



**How can Educational Psychologists Support  
Looked After Children and Care Leavers in  
their Journey to University?**

Hannah Francis

B7065187

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Newcastle University

Doctorate in Applied Educational Psychology

School of Education, Communication and Language  
Sciences

## **Disclaimer**

The following thesis has been written for the award of Doctorate in Applied Educational Psychology. It has not been previously submitted or assessed for any other qualification. I declare the following is entirely my own work and to my knowledge I have correctly acknowledged the work of others where appropriate.

Chapter 3 has been written based on the submission criteria for the British Journal of Educational Psychology (excluding appendix content).

# Overarching Abstract

## How can Educational Psychologists Support Looked After Children and Care Leavers in their Journey to University?

Literature shows Care Experienced Individuals (CEI) experience poorer educational outcomes than their non-care experienced peers. This continues into Higher Education where CEI are amongst the lowest represented population. Educational success is considered important due to its relation to greater satisfaction in life outcomes, including job, housing and economic security along with increased levels of wellbeing and health. Educational Psychologists are professionals that work to support positive educational outcomes for children and often work with CEI.

The first part of this research systematically reviews the existing literature to explore what is beneficial for CEI throughout their education in supporting an ambition and achieving university. A Meta-Ethnographic approach was used to review five selected studies. Supportive Relationships were found to act as an overarching mechanism to five key concepts of High Expectations, Positive Self-Perceptions, Role Models, Opportunities and Practical Support. The Systematic Literature Review highlights a lack of English literature that explores CEIs' perspective on the supportive factors in their educational journey to university. It further shows a lack of representation of the Educational Psychologists' role in supporting CEI to aim for and attend university.

The Empirical project has two phases. First it aims to gather CEI' perspective on the factors that have supported university attending CEI to succeed. Semi-structured interviews with Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis were used to develop three master themes: Relational Approach, Value of Education and Sense of Safety. Secondly, an Educational Psychologist Service engaged in focus group discussions that explored the current and potential practice Educational Psychologists engage in to support positive educational outcomes for CEI. Three superordinate themes were developed through Thematic Analysis engagement with focus group transcripts. Psychology as a Specialist Knowledge, Supportive Practices and Activities Undertaken are discussed as a bottom up approach to supporting CEI.

*“You don't realise how each lesson, never mind how each year or whatever, has an impact on your whole education.”*

[Nasha.683]

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*“change the world”.*

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## List of Acronyms

**BPS** – British Psychological Society

**CASP** – Critical Appraisal Skills Programme

**CEI / CEI'**- Care Experienced Individuals / Care Experienced Individuals'



**CL** – Care Leavers

**CPP** – Corporate Parenting Professionals

**DCSF** – Department for Children, Schools and Families

**DfE** – Department for Education

**DFES** – Department for Education and Skills

**DoH** – Department of Health

**EP(s)** – Educational Psychologist(s)

**EPS** – Educational Psychology Service

**HCPC**- Health and Care Professions Council

**HE** - Higher Education

**IPA** – Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

**LA** – Local Authority

**LAC** – Looked After Children

**ME** – Meta-Ethnography

**SLR**- Systematic Literature Review

**TA** – Thematic Analysis

**TEP** – Trainee Educational Psychologist

**VS**- Virtual School



## Chapter 1: Systematic Literature Review

What Supports Care Experienced Individuals in their Journey to  
University?

## **1.1 Abstract**

Educational outcomes for Care Experienced Individuals (CEI) are poor and are amongst the lowest social group to be represented in Higher Education. This Systematic Literature Review (SLR) reviewed the existing literature to explore what supportive mechanisms are conducive to the ambition and achievement of a university place for Care Experienced Individuals. It used a Meta-Ethnographic approach, outlined by Noblit and Hare (1988).

Five studies were selected. Each study explored the participants' educational experience which resulted in some CEI achievement of university. One overarching mechanism and five key concepts of support were developed. Supportive Relationships are discussed as the encompassing factor for High Expectations, Positive Self-Perception, Role Models, Opportunities and Practical Support.

