in the BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct. Indeed, throughout all the interviews with the educational psychologists in this study only one referred to the BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct spontaneously. The findings indicated that the educational psychologists' actions were guided by their own moral values, which is in keeping with Bennett's (2008) research.

Nonetheless, the findings suggested that educational psychologists regarded agreement from colleagues for a particular course of action as important validation. This echoes with the findings of Bennett (2008). She noted that educational psychologists who responded to her questionnaire sought the support of EP colleagues as *'a pragmatic strategy'*.

However, although EPs commented that talking to EP colleagues was one of the most effective ways they managed ethical situations, a number commented that it

was increasingly difficult to meet up with colleagues for informal and formal discussions. This was largely due to the move to new offices as part of the local authority's 'Better Offices Programme' where the office space is open plan, with use of 'hot desks' with a reduction in privacy and storage. The findings of this study not only indicated that the workplace environment impacted on the ability of EPs to seek support from EP colleagues, it also suggested that inter-agency relationships were affected with consequences for managing ethical situations that may occur.

This was an unexpected finding and further attention is given to it in response to RQ3 'What support do frontline EPs perceive as desirable when managing ethical issues?'

Also of importance to educational psychologists in managing ethical issues was their relationship with schools and other professionals. A number of participants referred to their ability to manage ethical issues more effectively as a consequence of the relationships they held with parents, teachers, SEN officers, and professionals from other agencies.

*'I guess I talk to the child's parents and teachers first. It really helps if we have got to know each other and have built up a relationship. Then they are more likely to open up, trust me a bit more and be more honest in what is really going on. In a recent tribunal case which went in the LA's favour it was because of the fact we were all (SEN officer, CAMHS professionals and Autism advisory teacher) in agreement and had developed a close relationship, but it felt uncomfortable because the parents had spent a lot of*

*money on private reports, which would have been better spent on a nice trip for the family.’ EP12*

### **Professional Guidance**

Not only did educational psychologists interviewed refer to ‘talking to’ a range of people including professional EP colleagues and family and friends; a few mentioned a variety of written procedures and sources of guidance, such as the SEN Code of Practice and the LA Inclusion Handbook, especially when discussing how they managed issues relating to resourcing, safeguarding and statutory work. As alluded to earlier, an interesting finding of this study was that eleven of the educational psychologists interviewed did not refer to the use of the BPS Code of Ethics or Conduct or to the HPC Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics until prompted.

The legal framework of the SEN Code of Practice was remarked upon by two educational psychologists. One of these EPs also referred to the LA Inclusion Handbook which states the statutory criteria for the initiation of statutory assessments. From this study, the key finding was that by far the majority of the educational psychologists did not refer to written professional guidance when managing ethical issues, be it the BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct or the HPC Standards, Performance and Ethics; nor did the majority of educational psychologists, refer to the legal framework of the SEN Code of Practice. Of interest here, and as seen in the Literature Review, it is commonly held that a feature of professionalism is the existence of a code of ethics (Pryzwansky and Wendt, 1999; Lindsay, 2008 p.7). Whilst professional educational psychology can claim that its

code of ethics is characteristic of a profession, the question about the utility and relevance of codes for practitioners is problematic given their apparent lack of use by participants in this study.

### **Research Question 3 - Presentation and Discussion of Findings**

RQ3. What support do frontline EPs perceive as desirable when managing perceived ethical issues?

To recap: the sequence of presentation of findings in relation to research question three will be:

- The presentation of an initial thematic map showing initial themes supported by relevant illustrative quotations from the data.
- Arising from the initial themes a thematic map of the developed themes is then presented.
- The final themes, derived from the developed themes, will be presented by a final thematic map.

There was a degree of commonality in the patterns of responses of interviewees to research question three and research question four (RQ4: What organisational arrangements would EPs wish to see implemented to support the management of ethical issues?). This meant that after data analysis the codes for research question three and four showed some similarity, although there remained enough difference between the patterns of responses for there to emerge distinctive as well as common themes. Bryman (2001) argues that it is important to preserve as much of the context as possible, a suggestion made by Braun and Clarke (2006) who encourage the researcher *'to code extracts inclusively'*. Furthermore, they remind the researcher that a code may be used once, or many times or not at all *'as relevant'*.

After the presentation of results as outlined above, the findings will be discussed.



During the interview educational psychologists were asked what support they would desire when managing ethical issues. Coded extracts were collated into fourteen initial themes.

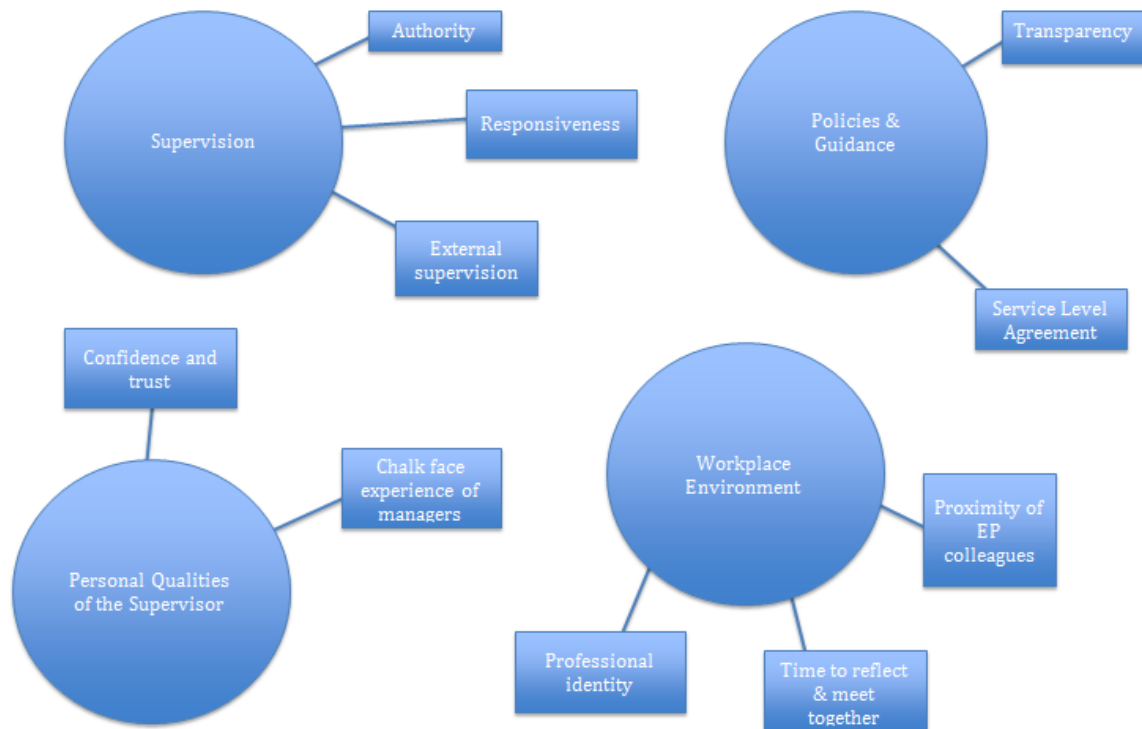


Figure 7: RQ3 Initial Thematic Map (showing four main themes)

These were reviewed and sorted into three main developed themes: protected and regular supervision, personal qualities and workplace environment. These main developed themes were reviewed further and named as two final main themes: supervision and workplace environment.

The initial themes will be presented in turn:

**Initial theme: Supervision ( a main theme)**

Supervision as a means of support for managing ethical issues was raised by the majority of educational psychologists interviewed in this study. The following three

quotations present the range of supervision educational psychologists saw as desirable:

*'I think when you have one to one supervision, unless you take turns it's becomes hierarchical situation and you have to really respect your supervisor and trust them. They have to be good at their job and good. I think peer supervision can be fine because I respect most of my colleagues ...so it is important for me to have supervision with someone with experience of doing the job'.EP4*

Competence in the professional EP role was an important feature of desired support for EP 10:

*'Supervision is best when it is a two way process, not just active listening and not a woolly chat, but a real learning experience with a competent EP'. EP10*

EP 11 preferred to have supervision from a manager:

*Well it would be best with another EP preferably a manager. It needs to be taken seriously and it is helpful for me to have your concerns written down in a 1:1 meeting so you can look back at what you discussed and actions and suggestions.EP11*

Initial theme: Authority

One educational psychologist explained that it was important to seek support from someone with authority:

*'... there are people I have greater professional respect for, who I attach greater professional value to than others, but the same is true for peers. There are peers I would go to, but again, because they don't have the authority and I wouldn't feel I had the backing if there was a complaint'.EP2*

Initial theme: Responsiveness

EP 1 saw both immediate and regular supervision as desirable:

*'It would work best if some slots were timetabled in and that time was prioritised and not taken up by other pressures. A regular session once a month or something. But that is only half the story because if you are wound up by something you can't really wait a fortnight to sort it out, can you?' EP1*

Availability of supervision and support was a view echoed by EP 11:

*'Well for me it is important that someone is available when the problem arises and this requires flexibility for our seniors and managers to be on tap ..I'd say within a couple of days'.EP11*

### Initial theme: External supervision

One educational psychologist valued external supervision from outside the LA educational psychology service.

*'I don't think recent experience is important for a supervisor. The point about having outside supervision is that if you have a dilemma which arises from being part of an agency you can talk about that. I think for an EP, professional supervision needs to be from another EP. So you could talk about the agency because they were out of the agency. Now I get supervision from xxxxxx privately. I pay for it. I chose somebody whom I pay, I chose someone I respect and I felt was a good supervisor. I go for an hour and I pay for it because I value it. It is reliable and it helps me with casework'.*

### **Initial theme: Personal qualities of supervisor (a main theme)**

Participants (EPs 2,3,11) commented strongly upon the personal qualities of supervisors best able to give support when they are dealing with ethical issues. Educational psychologists explained that it was essential to have support from someone who listened and was constructive. One educational psychologist referring positively to the past said about her supervisor:

*'She did a lot of listening and again was very clear that supervision was there to enable me to deal with the problem, not just to share and dump it. She encouraged me to think about what actions I would take'.EP2*

Interestingly, EP 3 reported that she found it desirable to have support from someone familiar with ethical issues:

*'Someone you respect and you know has knowledge about the ethical issues, codes, guidelines etc and could give informed advice and mentoring. And also someone you can trust because there is always emotional conflict about have I done the right thing or something different.'* EP 3

In a similar vein EP 11 added:

*'It is important that the person listens and does not make judgments.'*EP11

Initial theme: Confidence and trust

Referring to the past, EP2 was highly praiseworthy of her previous supervisor.

*'I entirely trusted her. She was entirely ethically driven and principled person.'*EP2

Initial theme: Chalk face experience of managers

EP10 identified recent and relevant experience as desirable characteristics of their supervisor. This is illustrated in the comments below:

*'A supervisor who is knowledgeable and experienced with hands on experience working in schools on a daily basis and understanding the issues is important for me'.EP10*

EP 3 used the phrase 'chalk face':

*'Someone who is currently practising as an EP – on the chalk face – with experience of case work, rather than someone who has been away for some while. It needs to be an EP rather than someone from another service, who knows the challenges and understand the jobs and shares the same professional codes of conduct...It needs to be someone who actually DOES the job'.EP3*

### **Initial theme: Policies and guidance (a main theme)**

The availability of written policies and guidance was raised by educational psychologists as desirable in managing ethical concerns. EP1 referred to the absence of policies and guidelines:

*'That brings me to the fact there are no guidelines from the LA on report writing'.EP1*

Referring to past leadership practices, EP6 highlighted the importance of communicating the ethical position of the EPS:

*'I'm just thinking of our previous PEP's service statements. He made strong ethical statements in the first paragraph. He said that the interests of the child*

*come first above all things. He also said we serve numerous masters. By setting it out this way it made it clear where we stood and the parameters under which we work. He used to do an Annual Report. He talked about the voice of the child. I would like this sort of support to be in place again' EP6*

Initial theme: Transparency

One participant interviewed explained that ethical challenges often arose for her as a result of a lack of transparency regarding the educational psychologists' role. For EP12 greater clarity in communication from the EPS to schools about her role was desirable in managing ethical issues. EP12 was assertive in her view:

*'I would like to see greater transparency laid out in the Service Level Agreement to schools explaining our role and purpose. There are often negotiations taking place where not everyone concerned is involved. When something is difficult or problematic it feels uncomfortable and we are drawn in to conflicts between schools, parents, SEN Officers and so on.'* EP12

Initial theme: Service Level Agreement

The availability of a transparent and comprehensive Service Level Agreement was commented upon as very important in avoiding confusion when managing difficult situations in schools:

*'It would help if other professionals and parents were aware of the ethical boundaries we work within. The fact that we put the child's needs at the heart of what we do. The Service Level Agreement needs*

*to include this and would reinforce the professional standards we work to. It might prevent us being put in difficult positions'. EP10*

**Initial theme : Workplace environment (a main theme)**

EPs 5 and 12 reported that they had found their previous working environments much more supportive. These participants recalled 'the best conditions' they had experienced. EP5 explained:

*'The best time I had working for the county council as an EP was when we worked at XXXXXX. It was an old building, not necessarily perfectly designed and quite cramped. But we had a greater sense of belonging to a profession. All our resources and 'stuff' was at hand and there was a sense of sharing ideas and knowledge. On an emotional level it felt much more supportive than the current office. EP5*

EP10 commented that having storage facilities for ready access to resources, rather than using the internet was helpful:

*'Not only that I could access the team library, resource cupboards and materials – there was more storage for things'. EP10*

Several educational psychologists also commented that easy access to assessment tools and parking near the office would be desirable features and would mean they would be more likely to visit the office during the day and meet colleagues for informal support, and discussing ethical issues.



EP 11 explained that she wished for privacy in the office to work effectively:

*'I think you need somewhere quiet and private. You need to find an interview room if you are in the office – that's important because of the confidential things you need to discuss and also so that you are not interrupted by people in the office, phones and so on'.EP11*

#### Initial theme: Proximity of EP colleagues

For another educational psychologist proximity to other educational psychologist colleagues in the office gave a sense of support and professional identity which was viewed as important and desirable in managing ethical issues:

*'Definitely, I felt more supported both emotionally, more able to talk about life outside work, more comfortable personally having colleagues around more, able to check things out with colleagues, ask them for suggestions and feedback at the photocopier and so on'. EP1*

#### Initial theme: Time to reflect and meet

The following quotations from different educational psychologists revealed what they considered to be the importance of allocated time to reflect on their practice.