The SLR highlighted a lack of English specific literature that explores CEI perspective on the supportive factors in their educational journey to university. It is suggested that further research is needed to capture this. Furthermore, there is an absence of literature presenting Educational Psychologists' roles in supporting these processes.

## 1.2 Introduction

### 1.2.1 Care Experienced Individuals

As of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019, 78,150 individuals were Looked After Children (LAC) in England, reflecting a steady rise from 47,590 LAC in 1994 (DfE, 2019a). The LAC population is however, considered complex due to its constant fluctuation (O'Higgins, Sebba, & Luke, 2015; Rowlands & Statham, 2009). Previous LAC and Care Leavers (CL) tend to experience poor life outcomes and are cited to be among the most vulnerable adult populations (S. Cameron & Maginn, 2011; Driscoll, 2013b). Recent years have shown an increased focus from government policy and research on the educational attainment for LAC and CL, to raise life outcomes for this population.

#### 1.2.1.a Terminology

This study's focus population is those with previous experience of the care system, including LAC and CL. The Children Act (1989) defines LAC as those in Local Authority (LA) care following a care order or if accommodation has been provided under section 20, for a continuous period of 24 hours or more (DfE, 2015). CL are defined as those who have previously been looked after for at least 13 weeks including their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday (Children (Leaving Care) Act, 2000). There is diversity within and across these two groups and with movement in and out of the care system, many individuals experience care without being a CL (Harrison, 2019; Norwich, Richards, & Nash, 2010). This leads organisations such as The Care Leavers Association to define CL as "*any adult who has spent time in care*" (The Care Leavers' Association, 2014). This broader definition is the focus of my research. I refer to those who have at any point been classed as LAC or CL as Care Experienced Individuals (CEI). This umbrella term provides ease of reference, whilst maintaining they are not a homogenous group (Mendes, Michell, & Wilson, 2014) but individuals with personal experiences who should be considered as such. Corporate Parenting refers to the LA's responsibility to act "*as the best possible parent*" for LAC (1.15; DfE, 2015). This document views Corporate Parenting Professionals (CPP) to include all adults supporting the child.

#### 1.2.1.b Life Trajectories

The Children's Act 1989 guidance states "*looked after children deserve the best experiences in life... in order to have an enjoyable childhood and successful adult life*" (1.1; DfE, 2015). Literature suggests CEI hold positive expectations for their future, envisioning a good job, including aspirations for professional roles, their own car, apartment (Mannay et al., 2017; Sulimani-Aidan, 2015), and university attendance (Sulimani-Aidan, 2015; The Who Cares? Trust, 2012). Unfortunately, these life trajectories are rarely actualised as CEI tend to experience instability in employment, housing and education after leaving care (Courtney et

al., 2011; Häggman-Laitila, Saloekkilä, & Karki, 2018). Furthermore, CEI appear overrepresented within the criminal justice system and cited more likely to require mental health and substance use services (Barn & Tan, 2012; Berlin, Vinnerljung, & Hjern, 2011; Blades, Hart, Lea, & Willmott, 2011; Butterworth et al., 2017). CEI are consequently, referenced among the most vulnerable populations to experience economic and social exclusion as adults (Brady & Gilligan, 2018; S. Jackson & Cameron, 2012; Social Exclusion Unit, 2003). Pre-care experience is discussed as a possible explanation. The primary reason for care entry is cited as 'abuse or neglect' (63%), and exposure to these adverse experiences are likely to have significant psychological consequences (Braden, Goddard, & Graham, 2017; Coman & Devaney, 2011; DfE, 2019a; Welbourne, 2012). Additionally, in-care experiences including, home and education placement moves, lack of relationships and a deficit view of LAC outcomes, are likely contributors (Driscoll, 2011; Mannay et al., 2017; Pecora et al., 2006).

### 1.2.2 Education's Role

Factors contributing to CEI's life trajectories are complex and interlinked (Harrison, 2019). Education is arguably a powerful determinant of life outcomes (Day et al., 2012), supporting social mobility, meaningful employment and well-being (Berridge, 2007; Ilies, Yao, Curseu, & Liang, 2019; Wolf, 2011). Educational study is identified as the "*best guarantee of social inclusion*" (p.1107; S. Jackson & Cameron, 2012), with the qualifications gained permitting them to access employment, support life outcomes and reduce the risk of social exclusion (S. Jackson & Höjer, 2013).

Academic outcomes for CEI' are significantly poorer than other children and young people (O'Higgins et al., 2015). CEI are overly represented in negative statistics, including low attainment, exclusion and level of truancy (Dent & Cameron, 2003). In England, official statistics show LAC to have achieved "*much lower*" attainment outcomes throughout Key Stage One and Two, and achieve on average under half the score in their Attainment 8<sup>1</sup> compared to non-LAC (p.5,9; DfE, 2019b). Reports show over half CEI have a Special Educational Need, with social, emotional and mental health needs most commonly cited (DfE, 2019b). An international SLR, exploring the relationship between CEI and education outcomes found being in care cannot itself explain low academic achievement (O'Higgins et al., 2015). It may, instead, act as a protective factor (Sebba et al., 2015), with CEI stating, entry into care improved their lives and had positive effects on their progress, attendance and education chances (Berridge, 2017; S. Jackson, Ajayi, & Quigley, 2005). Despite these

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<sup>1</sup> Attainment 8 measures students' achievement across 8 GCSE qualifications.

optimistic views of care, achievement and progress of CEI to higher qualifications are limited.

### *1.2.2.a Higher Education*

Attending university represents a normative pathway for middle class children and is argued to be an increasingly realistic aspiration for non-traditional students (Claire Cameron, Graham Connelly, & Sonia Jackson, 2015b; Hyde-Dryden, 2012; S. Jackson & Cameron, 2012). CEI are, however, “*potentially the lowest of any identifiable social group*” for Higher Education (HE) participation (p.2; Harrison, 2019). Government records showed 12% of CEI accessed HE by 19-years-old (DfE, 2019c). This fails to reflect CEI returning to education later, which is of importance as CEI can take longer to actualise their educational goals (Harrison, 2019). This figure is starkly contrasted to the 42% of attendance in the general population (DfE, 2019c; Harrison, 2017). Further, CEI are more likely to enter HE later with low status qualifications and access less traditionally prestigious universities (Harrison, 2019).

### *1.2.2.b Government Initiatives*

The government introduced measures to attempt to raise educational attainment of LAC, enhance future employment prospects and personal fulfilment levels (Brodie, 2010; Children and Young Persons Act, 2008; Hyde-Dryden, 2012). Personal Education Plans, Designated Teachers and Virtual School (VS) Head Teachers were introduced to promote education achievement of their Local Authority LAC population (Children and Families Act, 2014; DCSF, 2010; DfE, 2018; DfES, 2007). Legislation dictated further support for CEI up to 25-years-old whilst in education (Children (Leaving Care) Act, 2000; DfE, 2016). The Buttle UK Quality Mark was introduced following the By Degrees project, designed to recognise HE institutions who are committed to widening participation to CL (Boyes, 2012). Although this has now ceased, it is suggested its effects continue (Askew, Rodgers, & West, 2016; BUTTLEuk, 2020; Starks, 2013). Despite substantial policy development, numbers of CEI attending university remains steadily below the general population (DfE, 2019c; Driscoll, 2013a; Harrison, 2019). Additionally projects have shown that, although policies have provided support for CEI accessing university, implementation has lacked clarity (The Who Cares? Trust, 2012).