*'We need to talk more about the issues we face and more time together as an EP service to keep our knowledge current about interventions and so on'.EP5*

*'As far as possible we need to prevent ethical dilemmas from arising. But that is impossible. EPs need time to think about why some issue or other is an ethical issue and time to formulate our ideas. That is something the DECP refers to. The better planned and informed you are the less likely an ethical issue is to pop up. We need to talk more about the issues we face and time together as an EP service to keep our knowledge current about interventions and so on. Having a facilitator for ethical dilemmas within the EPS to ensure all our systems are working properly such as communicating with parents, disseminating key documents and so on would support us. It would have to be someone you trust with psychological knowledge and good questioning and listening skills.'*EP9

Similarly EP 3 commented:

*'It is difficult within the open plan offices to have ongoing regular discussions in private and it makes you think twice about talking about cases. You also need protected time to discuss issues. In my office we are not getting protected supervision time. Or sometimes it would be good to raise ethical issues in a small group or team. But we have lost our team meetings. It would be good to have a team meeting with a focus specifically on ethical issues maybe every few months on a rolling programme or for a few minutes each time'* EP3

### Initial theme: Professional identity

EP 6 explained that it was desirable to have a conducive office environment in order to maintain and developing a sense of professional identity and for access to formal and informal support.

*'...getting this room today took some planning and doing. When I am speaking to my manager at the moment and to colleagues or on the phone to parents and professionals I am very aware of disturbing others and the fact that a lot of what we talk about is confidential. I often do so in whispers. It is impossible to talk about difficult issues openly. I have even met colleagues in McDonalds car park to talk about contentious issues. Anything more sensitive I would need to book a room and this is not always possible so we don't talk about things as openly as we used to in the previous offices. We tried to eat lunch regularly to talk about cases and ethical problems as a professional group but that is almost impossible to do nowadays because of the break out area where are often lots of other people using files and so and one is aware of other professional groups sitting eating their lunch and not wanting to disturb them' EP 6*

The fourteen initial themes outlined above were reviewed and analysed further looking for patterns of meaning. Following this three main developed themes became apparent and are represented in the developed thematic map below:

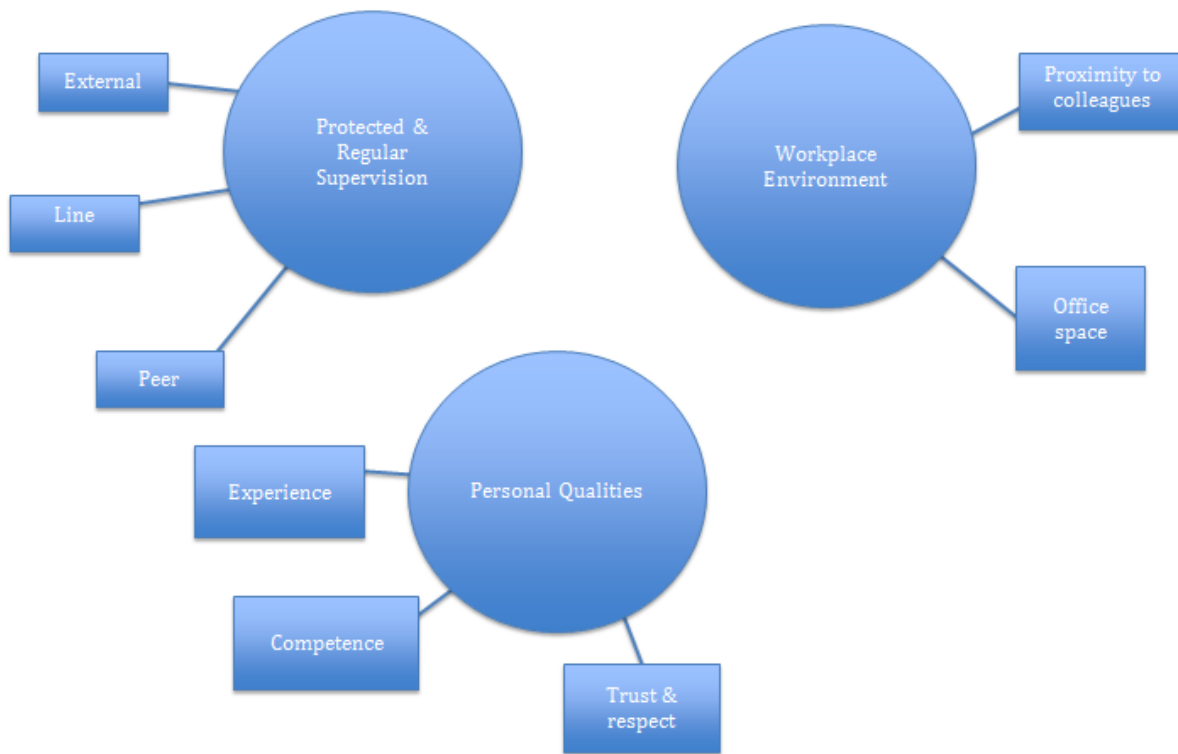


Figure 8: RQ3 Developed Thematic Map (showing three main themes)

The developed themes of RQ3 underwent further analysis to refine specifics of each theme in order to convey the ‘overall story’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This resulted in the definition and naming of two final main themes; workplace environment and supervision. These are presented in the final thematic map below:

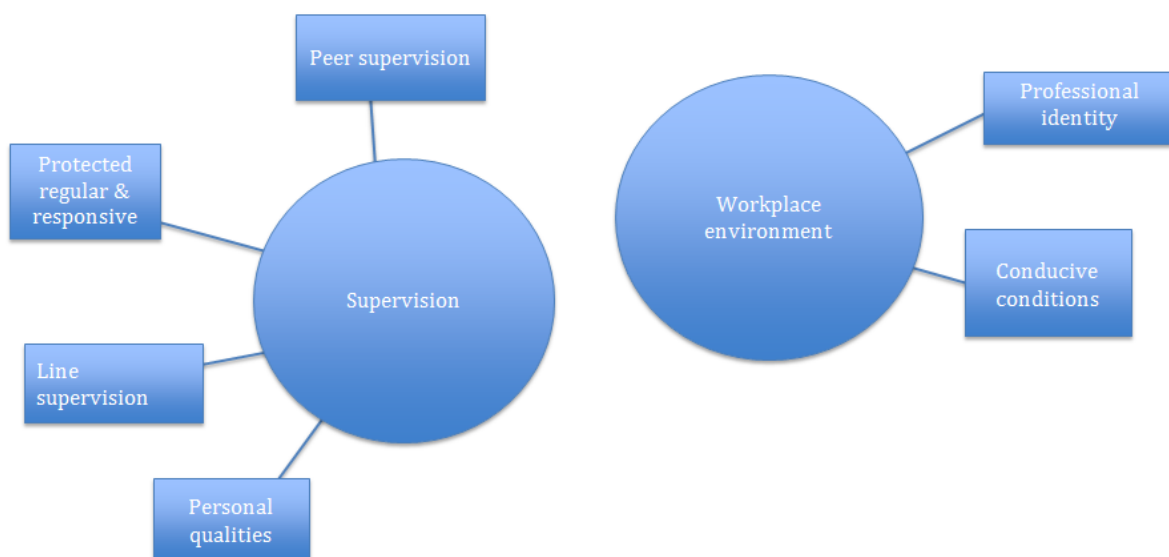


Figure 9: RQ3 Final Thematic Map (showing two main themes)

### **Research Question 3: Discussion of Findings**

RQ3: What support do frontline EPs perceive as desirable when managing ethical issues?

The preceding section has, through the use of illustrative quotations and thematic maps, presented the study's findings with regard to research question three. What follows is a discussion of these findings, which were analysed, reviewed and named as two main final themes, supervision and workplace environment. The aim of this section is to address research question three by linking the findings of the current study to the literature reviewed in chapter two.

#### **Supervision**

Of significance in this study was that all twelve educational psychologists interviewed stated that they would want more protected, regular and quality supervision to support them when managing ethical issues. In particular they commented upon the importance of the personal qualities they considered desirable in a supervisor. The Literature Review in Chapter Two outlined the importance of supervision as a feature of professionalism. EP 2 commented that supervision was important in enabling her to find solutions to problems, a view presented by Fleming and Steen (2004). EP 2 commented '*it is probably the best support there is for talking about and solving ethical dilemmas*'. The majority of educational psychologists echoed the views of Hawkins and Shohet (2006) who expressed the view that supervision improved their effectiveness when facing ethical situations and helping people; '*good supervision*

*isn't about telling me about what to do, good supervision is helping you come to conclusions yourself'. EP2*

The DECP clearly states that supervision is an essential part of continuing professional development (DECP, 2010). The aspiration expressed by a number of the educational psychologists in this study was for regular and protected supervision in order to help them manage ethical issues, especially at a time when there may be significant challenges to professionalism posed by traded services. The DECP refer to the three main functions of supervision which include managerial, educative and supportive functions. The findings of the present study suggested that EPs would want supervision for each of these functions. Managerial or line supervision was mentioned by several EPs as a source of 'backup' or verification for their actions:

*'there are peers I would go to, but again, because they don't have authority and I wouldn't feel I had the backing if there was a complaint'.EP2*

EP2 and 11 talked about the need for reassurance that their decisions were appropriate; a view expressed by Nolan (1999) who states that *'the managerial function induces a form of quality assurance for the organisation, but also a shared responsibility for the individual'* (1999 p.68)

Peer supervision was considered by some educational psychologists to offer more collegiate or emotional support, for example EP 12 *'I felt more able to offload and burst into tears with X'*. Nolan (1999) refers to the *'supportive function'* of supervision *which allows the supervisee to deal with the emotions and stress that are part of*

*being in a helping profession*'. Reliance on emotional support from family and friends emerged as one of the ways EPs managed ethically challenging situations. This may have reflected the fact that supervision had been irregular or absent in the experiences of the educational psychologists interviewed because of radical local authority changes affecting leadership and management. A number of EPs talked about the lack of availability of colleagues for informal support since the reorganisation of the LA and move to open plan offices. What is interesting here is that the experience of not accessing support may have had a detrimental effect on organisational effectiveness as well as on individual welfare; (Dowling and Osborn, 1994; Fineman, 1985). Certainly, as referred to in the Literature Review, there appears to be a relationship between organisational effectiveness and supervision.

*'supervision ...can help us to manage our own resources better, manage our workload and challenge our inappropriately patterned ways of coping...there is research to show good supervision correlates with job satisfaction';*  
*Cherniss and Eganatoo, (1978 p.219.)*

One educational psychologist explained that she benefitted from having supervision from outside the EPS to ensure the regularity and quality of supervision. The majority of educational psychologists mentioned the personal characteristics of the person supervising them as important. In particular, qualities of trustworthiness, competence and experience were commented upon. EP 6 explained:

*'Well she is extremely experienced and trustworthy. She is a good listener and counsellor' EP6*

Trust as a notion was raised on a number of occasions. However, it remained undefined by interviewees and therefore somewhat elusive in meaning, a view confirmed by Hosner (1995).

*'There appears to be widespread agreement on the importance of trust in human conduct, but unfortunately there also appears to be an equally widespread lack of agreement on a suitable definition of the construct.'* (1995 p.380)

Nevertheless, as mentioned, educational psychologists put an emphasis on a supervisor's personal qualities. Implicit within what educational psychologists were saying was that they sought confidence that their views would be protected by a supervisor and their vulnerabilities unexposed. This links with O'Neill's view elaborated upon in the Literature Review which sees trust as central to professional relationships (O'Neill, 2002).

At a time when the employment landscape is changing (AEP, 2011) one of the potential benefits of regular managerial supervision could be to ensure consistency across the educational psychology service, especially with a view to delivering an ethical traded service. For this to work effectively the findings of this study suggested that managers were most effective in supporting frontline EPs when they were *'ethically driven'* (EP2) and when managers were perceived to be competent



professionals with current experience of working in schools (EP8). This view was shared by EP3:

*'someone who is currently practising as an EP – on the chalk face – with experience of case work, rather than someone who has been away for a while' EP3.*

A number of EPs (EP 2, 9, 10, 11, 12), referred to the need for well thought through policies and guidance to help them manage ethical conflicts in the new traded environment. EP12 desired a *'clear Service Level Agreement'* clarifying the role and work expectations of the educational psychologist. A number of EPs expressed the wish for a clear vision and policy regarding traded working.

A further strand of desirable support was acknowledgement by LA senior officers. This view was expressed by EP 10 who added that she perceived that her professionalism was not recognised or valued.

*'What I find difficult at the moment is the LA questioning the level of competence of EPs who are working hard. I feel we have to be so much more accountable, to show why we are paid more than specialist teachers for example. We are not considered as a professional group any more but an expensive part of an early intervention team'.EP10*

## Workplace environment

An unexpected finding to emerge from the data was the importance educational psychologists attached to the workplace environment. This was perceived to be a pivotal factor in the availability of support for EP colleagues (particularly for EPs 3, 10, 11) as well as for private and confidential consultations and for optimising a sense of professional identity and collegiate ethics. EP 2 commented that the workplace environment had the potential to afford educational psychologists the opportunity for '*time to reflect*' and to '*think and formulate ideas*'. Characteristics of the desired workplace environment as stated by educational psychologists included privacy for formal and informal professional discussions, as well the opportunity for emotional and practical support.

This relates directly to the discussion in the Literature Review where reference was made to the work of Dixon and Durrheim (2003) who argued that the formation of group identities is affected by the way space is organised emphasising the point made by Knight (2009) who suggests that '*space is a critical medium through which personal and social identities are expressed and developed*'.