### *1.2.3 Warrant for Research*

Several research projects have explored CEI and HE (Harrison, 2017; Hyde-Dryden, 2012; The Who Cares? Trust, 2012). The By Degrees action research project uncovered barriers and supportive factors from HE attending CL experiences (S. Jackson et al., 2005). This urged the government to make education the “*highest priority*” for CEI and greatly

contributed to legislative developments (p.129; Martin & Jackson, 2002). The Buttle UK Quality Mark was found to have supported significant advances in university supportive mechanisms for CEI (Hyde-Dryden, 2012) and research of CEI' experience attending university has reflected this (Harrison, 2017).

Research has highlighted the impact of CEI' educational journey on long-term outcomes (S. Jackson et al., 2005; Milligan, 2005). An international literature review presented aspects of relationships, mental health and support programmes as important for CEI' achievement of HE (Geiger & Beltran, 2017). Harrison (2017) proposed six predisposing factors of success: Strong KS4 attainment, managed transition from care to HE, membership of community, resilience and determination, strong disability support and alternative educational pathways. These factors were extracted from qualitative data written for open-text responses, subjects focused on transition to HE, withdrawal, reasons for staying and further comments.

England has seen significant change in policy for supporting CEI education. To my knowledge, the evidence-base currently lacks a review of the literature, reflecting aspects of practice or experiences conducive to entering HE within our unique English context. This paper aims to systematically review existing literature to address the question: What supports CEI in their journey to university?

### **1.3 Method**

The aim for this project was to better understand what experience CEI identify as important in supporting them to get to university. A systematic literature review provides the opportunity to identify previously published literature, drawing together the knowledge from individual studies and exploring their contribution towards the understanding of a chosen topic (Atkins et al., 2008). It further allows the identification of gaps within the knowledge base to inform areas of future research (Grant & Booth, 2009).

CEI have a significant number of barriers to overcome and it is acknowledged that their experiences are often complex (Coman & Devaney, 2011). Qualitative methods can provide a bottom up approach to research (Barbour & Barbour, 2003) and the opportunity for a deeper understanding of the complex human experience this research is interested in (Thorne, 2017). Qualitative literature reviews have become increasingly valued for providing a voice to marginalised populations and using these voices to inform practice (Barbour & Barbour, 2003). Synthesising individual research projects acts to expand the value of labour-intensive research which often address sensitive topics and works with difficult to recruit populations (Mary Dixon-Woods, Agarwal, Young, Jones, & Sutton, 2004).



### *1.3.1 Meta-Ethnography*

I aimed to explore how the chosen studies were related and generate a collective interpretation to inform further research and field-based practice (Schumm, Skea, McKee, & N'Dow, 2010). A Meta-Ethnography (ME) methodology was chosen to address this aim (Noblit & Hare, 1988). Developed to explore qualitative, educational research it is highly applicable to my exploration (M. Dixon-Woods, Agarwal, David, Young, & Sutton, 2005; France et al., 2019; Noblit & Hare, 1988). It provides a systematic process with the ability to create higher ordered interpretations that go beyond traditional literature reviews, developing new understanding from the available data (Atkins et al., 2008; M. Dixon-Woods et al., 2005; Mary Dixon-Woods et al., 2004). It is further able to maintain transparency, preserving the interpretative properties of the original data and allows synthesis of a range of papers from different sources and disciplines (Campbell et al., 2003; France et al., 2019).

This research draws on Noblit and Hare (1988)'s original account (Table 1) in conjunction with more recent worked examples (Atkins et al., 2008; Britten et al., 2002; Campbell et al., 2003). This provides evolved methodology developed in response to a lack of details in the original account (R. P. Lee, Hart, Watson, & Rapley, 2015). Application of ME was not linear but involved experimenting with various methods to find best fit. For transparency I will outline the processes undertaken.

<b>Phase 1.</b>	<b>Getting started;</b> <i>“In this phase, the investigator is asking, How can I inform my intellectual interest by examining some sets of studies?”</i> (p.27)
<b>Phase 2.</b>	<b>Deciding what is relevant to the initial interest;</b> <i>“In the end, a meta-ethnography is driven by some substantive interest derived from comparison of any given set of studies.”</i> (p.27)
<b>Phase 3.</b>	<b>Reading of the studies;</b> <i>“the repeated reading of the accounts and the noting of interpretative metaphors.”</i> (p.28)
<b>Phase 4.</b>	<b>Determining how the studies are related;</b> <i>“This requires determining the relationships between the studies to be synthesized.”</i> (p.28)
<b>Phase 5.</b>	<b>Translating the studies into one another;</b> <i>“In its simplest form, translation involves treating the accounts as analogies... Translations are especially unique syntheses, because they protect the particular, respect holism, and enable comparison.”</i> (p.28)
<b>Phase 6.</b>	<b>Synthesizing translations;</b> <i>“Synthesis refers to making a whole into something more than the parts alone imply.”</i> (p.28)
<b>Phase 7.</b>	<b>Expressing the synthesis;</b> <i>“To be effectively communicated, the synthesis must not only be in appropriate form but must also use intelligible concepts.”</i> (p.29)

Table 1: Noblit and Hare (1988) Meta-ethnography Outline

### 1.3.1.a Identification of Relevant Studies

Phase 1 is addressed throughout the introduction and bridging document (p.3 & p. 24).

Phase 2 involved a literature search conducted using databases chosen for their relevance, range and accessibility: Child Development and Adolescent Studies; ERIC; Medline ProQuest; PsychInfo (OVID); Scopus; Wiley and, Web of Science, alongside hand searching. Searches were performed using key words sourced from relevant papers in the field. Despite careful exploration for key terms, it is likely some papers were missed as language used in this area of research varies significantly.

### 1.3.1.b Selecting Papers

Initial search terms using key words combined with ‘Educational Psychologist’ (EP) and appropriate synonyms resulted in extremely low or inappropriate results, this was therefore excluded. This finding highlighted a significant deficit in EP involvement in this area and

consequently reshaped my SLR question. The active research question took a figurative step back and was reframed as follows:

What supports CEI in their journey to university?	
	("Looked after #" OR LAC OR "Foster Child#" OR "Care population" OR "Young people in care" OR "residential care" OR adopt# OR "Out of home care")
	("leaving care" OR "care leave#" OR care-leave# OR "aging out of foster care" OR "care experienced" OR "care alumni" OR "after care" )
AND	(adulthood OR "Adult life" OR transit# OR education# OR HE OR "Higher Education" OR University OR Degree)

Table 2: Search Terms

Searches were conducted between September 2018-November 2018. Search alerts were activated until April 2019. No relevant papers were added. Hand searching was also conducted adding 1 paper. Figure 1 outlines the process for study selection.