It is suggested that for the organisation to be an effective working environment in which educational psychologists feel supported in managing ethical issues it is important that consideration is given to improvements of the work place design, an argument expanded by Freeman and Knight (2009). The organisation at the heart of this enquiry had undergone refurbishment, but the comments of the educational psychologists interviewed in this study indicate that the working environment was not

*'more humane, effective and productive'* as described by Freeman and Knight (2009)  
as a consequence.

## **Research Question Four: Presentation and Discussion of Findings**

RQ4. What organisational arrangements would EPs wish to see implemented to support the management of ethical issues?

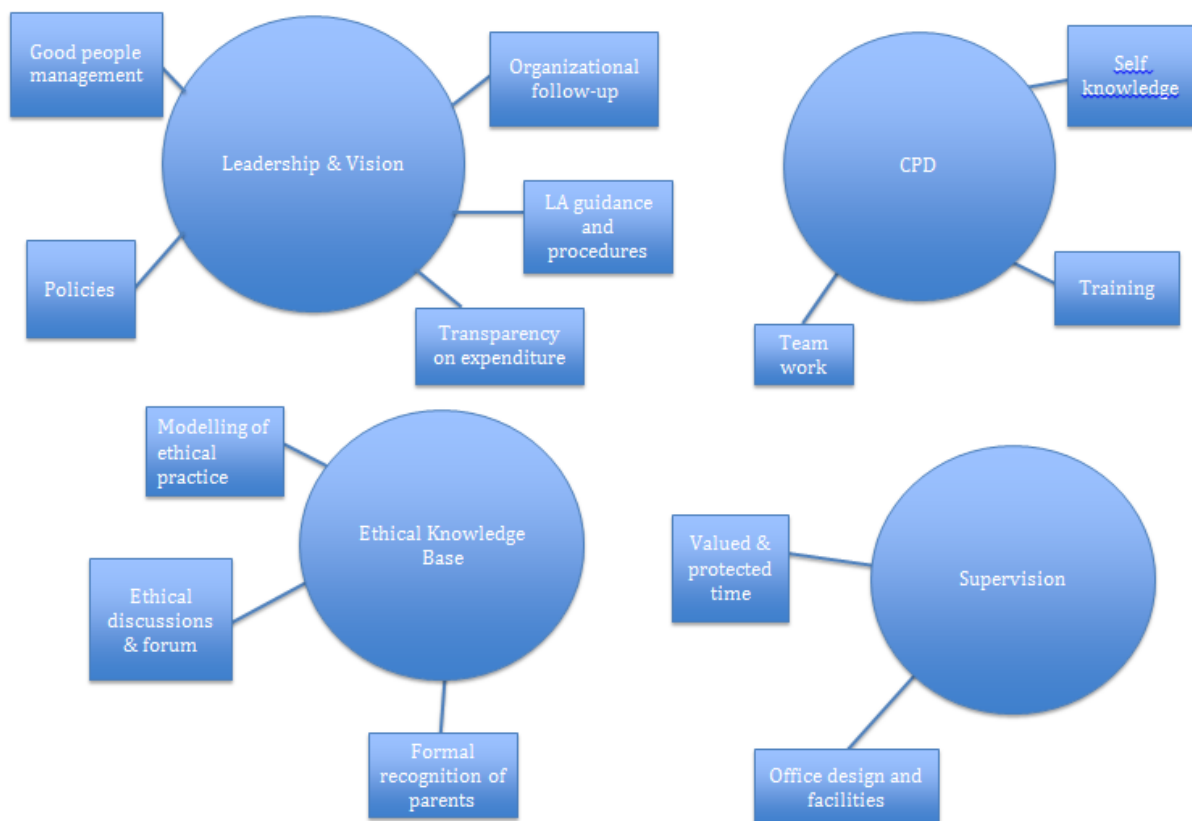
To recap: the sequence of presentation of findings in relation to research question four will be:

- The presentation of an initial thematic map showing initial themes supported by relevant illustrative quotations from the data.
- Arising from the initial themes a thematic map of the developed themes is then presented.
- The final themes, derived from the developed themes, will be presented by a final thematic map.

However, as previously stated, there was a degree of commonality in the patterns of responses (themes) of interviewees for research question four and research question three. This meant that after data analysis the initial main themes for research question three and four showed some similarity, although there remained enough difference between the patterns of responses for there to emerge distinctive as well as common main themes. Braun and Clarke (2006) remind the researcher that there are often *'contradictions in the data patterns and that those coded extracts should be retained'*.

After the presentation of results as outlined above the findings are then discussed. During the interview educational psychologists were asked what support they would desire from the organisation when managing ethical issues. Coded extracts were

collated into seventeen initial themes. These were reviewed and sorted into three main developed themes: supervision, leadership and vision and continuing professional development (CPD). In turn the developed themes were analysed and refined further and named as one final main theme: ethical direction of the organisation.



**Figure 10: RQ4 Initial Thematic Map (showing four main themes)**

**Initial theme: Supervision (a main theme)**

Whilst supervision was an initial theme to emerge in RQ3, there was a different emphasis when it was raised in relation to RQ4. What follows is a presentation of illustrative quotations about supervision in relation RQ4.

All twelve EPs wished for more regular, high quality supervision, from a range of sources within the organisation and outside. EP 8 requested supervision from a person of her choosing with personal qualities she admired and respected and who had current experience of working as an EP:

*'From our service I think supervision from a person of our choice is the best support for me – from someone I admire and respect, not necessarily peer support, but a competent EP who knows the job and who is in tune with ethical principles, who thinks...who is enabling and exploratory and who you can trust and feel safe with. I wouldn't think it needed to be frequent but regular' EP8*

EP12 wished for access to a range of supervision for different functions:

*'greater access to a range of supervision – sometimes it needs to be line and sometimes peer supervision'. EP12*

A number of educational psychologists referred to their wish for regular and predictable opportunities for supervision:

*Timetabled, protected supervision that was never lost. EP2*

This wish was re-iterated by EP5:

*'One (wish) is more regular supervision, whether it is outside or peer supervision. That is actually takes place. Talking to others'.EP5*

Several EPs wished that more time was available to reflect on ethical issues. These wishes were summarised by EP 4 and EP6:

*Thinking about it I don't make fast decisions. If I am faced with a dilemma I like to think about it and take time. I don't think on my feet so well. So I guess a second wish would be to have the time to reflect and not to rush when faced with complex dilemmas'.EP4*

*'Well I think dedicated time to think about ethical issues, personal supervision and development to build up resilience with someone who is separated from the management role' EP6*

Another educational psychologist referred to having good quality supervision especially during a time of transition to greater traded working:

*'A second wish would be more recently; we are headed towards traded services and need schools on side. There is already a lot of pacifying at the expense of backing EP's supervision. Even when we do get supervision it may not be helpful. We do not need tea and sympathy, trying to make you feel better. We need a robust response and good quality supervision which is about finding solutions and practical advice, rather than 'how can we make this go away'. People (EPs included) feel threatened by the reorganisation,*

*about losing their jobs. They feel battered and have avoided the office. We are all worn down and physically exhausted by the lack of information and uncertainty.’ EP7*

Educational psychologists commented it was important that colleagues providing supervision valued supervision and that the outcomes of supervision were recorded:

*‘It needs to be taken seriously and it is helpful for me to have your concerns written down in a 1:1 meeting so you can look back at what you discussed and actions and suggestions’.EP11*

EP10 had a strong commitment to supervision:

*‘We need supervision from colleagues who really value supervision and who are not there to have a really good moan. We’ve tried group supervision and this is effective because it is non-directive, is genuinely enquiring and supportive. It helps you see all perspectives on a case and helps you see your way through’. EP10*

EP5 emphasised the importance of personal attributes of the supervisor:

*‘I believe supervision is most effective because colleagues are empathetic and good at their jobs. Being competent is important for me because I feel confident in taking on board suggestions. The most effective supervision for*



*me is where there is no 'one up man ship', no pulling rank and it feels neutral.*

*For me most supervision is about ethical conflicts'.EP5*

### Initial theme: Office design and facilities

A high proportion of educational psychologists wished for offices that facilitated professional working. This included thought for privacy and efficient facilities. Some perceived the offices were a reflection of the LA's value for its employees.

*'These are meant to be part of the Better Offices Programme – but better for whom? I don't come into the office if I can help it. The facilities are often not working – the photocopiers for example were out of order for two days last week. The offices affect the quality of your work, there's little privacy and that has a knock on effect for talking about ethical issues.'* EP12

The physical proximity and co-location of educational psychologists in the same office for informal support was an important factor for EP5.

*'We get a lot of informal supervision from colleagues in our team, if they happen to be in the office at the same time, but it is not regular. Where would we go for a start? It is hard to book a room unless you plan it well in advance. Informal conversations and support are hit and miss'.EP5*

Initial theme: Valued and protected time

EP 10 expressed the wish for the organisation to implement arrangements which she felt would demonstrate that the organisation valued and protected supervision for its employees. She explained that she would wish for:

*More access to regular and protected supervision from the EPS in an atmosphere where you are not looking at the clock to see when you have to vacate the room, and are not interrupted. It would be valued and protected time and would not be chipped away.' EP 10*

Initial theme: CPD (a main theme)

When thanked for participating in the interview EP 10 replied:

*'It's a pleasure and it will be helpful to think about ethical issues because I haven't done that since my training'.EP10*

This comment was echoed by other educational psychologists who explained that they would wish to see ethical discussions included as part of service CPD.

EP 9 reported that CPD had been overlooked through the reorganisation of the LA.

She added:

*'I am not sure what code of ethics or standards the LA has and it certainly isn't clear. We also need support through reorganisation so that things like CPD, discussions about ethics, training and supervision are kept as priorities to ensure we keep up to date and our professional knowledge up to date'. EP9*

Initial theme: Training

EP 6 wished to see more training for managers leading educational psychologists through reorganisation:

*'We need to know good current practice in other areas. Particularly if we are going to be Early Intervention Teams, more multidisciplinary. More training. We need our managing colleagues to have an idea about what is and isn't good practice and to have time to do that'.EP6*

EP 9 wished for further training also:

*'We also need support through reorganisation so that things like training and supervision are kept as priorities to ensure we keep up to date and our professional knowledge up to date'.EP9*

Initial theme: Team work

EP 5 wished to see greater importance attached to team work as a means of supporting the management of ethical issues:

*'A third area of support I would like to see is a commitment to more active paired working with a colleague e.g. delivering TA training. Not just shadowing a colleague. I think team work is very effective and it is helpful to talk about ethical issues as part of that.' EP5*

Initial theme: Self knowledge

EP6 commented that dedicated time to develop self-knowledge and to focus on personal development would be an important wish with organisational arrangements in place to support her:

*'We would benefit from personal development work to improve our self-knowledge. That might be another wish. Time to do that'. EP6*

**Initial theme: Leadership and vision (a main theme)**

EP12 expressed the wish that formal as well as informal opportunities might exist for all employees of the LA to meet to identify themselves as a whole organisation. She explained that she would want structures to facilitate clarification of individual roles.

*'I don't think of the LA as a whole, I tend to think of teams of professionals. That's probably because we never formally meet together as a unified directorate and don't understand each other's roles. It is sometimes unclear what we do. That can lead to conflict between what say an SEN officer wants from an EP and an EP's decision, so much more transparency and vision throughout the LA would be my wish'.EP12*

EP2 wished for greater acknowledgement for her work:

*So I have completed my piece of work, the LA has paid for some of that; I let them know I have finished and no one says well done. It makes you question the point of it all really'.EP2*

Initial theme: Policies

EP 3 explained that the presence of local authority and educational psychology service policies would assist her in managing ethical issues:

*'I think it is essential that we have policies ready and easily available so that when ethical issues arise either from case work, working with other professionals, doing research and so on we can sort them out and feel supported.'* EP3

Initial theme: Local authority guidance and procedures

One educational psychologist expressed the views of several interviewees:

*'We need clarity on what the ethical principles of the Area Inclusion Team or the LA organisation actually are? We needed some guidelines or a policy on joint information sharing.'* EP3

Guidance from the EPS was considered important when working with other professionals:

*'A policy about information sharing when one service has its own professional code of conduct and has obtained informed consent for a specific course of action by a'* EP 3

Initial theme: Organisational follow up

EP 7 expressed frustrations with the local authority for not holding schools more accountable where advice was not followed. She wished for officers to have more power to enforce actions:

*'So I guess what I am saying is that schools should be held more accountable, by the LA. They should be required to do better. Where paperwork does not exist e.g. IEPs, PSPs etc that there is a time limit to produce this. And when there is no evidence of interventions in place, it should be followed up by someone who has the power to insist'. EP 7*

Initial theme: Good people management

When asked 'if you had 3 wishes from the organisation to support you better when managing ethical issues, what would they be?' EP 2 replied:

*'I suppose good people management'. EP2*

She explained that she linked good people management with ethical practice:

*Yes, sometimes things get bypassed because there's not enough time. It doesn't really come down to ethical practice it comes down to good people management, but then again those things for me are tied together. If you are managing people through the consultation period in a good way you are thinking of those ethical issues. EP2*

Initial theme: Transparency on expenditure

EP 8 requested the availability of information regarding funding. She was vehement in her comments:

*'Greater clarity and transparency on SEN expenditure in the LA across the county so that pupils from across the county have fair access to specialist provision...I think I would feel there was greater fairness if I could see how the budget was spent and that pupils in xxx were not at a disadvantage'.EP8*

**Initial theme: Ethical knowledge base (a main theme)**

Another EP commented that she would wish to see the implementation within the organisation of:

*'...a good knowledge base about ethics would be helpful. To have someone in the LA who could help intervene or support in intervening in ethical issues – some guidance, steering and support. Both written and personal support'.  
EP7*

Initial theme: Modelling of ethical practice

EP 2 suggested that modelling of ethical practice in decision making amongst senior officers in the LA would support educational psychologists in their practice:

*'It would help if good ethical issues was modelled from the top down. ..The whole LA, from the Director throughout all employees in CYPF. I wouldn't usually think about the LA as a whole, but because of the reorganisation we are going through at the moment I know they are trying to manage change,*

*but they are not really thinking about human beings. Obviously they have to cut people and that's understandable and I suppose it's where ethical practice just gets caught up with being disorganised and I think then because the LA is disorganised not very ethical things happen'.EP2*