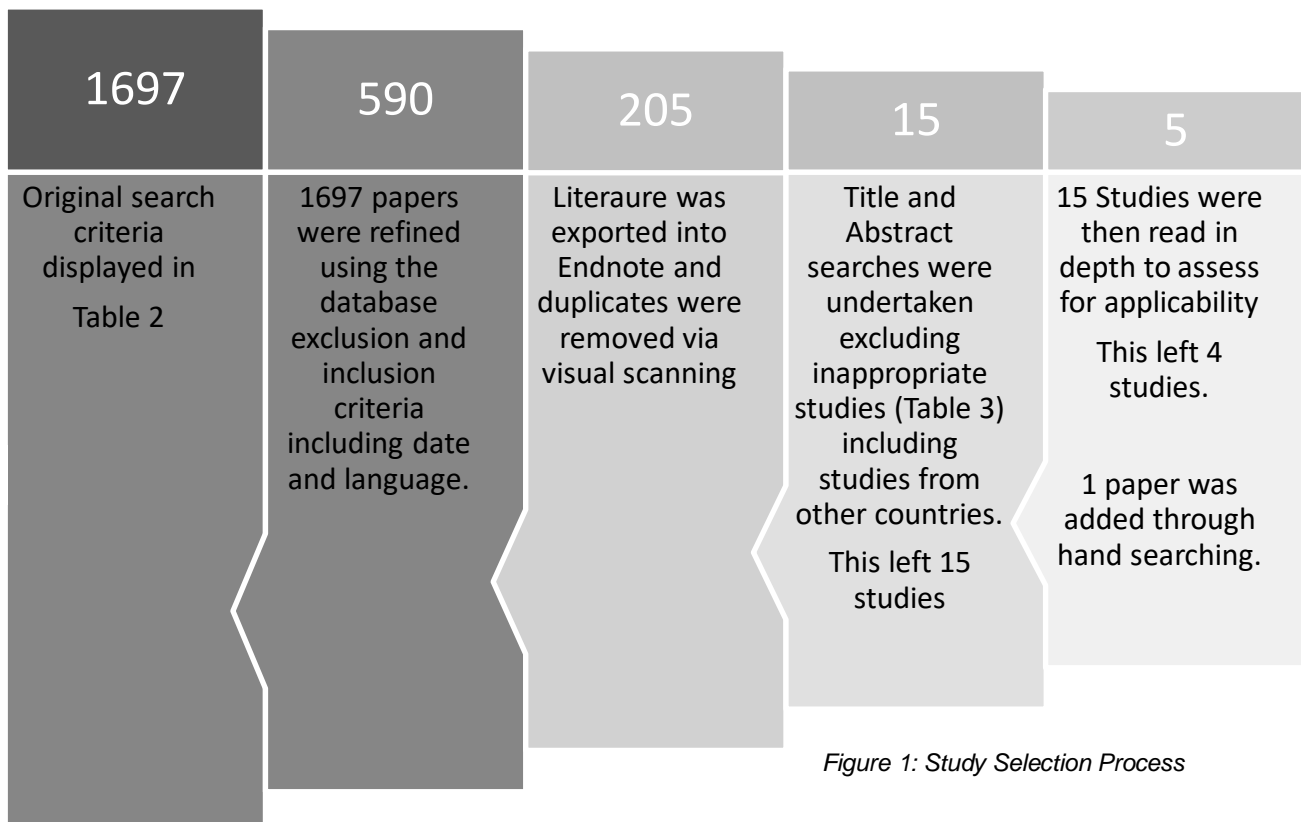


Figure 1: Study Selection Process

During abstract review, concerns around a lack of studies lead me to widen my criteria. This allowed inclusion of any intervention or focus that resulted in some of its participants clearly attending university (Table 3).

Inclusion Criteria		Reason
<b>Participants</b>	Those who had experienced the care system and who had achieved a university place.	As the focus population of my exploration, studies with LAC and CL as participants were selected. The participants had to have been offered a place at university or currently attending university.
<b>Settings</b>	Data collected from English constituencies.	The aim of the study was to investigate how we can support English CEI to achieve university places. England has its own specific legislations, practices and systems that impact on the experience CEI have. Data collected from outside of England, including, Ireland, Wales and Scotland was excluded.
<b>Focus</b>	Papers that explored aspects participants believed supported them to enter university.  <u>Not supportive whilst at University</u>	Papers were selected on their ability to contribute to the research question.
<b>Methodology</b>	Qualitative methodology	Qualitative methods were selected to provide in depth data of CEI experiences.
<b>Language</b>	All papers must be published in the English Language.	Studies published in English language were used for ease and relevance

Table 3: Inclusion Criteria

### *1.3.1.c Mapping the Research*

The steps taken, reflecting phases 3-6, are outlined.

Studies were mapped to allow quick comparison of data (David Gough, Thomas, & Oliver, 2012). This highlighted two concerns for synthesis; a wide variety of study focus and varying degree of transparency in research design (Table 4).