Initial theme: Ethical discussions and forums

EP 4 commented upon the isolation she experiences. She therefore wished to see organisational structures implemented to increase team work, facilitating her proximity to colleagues thereby reducing her sense of isolation when managing ethical issues. She cited ethical forums, case discussions and ethical buddies as means of achieving this:

*'It would be quite nice to have a forum to discuss ethical issues because you can get lonely. You think you are taking the right course, you think you are doing the right thing but actually until you start sharing with other people you don't always question what it is that is troubling you. Something like an ethical case conference where people raise ethical issues once a month. More a general discussion to share what the issues are separately from supervision because it could be that certain ethical issues recur at a particular time or when something is happening in the organisation. Then you possibly can share this and it can be helpful to others and you. I think we are doing a lonely job. There are real benefits of the team work'.EP4*



Initial theme: Formal recognition of parents

EP 8 explained that she would wish for formal recognition of parents in educational psychology service policies:

*'I would like parents to be formally acknowledged in our practice. It would be good for it to be mandatory practice that parents are more central to EP practice and that an automatic meeting with parents and carers took place. This would need to be in the Service Statement or Agreement and would support me in asking schools to use some of their allocated time to invite parents along' EP8*

The initial themes were grouped into three developed main themes. These are presented in the developed thematic map below:

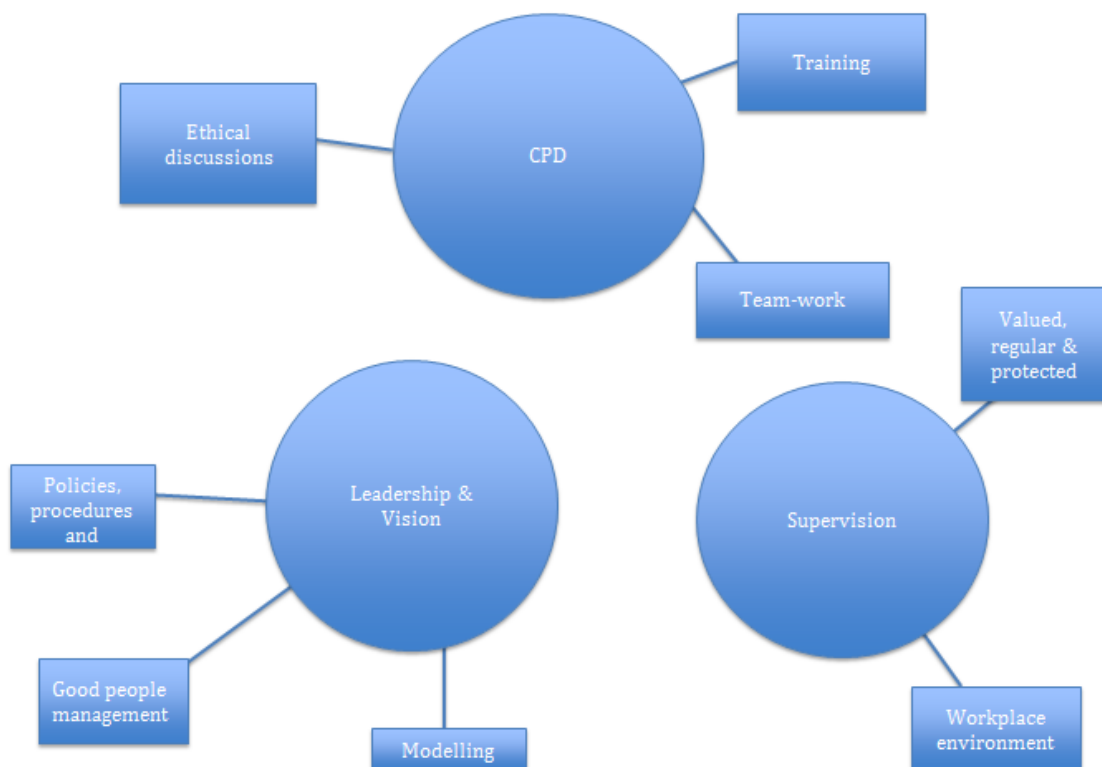


Figure 11: RQ4 Developed Thematic Map (showing three main themes)

The developed themes of RQ4 underwent further analysis to refine specifics of each theme in order to convey the 'overall story' (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This resulted in the definition and naming of one main final theme, ethical direction of the organisation. This is represented in the final thematic map below:



Figure 12: RQ4 Final Thematic Map (showing one main theme)

## **RQ4 Discussion of Findings**

RQ4: What organisational arrangements would EPs wish to see implemented to support the management of ethical issues?

The preceding section has, through the use of illustrative quotations and thematic maps, presented the study's findings with regard to research question four. The final and single theme to emerge was ethical direction of the organisation. What follows is a discussion of the final main theme. The aim of this section is to address research question four by linking the findings of the current study to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two.

### **Ethical direction of the organisation**

Following Reidenbach and Robin's (1991) five stage model of organisational moral development referred to in the Literature Review, a number of educational psychologists implied the organisation was at stage three. Stage three (Responsive Organisation) according to Reidenbach and Robin's (1991) model is characterised by a concern with responsibility towards society as well as driven by targets and the law. The findings suggested that the educational psychologists perceived the organisation to be responsive. For example, EP 8 said:

*'we do have some rules and regulations...sometimes they work OK...the problem is they are interpreted differently. We need more consistency'. EP8*

This was typical of those educational psychologists who indicated that the LA showed some awareness of its social responsibilities with a commitment to fulfilling

its statutory responsibilities to children, young people and families in the local authority. In other words educational psychologists were mindful that the LA as an organisation was aware that it needed to be seen to be responding ethically to the most vulnerable. Reidenbach and Robin (1991) suggest that ethical codes of practice will often be characteristic of stage three organisations. Interestingly, a finding of this study revealed by an educational psychologist that there is no local authority code of practice. The same EP felt that a code of practice or statement by the LA would be viewed as an important step in the implementation of support for educational psychologists when managing ethical issues.

Educational psychologists wished to see ethical behaviour modelled from the 'top down' of the organisation; a view expressed by EP2:

*'The whole LA, from the Director throughout all employees in CYPF. I wouldn't usually think about the LA as a whole, but because of the reorganisation we are going through at the moment I know they (senior officers) are trying to manage change, but they are not really thinking about human beings. Obviously they have to cut people and that's understandable and I suppose it's where ethical practice just gets caught up with being disorganised and I think then because the LA is disorganised not very ethical things happen'.EP2*

The findings also suggested that educational psychologists wished to see clearer leadership, especially in relation to establishing a vision, developing the organisation and its workforce. Following Leithwood and Riehl (2003), educational psychologists seemed to want leaders and managers to set a clearer direction, build collaborative

processes and develop people centred relationships. For the most part, educational psychologists wanted a new ethos and climate.

The study demonstrated that EPs' views of 'vision' and 'leadership' were associated with good 'people management' skills, valuing the profession and modelling ethical behaviour from the top down. However, what educational psychologists indicated was that they wished for direction and leadership through turbulent times within the organisation. At the time of the study many appointments to leadership positions with the LA were undecided, leaving an unled and unmanaged educational psychology service. As a result one educational psychologist reported:

*'Yes, sometimes things (ethical issues) get bypassed because there's not enough time. It doesn't really come down to ethical practice it comes down to good people management, but then again those things for me are tied together. If you are managing people through the consultation period in a good way you are thinking of those ethical issues...the trouble is, we don't know where we are going...'*EP2

EP2 captured the sense of what a number of EPs conveyed: at a time of change there was little, if any, direction; the organisation's effectiveness suffered, and individuals within the organisation felt undervalued. This directly relates to Leithwood and Riehl (2003) who identify three areas of practice as crucial for leadership success. These are:

- Setting directions

- Developing the organisation
- Developing people

Setting direction involves identifying a vision not isolated from the rest of the organisation which allows for the creation of shared meanings and understanding in support of the organisation's direction. Leithwood and Reihl (2003) argue that the promotion of human values of mutual caring and trust within the organisation strengthens its collaborative culture allowing individuals to work. Within this framework, effective leaders model behaviours that are congruent with the espoused organisational values and goals. The view is that such leaders encourage positive beliefs in others and enthusiasm for change. This represents a way of working and behaving not evident in the responses of the participants in this study.

Over and above the aspiration for a different and revitalised climate and ethos a number of educational psychologists identified CPD and training in ethics as support for the management of ethical issues. A view shared by Eberlain (1993) and Francis (1999) who argue that training is valuable to help educational psychologists develop ethical reasoning.

In the special edition of *Educational and Child Psychology* (2002) Lunt expressed the aspiration that compulsory CPD would mean:

*'all EPs would have the opportunity to develop the ethical side of their practice with the expectation of significantly greater awareness of ethical issues across the profession'* (Lunt 2002, p.105)

In the same edition, Franey (2002) put forward a number of organisational arrangements which might promote ethical mindfulness from the adoption of a code of conduct to the promotion of supervision within the profession. Whilst it might not be possible to evaluate the centrality of ethical decision making within professional practice since 2002 and the publication of the special edition 'Ethics in Practice' it is possible to highlight two important changes in the last decade. First of all, as argued in the Introduction to this research, there has been an increased interest in ethics across the public domain. Secondly, this has been accompanied by the BPS and HPC, newly entitled HCPC, strengthening the importance of CPD in general and highlighting through its publications the significance of ethics in professional practice.

### **An Appreciative Model: Factors Supporting the Management of Ethical issues**

Later in the next section of this chapter an appreciative model of the factors supporting the management of ethical issues is presented. It is important to provide a context for this by summarising the salient research findings of the study.

#### **Summary of main findings**

In summary, the main findings in relation to research question one are that all twelve educational psychologists experienced a range of situations which presented ethical issues in their practice referred to and named as a final theme; Difficult Situations 'Hotspots'. They also perceived significant challenges to their professionalism and the inherent challenges of operating within a new trading environment.

In relation to research question two, the responses of the educational psychologists interviewed indicated that how they managed difficult situations was dependent upon their character and relationships. Educational psychologists also discussed certain features of professionalism, such as professional guidance and conduct, in relation to their management of ethical issues.

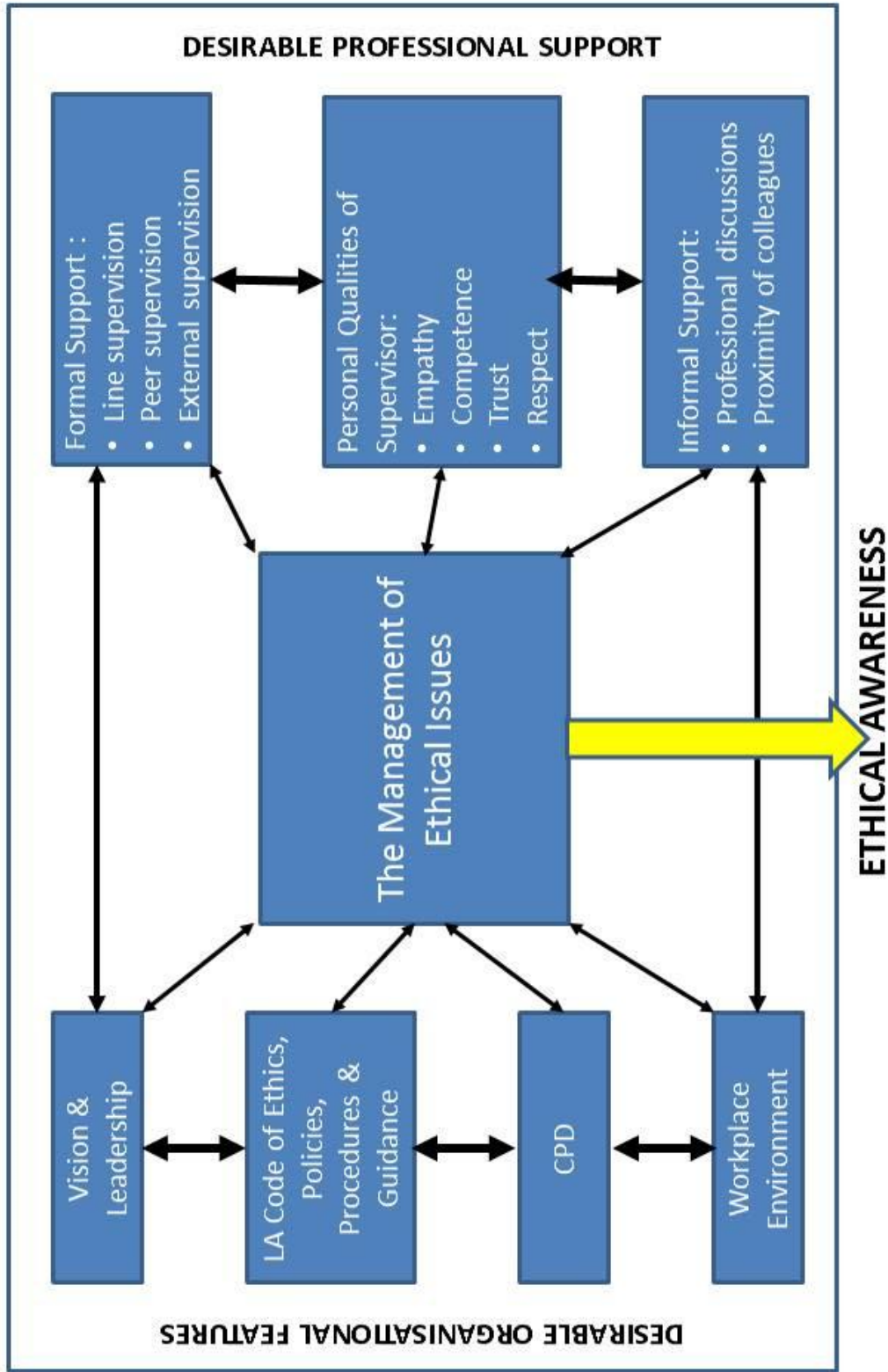
Research question three revealed that educational psychologists desired a range of support when managing ethical issues. Predominantly they wished for support through a range of supervision from peers and line managers possessing certain personal qualities. They highlighted the importance of the workplace environment in facilitating access to support and enhancing professional identity.

The salient findings to emerge from educational psychologists' responses to research question four suggested that participants predominantly wished for ethical direction from the organisation, including leadership and vision and CPD.

Before presenting the Appreciative Model it is essential to recall that the basic process of appreciative inquiry is uncovering and valuing the 'best of what is' (Discovery) to envisioning 'what might be' (Dream). With this in mind, the Appreciative Model represents the Dream stage of the Appreciative Inquiry cycle articulating and identifying themes that were discovered from the interview process and envisioning possibilities for the future.



An Appreciative Model: Factors Supporting the Management of Ethical Issues



Arising from the Appreciative Model the thesis of the current study is as follows:  
Frontline educational psychologists perceive ethical issues as common and problematic features of their practice. This thesis argues that the ability of EPs to manage ethical issues is at its best when identified desirable organisational features and professional support exist, which leads to ethical awareness.

The organisational features identified were:

- Vision and Leadership
- LA code of ethics , policies, procedures and guidance
- CPD
- Workplace environment

Professional support was identified as:

- Formal support
  - line supervision
  - peer supervision
  - external supervision
- Personal Qualities of the supervisor
  - empathy
  - competence
  - trust
  - respect
- Informal support
  - professional discussions
  - proximity of colleagues

This chapter has presented and discussed the findings of the research. In terms of data analysis it adhered closely to the qualitative analytical methods of Braun and Clarke (2006). The intention was to provide maximum exposure of the data by following Braun and Clarke's (2006) clear framework of initial, developed and final themes; thereby increasing the trustworthiness of the research.

The final chapter which follows will present conclusions drawn from the findings of this study, identify the strengths and weaknesses of AI and discuss positive features of the study. Future areas for research are indicated and a reflexive account is given.

## Chapter 5

### **Conclusion**

The final chapter of this appreciative inquiry is comprised of several sections.

The first part recalls the research aims and questions. This is followed by a summary table of main findings in relation to the four research questions. The next section returns to the appreciative inquiry orientation. The following section of this chapter reflects upon the methods and methodology used by identifying the strengths and weaknesses of AI. Finally, areas for future research are outlined and reflections on the research process are provided.

The research aims of this study were:

- To investigate the perceptions of frontline EPs into ethical issues.
- To identify factors and conditions which contribute to effective support for EPs faced with ethical issues in one local authority.
- To offer to the Senior Management Team of the LA EPS a model envisioning possibilities for the future to support educational psychologists in the management of ethical issues.

The four research questions addressed in this study were as follows:

1. What do frontline Educational psychologists perceive as ethical issues in their practice?

2. How do frontline EPs manage perceived ethical issues?
3. What support do frontline EPs perceive as desirable when managing perceived ethical issues?
4. What organisational arrangements would EPs wish to see implemented to support the management of ethical issues?

Summary of main findings

Table 5: Summary of Main Findings

Research Question	Main Findings
RQ1 What do frontline educational psychologists perceive as ethical issues in their practice?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All twelve educational psychologists perceived ethical issues in their practice. These were focussed on a wide range of situations or 'hotspots' including communication and reporting, direct work and activities around consultation</li> <li>• A number of challenges to professionalism were identified, including trading services and maintaining integrity.</li> </ul>
RQ2 How do frontline educational psychologists manage perceived ethical issues?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational psychologists managed 'difficult situations' drawing upon a range of support. The findings suggested that EPs were motivated by their personal values and characteristics, by a wish to act in the best interests of CYPF and through developing relationships.</li> <li>• The findings suggested that EPs followed professional guidance.</li> </ul>
RQ3 What support do frontline educational psychologists perceive as desirable when managing ethical issues?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational psychologists desired a range of support. The findings suggested professional supervision from peers and line managers possessing certain personal qualities was important.</li> <li>• They highlighted the importance of the workplace environment in supporting them.</li> </ul>
RQ4 What organisational arrangements would educational psychologists wish to see implemented to support the management of ethical issues?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants predominantly wished for ethical direction from the organisation, including leadership and vision and CPD.</li> </ul>

## Appreciative Inquiry

The methodological orientation of this study was appreciative inquiry. Its design was based on AI principles. It is important at this stage to revisit the salient elements of AI which shaped the present work. These elements are:

### **Discovery and Dream**

**Discovery:** this refers to uncovering and valuing the ‘best of what is’ - An approach which guided my interviews with twelve educational psychologists.

**Dream:** this refers to the articulation of possibilities and envisions ‘what might be’.

Research Questions 1 and 2 related to uncovering and valuing the ‘best of what is’ in the current practice of the twelve educational psychologists interviewed. Research questions 3 and 4 related directly to the Dream stage of AI and to capturing the views of the educational psychologists when envisioning ‘what might be’ in developing support for them in the management of ethical issues in their practice.

In an attempt to fuse the many themes and issues which emerged in this study and to address the research aims of this work, the model stemming from the present study’s AI stance presents the desirable organisational and the desirable interpersonal characteristics which help frontline educational psychologists manage ethical issues. The model presented at the end of Chapter 4 is a visual representation of the ‘Dream’ stage of the Appreciative Inquiry identifying factors which support the management of ethical issues. Based on the study’s findings, the

thesis to evolve from this dissertation argues that educational psychologists are best able to manage ethical issues in their frontline practice in the presence of desirable organisational arrangements and with professional support. It is suggested that all frontline educational psychologists who participated in this study would benefit from an organisation which values continuing professional development and supervision; which provides relevant policies, procedures and guidance, which offers opportunities to develop ethical literacy including an ethical forum for discussion, leadership and vision. For this to take effect educational psychologists require workplace environments which are conducive to professional identity and privacy. Of critical importance for the educational psychologists and a recurrent theme were the personal qualities wished for in both formal and informal personal and professional support. The personal qualities of the person giving supervision were essential. Personal qualities such as empathy, flexibility, confidentiality, trust, respect, chalk face current experience, and competence were highlighted in line and peer supervision. It was critical for participants in this study that supervision was responsive and available at planned intervals and that it was not overtaken by other activities.

When envisioning the future, the final themes to emerge from the findings indicated that educational psychologists desired a combination of professional support and organisational arrangements. The overall suggestion presented in the model is that the existence of these mechanisms leads to greater ethical awareness throughout the organisation and amongst individual educational psychologists.

## **Strengths and Limitations of AI**

The rationale for the selection of AI as the methodological orientation for the study was provided in Chapter Three. A key reason was AI's positive focus at a time when educational psychologists faced major changes amidst restructuring of the organisation and when morale was very low. AI identifies 'the best of what is' in order to articulate 'what might be' in the future. In spite of this positive slant it was a challenge to steer participants towards what worked well because of their uppermost concern with organisational changes and fears for the future. These topics fell beyond the orientation of AI. As an interviewer there was a balance to be maintained between maintaining rapport and empathy, listening to 'problem centred' views or opinions, emotional tensions and upholding the main principles of AI.

Considerable thought was given to the choice of methodology and to possible alternatives. Given the highly sensitive context and time frame, I would argue that there was little alternative choice of appropriate methodology. The reasons outlined in Chapter Three for adopting an AI approach remain valid, despite the challenges faced as a result of remaining positive. Nonetheless, this inquiry has highlighted a number of limitations of AI.

A characteristic of the AI approach rests is the tendency of AI to underplay power relationships within an organisation. All interviewees were generic educational psychologists and in a similar hierarchical position in the organisation to the researcher. There is often a relationship between hierarchical position and the impact of an individual's views or opinion. It was a significant factor therefore to



ensure anonymity in this research when presenting a model to the senior management team.

Secondly, the ability to articulate reason and persuade is also not evenly distributed. AI is dependent on participants' ability to articulate their thoughts and views and on the mastery of language which varies amongst individuals according to personality, educational achievements, training and social class. The educational psychologists were affected at times by affective factors such as anger and sadness which may have contributed to their ability to articulate their perceptions of the ethical issues they faced. This leads to the penultimate point.

As mentioned there may be a slight contradiction within AI. On one hand it acclaims meanings and emotions held by the interviewees whilst at the same time underplaying the reality of their feelings of negativity and possible deep seated grievances which have their origins in past events. It may not always be possible to 're-frame' such experiences positively to identify the 'best of what is'.

Finally, whilst the belief that organisations can be developed through positive affirmation might hold a certain attraction, there may be occasions where a system is reduced by factors, such as drastic cuts as in this study, or lack of political will, to make it so dysfunctional that it is unrealistic to effect meaningful change within it.

### Positive features of the Study

The systematic literature review into ethical issues specifically affecting educational psychologists is sparse. The special edition of Educational and Child Psychology Ethics in Practice (2002) contains the most recent collection of papers relevant to this enquiry but is now approaching ten years old and was published ahead of a series of legislative changes. The majority of the literature and discussion of ethics tends to concentrate on theories of ethics, ethical codes and principles. The vast body of research studies comes from the United States into the ethical practice of psychologists generally. It was considered timely to investigate ethical issues currently facing educational psychologists in the UK.

This study aimed to better understand the ethical issues facing educational psychologists at a time of huge change. It was begun ahead of the formation of the DECP working party into ethical trading and as such it is anticipated that additional studies into ethical practices will follow.

### **Difficulties and Limitations of the study**

As with most research, this study has a number of difficulties and limitations. A study of the perceptions of frontline educational psychologists is complex. Given the variation between individuals in their interpretation of language and its emotional impact upon them, it is probable that the educational psychologists in this study had different interpretations and understanding of the terms and concepts related to ethics. For example, one educational psychologist's understanding of the meaning of 'ethics' or 'values' may be different from another's. This has implications for ensuring that the methodology, design, data analysis validity and reliability of the study are as

meticulous as possible. Consequently the following difficulties and limitations of this research study are brought to the attention of the reader.

The purposive sample of twelve educational psychologists is small. However, this number represented the whole 'case' to be studied as discussed in Chapter Three. This study might act as a basis for further, larger scale studies in order to understand the perceptions of a wider group or body of educational psychologists.

The participants in this study were colleagues working in the same local authority and this posed a more specific challenge due to the depth or length of existing and previous professional relationships. Such relationships and knowledge may have affected the content of the interviewees' responses and how they communicated throughout the interviews. There are many factors which may bias the interviewee; including a wish to agree, surprise or influence the researcher. The interviewees may have been disposed to give more open and frank accounts of their experiences because of their past relationships with me and because a number of colleagues had encouraged this research study. Nonetheless it is important for researchers to maximise the validity of research. The use of the Interview Schedule (Appendix K) went some way towards increasing the trustworthiness of the research interviews.

Issues such as validity and reliability are often associated with quantitative studies whilst qualitative research is concerned with trustworthiness. In qualitative research an additional range of criteria is suggested with published guidelines by a number of researchers (Barker et al, 2002; Elliott et al, 1999, Popay et al, 1998).

Trustworthiness and validity in qualitative research is approached through

considering aspects of the data such as its depth, richness, scope, participants and the objectivity of the researcher (Cohen et al, 2000). Issues related to trustworthiness have already been addressed in Chapter 3. Attempts were taken to maximise the trustworthiness of the data and to minimise invalidity due to the demand effects described. However it is not possible to claim total validity in this study.

The data collection method used was interviewing which has potential for particular problems relating to interpretative and evaluative validity and therefore with theoretical validity. The reliability of data in qualitative research is the extent to which the recorded data matches what actually happens in the natural research setting. Methods of selecting and recording are possible sources of bias as a consequence of the researcher's needs or expectations. In this study interviews were tape-recorded with the informed consent of interviewees as outlined in Chapter Three. Given the sensitivity of the context much consideration was given to transcribing the data and to anonymity. Certain phrases or words were therefore removed from the transcripts with the inevitable loss of some information.

Certain criteria are applicable to both quantitative and qualitative research. These include reference to the relationship between the study and the relevant literature, clarity of research questions, methodological appropriateness, informed consent, ethical approval, specification of methods, clarity of writing and contribution to knowledge. Additionally there are guidelines specific to qualitative research and include: owning one's own perspective, situating the sample, grounding in examples,

providing credible checks, coherence, accomplishing general versus specific research tasks and resonating with readers (Baker et al, 2002; Elliot et al, 1999).

The present study strived to apply these guidelines whilst being consistent with the underlying principles of AI to encourage reflexivity throughout the research process as well as when writing up this study. In Chapter One I presented my personal and professional background to the research. The origins and significance of the study were explained and the research setting was described in detail. The methodological orientation of the research and the study's theoretical significance were described to allow replication. In keeping with a qualitative and specifically inductive approach, comprehensive illustrative quotations, 'the data', have been presented to illustrate identified themes. To increase trustworthiness member checking was adopted as an important quality criterion in the study by interviewees checking their transcripts. The data have been presented and discussed through visual thematic maps; following Elliot et al (1995) and Popay (1998) this contributes to the internal coherence and narrative of the data. A summary of the data analysis was provided in an appreciative model that highlights the importance of the final themes contributing to the desirable organisational arrangements and professional support perceived as necessary for the management of ethical issues. Finally, it is proposed that the findings should not be generalised but may serve as a basis for future researchers to investigate the challenges to professionalism and the support necessary in the changing professional landscape.

## Future Research

As indicated above, this chapter now turns to consider some interesting and relevant areas for future research arising from this study. The findings from this research suggest that there is a need to understand better the processes and support arrangements for educational psychologists managing ethical issues in a changing professional landscape. In particular, there is a need to research the connection between conducive workplace environments and professional identity. There is also a need for organisations to research how best to provide its employees with leadership and vision in turbulent times. Research into organisation cultures and ethical awareness is limited. The challenge of this would be worthwhile for professional educational psychology and related disciplines.

The importance of personal qualities in support was identified in the present study. A recurrent theme was a desire for an increase in both formal and informal support, particularly different forms of supervision. It is hoped that this study has provided inroads which will enable other researchers to follow to investigate these questions pertinent to the current time. More specifically, given the changing employment landscape for professional educational psychology, future research into ethical issues arising from fully traded, semi-traded and independent models of service delivery will be imperative.

## Personal and Professional Reflections

The final section of this chapter puts forward my personal and professional reflections on the research process.

Reflexive accounts are considered 'an interesting addition' (Oliver, 2004) and allow the researcher the opportunity to reflect upon their own personal and subjective perspective. This account aims to provide the reader with an understanding of the influences upon which my perspective is based, the stimuli for the selection of the area to be researched, the interaction with the interviewees and to contemplate both the effect on me personally and my learning as a consequence of the study. It will include key readings and speakers I have found helpful, the influence of colleagues and my career.

In Chapter One, Introduction, I explained that my interest in ethical issues has arisen through my experiences of case work and systemic work and an increasing sense of unease about the independence of my decision making. This sense has become heightened as a result of a range of contextual factors including national budget cuts and throughout the reorganisation of the local authority where I work. It has arisen from concerns about the future of the professional of educational psychology.

I enrolled on the doctorate in educational psychology at Cardiff University whilst working full time as a generic educational psychologist which allowed me the opportunity to research ethics and practice further. This allowed me to combine my wish to undertake further intellectual study and to prepare for my future professional role in a changing landscape alongside educational psychologist colleagues within

my own work place The views of educational psychologists within the organisation have had no arena in my career as far as I or my colleagues are aware and this research began to offer a stage for their views.

My reading of the special edition of Child and Educational psychology (2002) edited by Webster Lloyd-Bennett into Ethics in Practice acted as a springboard which led me to the work of Lindsay and Colley (1995) and Lindsay (2008) and on to ethical theory. I attended a number of talks and a course 'The Naked Coach' run by the BPS Coaching Division in November 2011 led by Julie Allan and Richard Kwiatkowski. Of particular importance and help to me as a novice qualitative researcher was the work of Willig (2001). Of the copious literature available on how to write a dissertation I found the most straightforward and comprehensive book to be that of Oliver (2004).

### **Interaction with interviewees**

From the outset I have been fortunate to have the support and encouragement of my colleagues as research participants. They were positive in volunteering as participants to discuss their perceptions of ethical issues and as a means of providing a useful feedback for use in practice. My impression was that the interviews had provided a much welcomed outlet for anxieties and fears for themselves professionally and importantly for the futures of the children, young people and families the educational psychologists served. Although facing considerable uncertainty about their job security they showed a commitment to the research as a professional development activity. The twelve educational psychologists interviewed had a range of experiences, some more established in the



role than others. Some of the interviewees have since left the organisation. The leadership team of the educational psychology service at the time of the inquiry has undergone major changes with the PEP, DPEP and a number of SEPs no longer in posts. The present management team are supportive and interested in this study.

I was concerned throughout that the data provided by the educational psychologists should remain untraceable and that the professional 'stories' or experiences were conveyed in a positive light, staying true to the chosen methodology. This was difficult at times given the highly sensitive context and strength of feeling evoked by past and current events. As mentioned the explicit approach of Appreciative Inquiry emphasised at the beginning of each interview was of benefit in facilitating the educational psychologists to describe 'the best of what is'.

### **Personal effects of the research and learning from the research**

The study has had a significant effect on me personally. What has emerged is the critical importance of the proximity and availability of colleagues to both the emotional and professional well-being of educational psychologists in the workplace. In particular, the personal qualities or 'virtues'; trust, compassion and empathy have been highlighted. The findings of this study underlined the shared importance of these qualities amongst educational psychologists and for me personally in reducing the sense of loneliness which can be present in educational psychology professional practice.

The study has also revealed the wish for effective leadership and vision amongst educational psychologists to enable them to feel connected to the larger organisation

and valued by it. The AI Model is an attempt to show how both personal qualities and organisational leadership and vision are associated.

The research process also provided the opportunity for me to explore research following a qualitative methodological approach. My undergraduate experience of psychological research in the 1980s was totally experimental with an emphasis on competence in statistics and an almost obsessive interest with analyses of variance conducted on a highly prized, huge and newly installed computer. Friday mornings continue to have an association with this activity. Indeed one of the conditions to being accepted on the course was an IQ test and an interview conducted behind a one way window, the data of which was used for 'research'. Happily the process is more explicit now. The results of such research for me had little relevance or usefulness and begged the question 'so what?' As a novice qualitative researcher I was determined to follow the procedure outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) closely and did not envisage that data collection and analysis would be so time consuming. The study has converted me to the practical application and benefits of qualitative research and confirmed that it is not the easy option.

Finally, the research process has developed my understanding of philosophical as well as psychological concepts. It has deepened my understanding of the perceptions of EPs and their motivations when faced with ethical issues. It is argued that ethics is part of an iterative process and ethical principles should be central to future models of service delivery regardless of their configuration. This appreciative inquiry has etched the views of Lindsay (2008) at the beginning of the dissertation more meaningfully into my future professional practice:

*'Psychologists have the opportunity to exercise power and influence many people's lives. This carries with it the necessity to behave ethically'. Lindsay, (2008 p.189)*

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## **Search engines**

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Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts (ASSIA)

Psych Info and Educational Research Abstracts

Information on UK DfE: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

Information on UK Government legislation: [www.opsi.gov.uk](http://www.opsi.gov.uk).

COPAC National, Academic and Specialist Library Catalogue [copac.ac.uk](http://copac.ac.uk)

British Psychological Society (BPS) [www.bps.org.uk](http://www.bps.org.uk)

Health and Care Professions Council (HPC) [www.hpc-uk.org](http://www.hpc-uk.org)

Association of Educational psychologists UK (AEP) [www.aep.org.uk](http://www.aep.org.uk)

## **Periodicals**

*British Journal of Educational psychology*

*British Psychological Society*

*Educational and Child Psychology*

*Educational psychology in Practice*

*Educational psychology Review*

*International Coaching Review*

*Journal of Business Ethics.*

*Journal of School Psychology*

*The Psychologist*

*Social Justice Research*

## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Letter for Participants

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

4.2.2011

Dear Colleague

Following my presentation at the EPS Training and Development Day in November, you will be aware that I am a post graduate student in the School of Psychology, Cardiff University. As part of the doctoral programme in professional educational psychology I am carrying out a study into front line Educational psychologists' perceptions of ethical issues. I am writing to enquire whether you would be willing to participate in this research.

The proposed title of my dissertation is: 'An Appreciative Inquiry into ethical decision making: the perceptions of frontline Educational psychologists'. I aim to investigate factors which contribute to effective ethical decision making in the Local authority which may lead to providing recommendations. My research supervisor is Dr Simon Griffey (see address below).

During the next term I hope to conduct semi structured interviews that are intended to explore the perceptions of frontline Educational psychologists. I would like to ask you to share your experiences in a semi structured interview. The data collected would be made anonymous. The interviews would take approximately 45- 60 minutes at a time and place convenient to you.

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

With best wishes

Yours sincerely,

Sarah White  
Educational psychologist  
School of Psychology  
Cardiff University  
Tower Building  
Park Place  
CARDIFF  
CF10 3 AT  
Tel 02920 875393

Dr Simon Griffey Research Director,  
Research Director D Ed Psych  
School of Psychology  
Cardiff University  
Tower Building  
Park Place  
CARDIFF  
CF10 3 AT  
Tel 02920 875393

The Ethics Committee  
Cardiff University  
Tower Building  
Park Place  
CARDIFF  
CF10 3 AT  
Tel 02920 875393

## Appendix B: Consent Form

School of Psychology, Cardiff University

### Consent Form - Confidential data

I understand that my participation in this project will involve taking part in a semi structured interview with Sarah White about my perceptions of ethical issues as a frontline educational psychologist. The interview will take no longer than an hour of my time

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

I understand that I am free to ask any questions at any time. I am free to withdraw or discuss my concerns with Dr Simon Griffey (Research Supervisor).

I understand that the information provided by me will be held confidentially, such that only the Experimenter can trace this information back to me individually. I understand that my data will be anonymised once it has been transcribed and that after this point no-one will be able to trace my information back to me. The recorded interview will be retained for up to one week when it will be deleted. I understand that I can ask for the information I provide to be deleted at any time up until the data has been anonymised and I can have access to the information up until the data has been anonymised.

I also understand that at the end of the study I will be provided with additional information and feedback about the purpose of the study.

I, \_\_\_\_\_(NAME) consent to participate in the study conducted by Sarah White, School of Psychology, Cardiff University with the supervision of Dr Simon Griffey.

Signed:

Date:

Sarah White  
Educational psychologist  
School of Psychology  
Cardiff University  
Tower Building  
Park Place  
CARDIFF  
CF10 3 AT  
Tel 02920 875393

Dr Simon Griffey Research Director,  
Research Director D Ed Psych  
School of Psychology  
Cardiff University  
Tower Building  
Park Place  
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Cardiff University  
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CF10 3 AT  
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## Appendix C: Gatekeeper Letter



8.3.11

Dear [REDACTED]

As you know I am a post graduate student on the Doctorate Programme in Educational psychology in the School of Psychology, Cardiff University. As part of my doctorate I would like to carry out a study of the perceptions of frontline educational psychologist colleagues into ethical issues. I am writing to request your permission for me to interview educational psychologist colleagues as part of this research.

The title of my study is 'An appreciative inquiry into the perceptions of frontline educational psychologists into ethical issues'. I will be supervised by Dr Simon Griffey, Research Director. I would be very happy to come and discuss my research proposal in more detail if wished.

I would like to interview colleagues following an Appreciative Inquiry format. I was grateful for the opportunity to introduce my proposed study at the Training and Development Day in November. I believe this approach would be most appropriate in the current climate of uncertainty and change as it focuses on positive aspects of practice and would allow colleagues the time and opportunity to reflect. The interview would take no longer than an hour and would take place at a time and place convenient to the educational psychologists involved. I will provide each psychologist with a letter explaining my research study and a consent form.

Please let me know if you require further information.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely,

Sarah White  
Educational psychologist  
School of Psychology  
Cardiff University  
Tower Building  
Park Place  
CARDIFF  
CF10 3 AT  
Tel 02920 875393

Dr Simon Griffey Research Director,  
Research Director D Ed Psych  
School of Psychology  
Cardiff University  
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The Ethics Committee  
Cardiff University  
Tower Building  
Park Place  
CARDIFF CF10 3 AT

## Appendix D: Debriefing Sheet.

### **AN APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY: THE PERCEPTIONS OF FRONTLINE EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGISTS INTO ETHICAL ISSUES.**

Thank you for giving up your time to be interviewed by me about ethical issues relating to frontline practice.

One of the main aims of this study was to illuminate perceptions of ethical issues amongst frontline educational psychologists working in one Local authority. Additionally it is hoped that recommendations may be offered to facilitate improved support in the management of ethical issues within the Local authority.

A key reason for studying perceptions of ethical decision making is that frontline educational psychologists face serious issues when working with children, families and schools: issues and decisions which have to be resolved in a manner conducive to the welfare of children. This is within a social and professional context which, owing to recent legislation, places a greater emphasis on professional from health education and social care working together which may have implications for traditional decision making.

The methodology used was appreciative inquiry (AI). This approach was selected for a number of reasons including:

- a) Its stance which recognises and dignifies the individual's perceptions.
- b) Its positive orientation acknowledges the sensitivity of practitioners working in an organisation facing rapid change.
- c) AI promotes reflection on past and present practitioner achievements which affirms the professional validity of interviewees.

Your contribution to this study is therefore very valuable and very much appreciated. If you wish to comment or expand further on the topics we discussed I would be happy to receive your views.

A collection of articles can be found in Webster, A. and Lloyd Bennett, P. (eds). (2002) Ethics in Practice Educational and Child Psychology, 19 (1) if you would like to follow up on this topic in terms of your continuing professional development.

If, for whatever reason, you later decide that you no longer want your responses to be part of this study, then please contact Sarah White (see details below) within one week of the interview to have your data removed from the study and destroyed. Please be assured that your interview transcript will remain anonymous.

Thank you again for participating and helping with this study.

If you would like more information, or have any further questions about any aspect of this study, then please feel free to contact **Dr. Simon Griffey (address below)**

Sarah White  
Educational psychologist  
School of Psychology  
Cardiff University  
Tower Building  
Park Place  
CARDIFF  
CF10 3 AT  
Tel 02920 875393

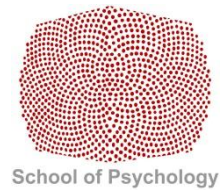
Dr Simon Griffey Research Director,  
Research Director D Ed Psych  
School of Psychology  
Cardiff University  
Tower Building  
Park Place  
CARDIFF  
CF10 3 AT  
Tel 02920 875393

The Ethics Committee  
Cardiff University  
Tower Building  
Park Place  
CARDIFF  
CF10 3 AT  
Tel 02920 875393

## Appendix E: Ethical Approval





### SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY, CARDIFF UNIVERSITY ETHICS PROFORMA



Form version 1.2


#### Guidelines for completing this form

- 1) You should save this document with the following type of Filename: **SAPXXX\_Title.xls** where **SAPXXX** refers to the 1st Researcher's university username and **Title** refers to the project title.
- 2) All sections marked YELLOW should be completed.
- 3) Click on the blue and white question mark symbol for more info on an adjacent section 
- 4) All supporting attachments should be either Word or PDF format. Please combine multiple documents of the same format into one. 
- 5) When completed, this document and any supporting material should be emailed to **psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk** by the **permanent member of staff** associated with the project.

#### Project Type


- Select one option:
- Staff Project
  - Postgraduate Project
  - Undergraduate Project

#### Submission Type

- Select if submission is for:
- Standard 
  - Level 2 Practical
  - Generic

**NB. Undergraduate projects MUST be Standard Submission Type**

If project comes under supervisor's generic approval, please provide the EC reference number

Submission date

20	▼	Jan	▼	2011	▼
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Title of Project

An appreciative inquiry into ethical decision making: the perceptions of frontline Educational psychologists

Applicant's Email Address

WhiteSE3@cardiff.ac.uk



Name of researcher(s) (Please list all researchers on separate line with the applicant first)

Status (e.g. staff, student, external RA)

1	Sarah White	student
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		



Name of supervisor (for student research)

Dr Simon Griffey

Name of permanent member of staff associated with the project

Dr Simon Griffey



NOT

	YES	NO	APPLICABLE
1 I will describe the main experimental procedures to participants in advance, so that they are informed about what to expect.	<input checked="" type="radio"/> YES	<input type="radio"/> NO	<input type="radio"/> N/A
2 I will tell participants that their participation is voluntary and that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason.	<input checked="" type="radio"/> YES	<input type="radio"/> NO	<input type="radio"/> N/A
3 I will obtain written consent for participation (this includes consent to be observed in observational studies).	<input checked="" type="radio"/> YES	<input type="radio"/> NO	<input type="radio"/> N/A
	<input checked="" type="radio"/> YES	<input type="radio"/> NO	<input type="radio"/> N/A
	<input type="radio"/> YES	<input type="radio"/> NO	<input checked="" type="radio"/> N/A





- 4 The data are to be stored anonymously (i.e. the identity of the person IS NOT linked directly or indirectly with their data).
- 5 I will debrief participants at the end of their participation (i.e. give them a brief explanation of the study and an explicit opportunity to comment and ask questions).
- 6 With questionnaires, I will give participants the option of omitting questions they do not want to answer.



Note: If you have ticked **No** to any of Q1-6 please give an explanation as to why in separate word document and submit with this form.

NOT

- |   | YES   | NO                        | APPLICABLE                          |                           |
|---|---|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 7 | The research is observational without consent and/or involves any covert recording. | <input type="radio"/> YES | <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO | <input type="radio"/> N/A |
| 8 | The research involves deliberately misleading participants.                         | <input type="radio"/> YES | <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO | <input type="radio"/> N/A |



9 Do participants fall into any of the following special groups? If they do, please refer to BPS guidelines, and tick box B below.  
**Note that you may also need to obtain satisfactory Criminal Records Bureau clearance (or equivalent for overseas students).**



**I will be recruiting:**

- |   |   |                                      |                                     |                           |
|---|---|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| a | People on premises other than Cardiff University? (if yes, please include letter asking permission to recruit from relevant authority). | <input checked="" type="radio"/> YES | <input type="radio"/> NO            | <input type="radio"/> N/A |
| b | Children (under 18 years of age).   | <input type="radio"/> YES            | <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO | <input type="radio"/> N/A |
| c | People with learning or communication difficulties.   | <input type="radio"/> YES            | <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO | <input type="radio"/> N/A |
| d | Patients (NHS ethical approval will be required).   | <input type="radio"/> YES            | <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO | <input type="radio"/> N/A |
| e | People in custody.  | <input type="radio"/> YES            | <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO | <input type="radio"/> N/A |
| f | People engaged in illegal activities, for example drug taking.  | <input type="radio"/> YES            | <input checked="" type="radio"/> NO | <input type="radio"/> N/A |

**Note: If you have ticked Yes to 7, 8 or 9(a-f) you should normally tick box B overleaf; if not, please give a full explanation on a separate sheet.**

**There is an obligation on the lead researcher to bring to the attention of the School Research Ethics Committee any issues with ethical implications not clearly covered by the above checklist.**

PLEASE SELECT **EITHER BOX A OR BOX B** BELOW AND PROVIDE THE DETAILS REQUIRED IN SUPPORT OF YOUR APPLICATION THEN SIGN THE FORM.

A. I consider that this project has no significant ethical implications to be brought before the School Research Ethics Committee.	<input type="checkbox"/> Check to confirm
<b>Give a brief description of the experiment (approximately 200 words). Include study rationale and theoretical constructs as well as brief information about: participants (e.g. number, age, sex, recruitment method, group assignment), apparatus and materials (e.g., stimuli, names of questionnaire) and procedure (e.g., what will happen to participants). Any exclusions must be scientifically justified.</b> <i>Tip: To insert line breaks within a cell use Alt+Enter on a PC and Cmd+Option+Return on a Mac.</i>	
See Thesis Proposal (attached)	

***If any of the above information is missing, your application will be returned to you.***

B I consider that this project may have ethical implications that should be brought before the School Research Ethics Committee, and/or it will be carried out with children or other vulnerable populations.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Check to confirm
<b>If you have checked BOX B, please provide all the further information listed below in a separate attachment. Please number the pages.</b>	

- i Title of project
  - ii Purpose of project and its academic rationale.
  - iii Brief description of methods and measurements.
  - iv Participants: recruitment methods, number, age, gender, exclusion/inclusion criteria.
  - v Consent and participant information arrangements, debriefing.
  - vi A clear but concise statement of the ethical considerations raised by the project and how you intend to deal with them.
  - vii Estimated start date and duration of project.
- This form should be submitted to the School Research Ethics Committee for consideration.

***If any of the above information is missing, your application will be returned to you.***

10	<u>I confirm that the relevant health and safety measures, in accordance with University policy and School requirements, have been taken into account for the proposed research.</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Check to confirm	?
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11	<u>I confirm that the relevant equality and diversity considerations, in accordance with University policy and School requirements, have been taken into account for the proposed research.</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Check to confirm	?
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12	<u>I confirm that the relevant Human Tissue Act considerations, in accordance with University policy and School requirements, have been taken into account for the proposed research.</u> <u>I confirm that, where appropriate, the University's Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy 2010 has been read and understood.</u> <u>I confirm that, where appropriate, the University's Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy 2010 has been read and understood.</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Check to confirm	?
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13	<u>I confirm that, where appropriate, the University's Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy 2010 has been read and understood.</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Check to confirm	?
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14	<u>I am familiar with the BPS Guidelines for ethical practices in psychological research (and have discussed them with the other researchers involved in the project).</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Check to confirm	?
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### INFORMATION FOR PERMANENT MEMBER OF STAFF ONLY

**I confirm as the permanent member of staff, by forwarding this documentation to the Ethics Committee, I have read this application and consider it suitable for ethical review.**

**Code Development RQ1**

**Research Question1: What do frontline Educational psychologists perceive as ethical issues in their practice?**

**Phase 1: Initial thoughts from reading and familiarisation with data set**

1. Issues in case work with CYPF
2. Issues with colleagues/LA
3. Issues in schools
4. Reconciling conflicting views.
5. Issues as a result of reorganisation and new ways of working.
6. Trading.
7. Fairness.
8. Frequent issues from mild unease to great distress.
9. Most common not the most problematic.
10. Safeguarding clearer cut.

**Phase 2: List of Codes**

1. Every conversation, contact and report has potential for an ethical issue
2. EPs handle dilemmas well most of time
3. Vary in degree of dilemma
4. Report writing
5. Reporting information in meetings
6. Reporting information if not in child's interests
7. Reporting not always in child's interests
8. Reporting findings can give negative picture of child's abilities
9. Reporting writing can affect the way child is seen by parents and teachers
10. How results are or could be interpreted
11. Reporting potentially upsetting information
12. What is contained in report writing
13. What is kept in files
14. Reporting not always in child's interests
15. Vary in degree of dilemma
16. Sharing information.
17. Treatment of parents around consultation.
18. Consultations without parents
19. Sharing information without explicit parental consent
20. Involvement of EP for CAMHS referral
21. Maintaining confidentiality
22. Getting informed consent
23. Actions of school staff.

24. Use of language by teachers
25. Parents and schools wanting EP to diagnose dyslexia
26. Teachers' emotive language about pupils
27. Casework where primary need is BESD
28. Schools photocopying EP signature
29. Schools not acting on EP advice
30. Finding a quiet place in schools
31. Direct work with CYPF
32. Being kept waiting
33. Use of EP time
34. Therapeutic interventions not done by qualified staff
35. Working with Social Care
36. Working with other agencies
37. Dealing with conflicts
38. Piggy in middle 'being drawn in'
39. Actions of parents.
40. Parents behaviour not helping child.
41. Smacking
42. Name calling.
43. Parents' choice of words.
44. Behaviour of other EPs
45. Terms and conditions
46. Traded working to ensure jobs
47. Equality of access for all CYPF with SEN
48. Schools photocopying EP signature.
49. Report writing
50. Reporting information in meetings
51. Reporting information if not in child's interests
52. Reporting findings can give negative picture of child's abilities
53. Reporting writing can affect the way child is seen by parents and teachers
54. How results are or could be interpreted
55. Parenting style.
56. Making judgements about parenting
57. Reporting child's views
58. Maintaining relationship with child.
59. Respecting confidentiality of child.
60. Who is the client?
61. Reluctance for tests
62. Parents and schools wanting diagnosis
63. Providing IQ scores for Health provision.
64. Use of assessment results.
65. Reporting of assessment results.
66. Conducting assessments at request of SEN officer
67. Use of IQ scores for funding and placement decisions.
68. Fully informed consent. Getting signed agreement from both parents.
69. Sharing information.
70. Use of terminology MLD Moderate and Mild
71. Lack of EP role clarity
72. Conflicting views of school and parents
73. Conflict between child's needs and SEN Officer decision

74. Conflict between child's needs and school personnel arrangements
75. Conflicts between child's needs and parental wishes.
76. Conflicts between individual and system.
77. Gaps in special provision.
78. Acting in child's interests
79. Expressing child's wishes accurately
80. Conduct of EP colleagues
81. Report writing not in line with LA policy
82. EP signing examination concessions
83. Private EP reports
84. Individual work with CYPF
85. How far to record child's voice
86. Sharing child's views of family breakup
87. Breaking relationship with child
88. Prioritising CYPF for EP involvement
89. Parental pressure
90. Pushy parents
91. Colluding with schools for return business
92. Maintaining relationships
93. Building rapport
94. Not overpromising
95. Remaining independent/not colluding
96. Observation information
97. Fairness
98. Equal access for CYPF in non-traded schools.
99. Queue jumping.
100. Additional funding requests.
101. Equality of service for CYPF.
102. Being torn between needs of child and LA.
103. Tribunals.
104. Being independent.
105. Doing procedural stuff/ rubbing stamping
106. Case work involving placement decisions.
107. Parent appeals
108. Conflicting loyalties and boundaries in role.
109. Multiple relationships.
110. Resolving personal reluctance for psychometric tests
111. Conflict between parental wishes, schools' wishes and pupil needs.
112. Issues being 'glossed over' by managers.

## **Code Development RQ2**

### **Research Question Two: How do frontline EPs manage perceived ethical issues?**

#### **Phase One: Initial Thoughts and Familiarisation with Data**

1. By talking to a range of people.
2. On their own.
3. Personal values, principles and boundaries
4. Manage ethical issues with experience
5. By developing good relationships
6. Showing empathy to parents
7. Being organised
8. Using criteria, handbooks, SEN guidance.

#### **Phase Two: Initial Codes**

1. Core principles and boundaries over which you never step
2. My own ethical principles
3. Having justification for what I do
4. Support from myself.
5. Talking to teachers.
6. Talking to EP colleagues.
7. Talking to SEN Officers.
8. Talking to other professionals.
9. Support from family.
10. Using experience.
11. Using training.
12. Own values.
13. Own beliefs.
14. Knowledge of SEN code of practice.
15. In quiet office.
16. Thinking time.
17. 'Brushing away', sticking to principles of consultation.
18. Being clear about consultations.
19. Thinking about how I greet and consult with people.
20. Experience of being in a similar situation.
21. Not colluding with parents or others.
22. Providing another explanation – reframing.
23. Checking all perspectives out with parent, school.
24. Being well organised.
25. Being well planned.
26. Prioritising involvement.
27. Using personal judgement.
28. Taking pragmatic view.
29. My own sense of right and wrong.
30. Following my thoughts.

31. Putting child's needs first.
32. Researching child's needs.
33. Evidence base for decision.
34. Not colluding.
35. Knowledge of LA criteria.
36. Procedures of LA.
37. Communication skills.
38. Reporting skills.
39. Relationships with SEN officers,
40. Relationships schools
41. Relationships parents.
42. Relationships with colleagues.
43. Ability to get on with CYPF
44. Empathising with parents.
45. Putting myself in their shoes.
46. Learning from skilled colleagues in BSS.
47. Using my personality.
48. Using scripts.
49. Timing and humour.
50. Taking an active role.
51. Raising profile of pupil.
52. Having frequent meetings.
53. Working with other agencies.
54. Knowing my limitations.
55. Having the agreement of colleagues that you are doing the right thing.
56. Sharing decisions.
57. Getting back up.
58. Discussing alternative solutions.
59. Putting together a coherent case for pupil.
60. Not over promising.



### **Code Development RQ3**

**RQ3: What support do frontline EPs perceive as desirable when managing ethical issues?**

#### **Phase One: Initial Thoughts and Familiarisation with Data**

1. Supervision from a variety of sources
2. Peer supervision
3. Personal characteristics of supervisor important
4. Experience adds credibility
5. Policies and Procedures desired.
6. EPS statements and communications wished for.
7. More access to support from colleagues
8. Improved offices

#### **Phase Two Initial Codes**

1. Supervision from person of choice
2. Someone I admire and respect
3. Supervision from a competent EP
4. Supervision from someone who knows job
5. Someone with chalk face experience
6. Someone in tune with ethical principles
7. Someone who thinks, is enabling and exploratory
8. Supervision with someone you trust and feel safe with
9. Someone experienced and trustworthy
10. Supervision from someone who is a good listener and counsellor
11. Supervision from someone with authority and backing.
12. Supervision does not need to be frequent, but must be regular.
13. Person supervising is important
14. Informal supervision from colleagues in team
15. When supervision is from a colleague it is not less valuable.
16. Supervision from someone separated from management role.
17. More supervision needed
18. Supervision needed through transition
19. Supervision with proper record
20. Supervision from someone who knows frameworks of BPS, AEP.
21. Robust, good quality supervision and practical advice
22. Supervision which is about finding solutions
23. Supervision from colleagues in office at same time
24. Supervision from colleagues who value it.
25. Supervision is central.
26. Group supervision is effective
27. Sharing responsibility with line manager
28. Checking decisions with superior
29. Good supervision is not about telling someone what to do.
30. Supervisor is someone who asks questions

31. Supervisor not judgemental
32. Supervisor does not tell you what they would have done.
33. Enquiring and supportive
34. Help to see all perspectives
35. Colleagues are empathetic and good at their jobs.
36. Being competent at job.
37. No 'one man up ship'
38. No pulling rank
39. Neutrality
40. Most supervision is about ethical conflict.
41. Protected supervision
42. Regular supervision
43. Clear line management during reorganisation
44. Confidence that EPS is well represented and led
45. To be informed about reorganisation.
46. More CPD which has been absent
47. External training
48. CPD to increase knowledge base
49. CPD to increase trading opportunities.
50. Commitment to more active paired work.
51. Wish to do more team work
52. Team work is effective.
53. Help to understand ethical position of other professionals.
54. A mechanism for monitoring CPD and supervision.
55. County council codes of conduct regularly updated.
56. Workplace that provides greater sense of belonging to profession.
57. Feeling safe in the office.
58. Feeling rested and energised for work
59. Workplace where resources at hand.
60. Workplace enables sharing of knowledge and resources.
61. Availability of colleagues for talking at workplace
62. More informal peer supervision
63. More professional cohesion
64. United professional front.
65. LA takes action and does something about failing schools.
66. Time to reflect
67. Time to think and formulate ideas
68. Good people management through change.
69. LA that treats people as human beings.
70. An office for professional support and discussions.

### **Code Development RQ4**

**RQ4: What organisational arrangements would EPs wish to see implemented to support the management of ethical issues?**

#### **Phase One: Initial Thoughts and Familiarisation with Data**

1. Supervision is very important
2. Training for managers
3. Vision from LA leaders
4. Commitment to CPD needed from LA
5. CPD which enhances trading possibilities from EPS.
6. Clear policies, procedures from LA
7. Service level agreement from EPS
8. Need for discussion about ethics.
9. Greater involvement of parents in managing ethical issues.
10. Greater transparency about the way organisation is run.
11. More time to reflect

#### **Phase Two: Initial Codes**

1. Supervision is valued
2. Supervision is central.
3. Protected supervision by EPS
4. Supervision is not interrupted.
5. Good quality supervision through transition
6. Offices for privacy in supervision
7. Supervision from the EPS
8. Timetabled supervision
9. Timetabled protected supervision that was never lost.
10. Choice of supervisor
11. Supervision from someone who knows frameworks of organisation
12. Regular supervision happens
13. Supervision is not an 'add on'
14. External training
15. CPD to increase knowledge base
16. CPD to be able to respond to requests
17. CPD to increase range of trading
18. Time to reflect on ethical practice
19. Commitment to active paired working
20. Team work is effective
21. Talking about ethical issues
22. Understanding of ethical position of other professionals
23. Maintenance of professional identity
24. Clear professional identity in LA
25. Systems for monitoring and checking CPD
26. Clear county council codes of conduct
27. Updating on LA policies
28. Clarity on ethical principles of Inclusion teams

29. Clarity on LA principles of ethics
30. Policies on information sharing
31. Readiness and availability of policies to help decision making
32. Workplace offices for professional support
33. Clear line management through change
34. Information through reorganisation
35. Support through reorganisation
36. CPD, training and supervision kept as priority through reorganisation
37. Good knowledge base in the LA
38. Someone to intervene in ethical decision making
39. Some guidance and support
40. Written and personal support from LA
41. Consistency
42. Not playing one off against another
43. An expert model of decision making
44. Security in employment
45. Good decision making modelled from the top down of LA
46. People higher up the organisation have a professional duty to spend time as a practitioner
47. An organisation that thinks about human beings during reorganisation
48. Good people management
49. Good people management and ethical practice tied together.
50. Management in a good way through the consultation period.
51. Recognition from the LA about the work I do.
52. Parents more central to EP practice
53. Automatic meeting with parents and carers
54. Service level statement to support me in ensuring access
55. Great clarity and transparency on SEN expenditure in LA
56. LA more transparent in its allocation of resources
57. Resources mapped to need not parental pressure and schools.
58. Fair distribution
59. Fairness so no disadvantage
60. More specialist provision
61. Leadership through change
62. Vision of senior managers
63. A forum for ethical discussions
64. An ethical case conference
65. General discussions to share the ethical issues separate from supervision
66. Possibility of ethical issues recur at a particular time
67. Organisation structures to encourage team work
68. Greater accountability of schools to LA
69. Recognition of work done for LA
70. Meeting as a whole directorate
71. Meeting as LA
72. More transparency and vision in LA
73. Personal development work
74. Time to improve self-knowledge
75. More training for managers in good practice.
76. Workplace facilities that work

## **Appendix J**

### **Example of Coded Transcript**

Interviewee 5

S Thank you for taking part in this study. To start off please could you describe some of your experiences and perceptions of the ethical issues you face in your work at an EP?

EP5 Well everything we do has an implication of one kind or another. ...I find cases around placement in special provision can be difficult. Especially when the parents of a child with a disability have named a special school and are appealing against a LA decision. I feel a lot of angst because I want to maintain the relationship with parents and can often see their point of view.

S So is the issue around a conflict of who to support?

EP5 Yes, conflicting loyalties and boundaries in my role...and the need to be equitable in the use of LA resources.

S Can you tell me a bit more about the case and how you managed it?

EP5 It concerned a girl with a severe disability. She met all the criteria for the special provision but there were more pupils than places. I researched information about the disability to inform me better. I did not want to collude with the LA about resourcing and tried to focus on the child's needs. I also

used the Code of Practice. The case went to a moderation panel and then to appeal. So there was follow through or back up.

S What were the best ways in which you dealt with this case?

EP5 I am not sure I resolved it very well – procedures kicked in. But I guess I used my own sense of enquiry to find out more about the disability, literature research skills and my experience and training and knowledge of the Code of Practice, LA procedures and so on. I tried to distil the procedure for the parents. I manage things by talking to people mainly, other educational psychologists, staff in schools, by getting things clear with parents, other professionals...you name them...if I think it will help, I talk to them. It makes things clearer. Mainly I relied on my communication skills, relationships with the SEN officer and schools. Also I think I was able to empathise as a parent and the parents knew I was genuinely putting their child first.

S Have you had any recent experiences ethical issues?

EP5 How do we ensure that the most vulnerable children in schools that are not buying in EP involvement are being identified and accessing support?

S So is this a new concern?

EP5 Yes, the whole new world of trading our services is opening up lots of questions. It is a completely different way of working and I am not sure how it will go.

S What do you consider to be the most problematic type of ethical dilemma?

EP5 No, probably the most tricky was a dilemma involving a colleague. It was about report writing not in line with the LA. It caused me a lot more worry and I lost sleep over it.

S Can you explain a bit more about how you managed this?

EP5 I discussed the report and the issues it raised during supervision. Although it helped that she felt concerned in the same way I felt more angst because she xxxxxxxx of our discussion presumably because she felt she couldn't take it further. This added to my angst because I did not feel I had backup. It made me question the practice of the EPS because it is too woolly. We are not clear what is appropriate to write in reports, notes and files. Some pupil files do not give a full picture of the SEN of a pupil and important things are glossed over and not tackled.

S Why is that do you think?

EP5 It probably comes from top down so to speak and not putting your head above the parapet and not being noticed in the current climate. Everyone is worried about their jobs and so practice is slipping.

S So in this case you did not feel things were avoided and not necessarily sorted out in the best way?

EP5 No, it was brushed under the carpet as too sensitive and maybe not worth the hassle.

S Are there any other ethical issues you would like to share?

EP5 I am concerned about some interventions delivered by xxxxx who offer 'therapy'. Schools seem very impressed by this. We all had a day's introductory training from APT and I have some resources I use... but I would not call myself qualified in CBT.

S Turning to think about the educational psychology service and the local authority as a whole, what would you identify as desirable support for the management of ethical issues in your practice - if you had 3 wishes for the EPS or the LA to facilitate you, what would they be?

EP5 The first would be much more supervision with a proper record with follow up of actions. We get a lot of informal supervision from colleagues in our team, if they happen to be in the office at the same time, but it is not regular. Where



would we go for a start? It is hard to book a room unless you plan it well in advance. Informal conversations and support are hit and miss. We need supervision from colleagues who really value supervision and who are not there to have a really good moan. We've tried group supervision and this is effective because it is non-directive, is genuinely enquiring and supportive. It helps you see all perspectives on a case and helps you see your way through. I believe supervision is most effective because colleagues are empathetic and good at their jobs. Being competent is important for me because I feel confident in taking on board suggestions. The most effective supervision for me is where there is no 'one up man ship', no pulling rank and it feels neutral. For me most supervision is about ethical conflicts.

S Are there any arrangements the organisation could implement to support you further?

EP5 I suppose it would be about management and maintaining a clear line management during this reorganisation – feeling confident that our service was well represented and led. I don't feel informed about what is going on. This has an impact on our ability to make decisions in schools. I am always saying 'well, I'm not sure' and so on. I feel I am taking on decisions on an 'ad hoc' basis to cover up for the leadership of the service.

S So this wish is for clear organisational leadership and communication at times of change?

EP5 Yes, and continued CPD which has been absent from the LA and we have followed our own interests.

S So to sum up, just reiterate if you could, the support that would facilitate you in approaching and managing ethical issues ?

EP5 From the EPS the first is protected supervision by an EP who knows the frameworks of the BPS, AEP. Supervision should not be an 'add on' and could be group supervision. It is more important throughout organisational restructure. The second would be external training; CPD to increase our knowledge base to respond to requests, possibly and increase trading possibilities. I think there are other agencies out there who offer CBT for example but who have less knowledge, training than we do. I would not call myself a CBT therapist but others do. So there is another ethical issue of interventions being delivered by untrained or qualified people in the LA. A third area of support I would like to see is a commitment to more active paired working with a colleague e.g. delivering TA training. Not just shadowing a colleague. I think team work is very effective and it is helpful to talk about ethical issues as part of that.

And from the LA. It would help to understand the ethical position of other professionals working in the partnership and localities and whether we overlap. It's important to keep our professional identity and to be clear about that. Also a mechanism, body or system for monitoring and checking that we receive proper CPD and supervision would ensure these things don't slip. I

would feel better supported if the LA was clear on county council codes of conduct. I am not sure there is one. All this could be part of induction but we all need to be updated, perhaps like the safeguarding training.

S Yes...um..

The best time I had working for the county council as an EP was when we worked at XXXXXX. It was an old building, not necessarily perfectly designed and quite cramped. But we had a greater sense of belonging to a profession. All our resources and 'stuff' was at hand and there was a sense of sharing ideas and knowledge. On an emotional level it felt much more supportive than the current office. I keep a lot of resources at home and tend to rely on the same things. We talked about issues much more before at XXXX, there was lots of informal peer supervision and so much more cohesive. We really presented a united professional front and there wasn't any competition between us – we all wanted to do the best we could and were prepared to take on more because the support was there.

S Are there any supportive features of your current office?

EP5 One positive thing is the good relationship we have developed with the SEN department. That is one good thing about co-location. Our EP relationships with that team are stronger and the whole statutory working framework is tighter. And the moderation panel is always there to look at the evidence – it represents 'the buck stops here'.

S That's all very interesting. Thank you for taking the time to talk to me.

EP5 Thank you. Just spending time thinking about ethical issues today and really been helpful to me and I will just take a bit more notice.

## **Appendix K** **Interview Schedule**

### Introduction

Thank you very much for taking part in this study. You may recall that at the recent Training and Development Day we discussed complex case work and some of the ethical questions it raised. This discussion was the starting point for this research.

Before we begin, I would like to explain a little bit about how I intend to conduct the interview. As you will have read in my initial letter to participants; I am going to ask you questions about times when you saw things working at their best in your practice. Often we try to ask questions about things aren't going well, the problems, so we can fix them. In this study I hope to learn more about your experiences of what is working well in your practice, when you consider it is at its best and most successful, so we can understand how we manage ethical issues most effectively.

This study is about affirming successes. The end result of the interview will help me to understand the positive forces that provide energy to the educational psychology service and to local authority as an organisation. My approach is 'Appreciative Inquiry' as outlined in my letter (Appendix A). As part of my professional doctorate I am conducting a series of interviews with all my colleagues working as frontline educational psychologists in our local authority educational psychology service about their perceptions of ethical issues. In particular my general aim is to locate, illuminate and understand the conditions that are important in supporting us in the management of ethical issues. As I have explained, I am interested in understanding more about how we best manage ethical issues. I will be asking you about your perceptions of the ethical issues you face in your day to day work as a generic

educational psychologist in this local authority and how you manage them. As I explained in my letter, a key reason for studying perceptions of ethical issues is that frontline educational psychologists face serious dilemmas when working with children, families and schools: dilemmas which have to be resolved in a manner conducive to the welfare of children. This is within a social and professional context which, owing to recent legislation, places a greater emphasis on professionals from health education and social care working together which may or may not have implications for our practice.

Thinking of your own practice as an educational psychologist I would like to ask some questions, but if other topics come to mind, please tell me about them.

Finally, if you are still happy to go ahead, are there any questions you would like to ask, clarification or information you would like in connection with study arising from my letter, or to the giving of consent, confidentiality, the anonymity of data and so on? Do you have any questions about the methodology: appreciative inquiry?

### **Questions and Topics**

Please can you describe your perceptions of some of the ethical issues you have faced as an educational psychologist?

Can you give an example?

Can you identify the best conditions or your personal strengths when facing a situation that concerns you?

What did you do to manage the situation?

What was the nature of the best support already in place to help you and how was it characterised?

What are the most problematic ethical conflicts you have faced as an educational psychologist?

What are the most frequent ethical concerns you face?

What was the most recent ethical issue you faced as an educational psychologist?

What organisational structures and support (both within the EPS and LA) would you wish to see implemented to support the management of ethical issues?

In relation to ethical issues in your practice as a generic educational psychologist, what three things would you wish for to heighten the vitality and overall health of the local authority as an organisation? Or, put another way, if you could name 3 wishes for support from the organisation to assist you in the management of ethical issues, what would they be?

Is there anything else you feel is important in the management of ethical issues in your practice?

## Conclusion

Thank you very much for taking part in this interview. I will now transcribe the interview, delete the tape recording and send you a transcript. I would be grateful if you could read it through and let me know if there is anything you would like changed or removed. I have provided a debriefing sheet and some references which you might find interesting for your own CPD (Appendix C). Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like to discuss the study further.

Many thanks for taking part.



**Appendix L**

**CD of Transcripts**