### *1.3.1.d Quality of Literature*

Quality assessment of qualitative literature is an area of continued debate (Spencer, Ritchie, Lewis, & Dillon, 2003; Walsh & Downe, 2006). The concept of quality is complex, and checklists cannot conclude good or bad research (Barbour, 2001; David Gough, 2007). Due to varying degrees of information provided in selected papers, I employed the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (2018) (CASP); a 10-question checklist with an additional query relating to my research enquiry. Designed to prompt critical consideration of qualitative research, the CASP provided a comprehensive guide to evaluation and supported criticality in my interpretations (p.22). It provided space for in depth discussion and reflection of each paper as shown in Appendix 1. Appraisal of research is, however, limited by the transparency of academic write up (Atkins et al., 2008). Papers providing inadequate information may not reflect poorly conducted or limited value research but does restrict readers' ability to make informed interpretations of findings. For my transparency and to inform interpretation of the synthesis conclusions, I present the overview of CASP findings (Table 5).

Mapping of Selected Studies					
Literature	Hollingworth (2012)	Bluff, King, and McMahon (2012)	Cotton, Nash, and Kneale (2014)	Mayall et al. (2015)	Ward, Devereux, Mayall, O'Neill, and Worsley (2015)
<b>Journal</b>	Child & Family Social Work	Social and Behavioural Sciences	Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning	Social Work Education	Child & Family Social Work
<b>Participants</b>	32 x CL's, 18-24Yrs in care for >1yr. Show " <i>Educational Promise</i> "	9 x 18-33yr olds. 2-18yrs care experience.	8 x female final year care leaver students	11 x CL 22-48yrs Under/post graduate students.	11 x undergraduate social care students.
<b>Context</b>	Qualitative strand of results from 5 x LA across England with contrasting social and economic characteristics.	1 <sup>st</sup> /2 <sup>nd</sup> year at University. Greater Manchester and Yorkshire.	" <i>A new university</i> " (p.8) in UK (researchers all from Plymouth university).	Social Work courses of Liverpool John Moores, Central Lancaster and Manchester Met.	3 universities in England
<b>Focus</b>	Impact of leisure and informal learning activities on educational participation and educational	CL experience of transition to University	Identifying protective and risk factors through their pre-care and in care experience and the impact on resilience.	What experience influences the choice to train as a social worker?	The motivation of students going into social work. How had individuals managed their identities in care?

	pathways.				
<b>Data Collection</b>	Biographical narrative interview method. (results from YiPPEE study).	Semi-structured Interviews.	Narrative accounts through interviews using critical incident approach.	Qualitative social research (Denzin, 1970). Interviews. Semi-structured interviews	Semi-structured Interviews
<b>Data Analysis</b>	Analysis informed by; 'education in its broadest sense' (Petrie et al 2005) and equal rights for social inclusion.	Interpretative Phenomenological Approach (IPA).  Thematic Analysis	Coded with NVivo software to explore themes and relationships. Used constant comparative method.	Thematic Analysis – using NVivo software.	Thematic Analysis and then NVivo Qualitative data analysis.

Table 4: Mapping Selected Studies

<b>Questions</b>	<b>Hollingworth (2012)</b>	<b>Bluff et al (2012)</b>	<b>Cotton et al (2014)</b>	<b>Mayall et al (2015)</b>	<b>Ward et al (2015)</b>
1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of research?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2. Is the qualitative methodology appropriate?	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	No	Can't Tell	Yes	Yes	Yes
4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Yes	Can't Tell	Yes	Yes	Yes
5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Yes	Can't Tell	Yes	Yes	Yes
6. Has the relationship between researchers and participants been adequately considered?	No	Can't Tell	No	Yes	Can't Tell
7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	No	Can't Tell	Yes	Yes	Yes
8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Can't Tell	No	Can't Tell	Yes	Yes
9. Is there a clear statement of findings	Yes	Can't Tell	Yes	Yes	Yes
10. How valuable is the research?	Valuable	Lacking	Valuable	Valuable	Reasonable
11. Does it answer my research question	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table 5: CASP Overview



### 1.3.1.e Translating and Synthesis

To ensure best practice, I explored methods of synthesis and translation in published literature (Appendix 2), developing the steps displayed (Figure 2).

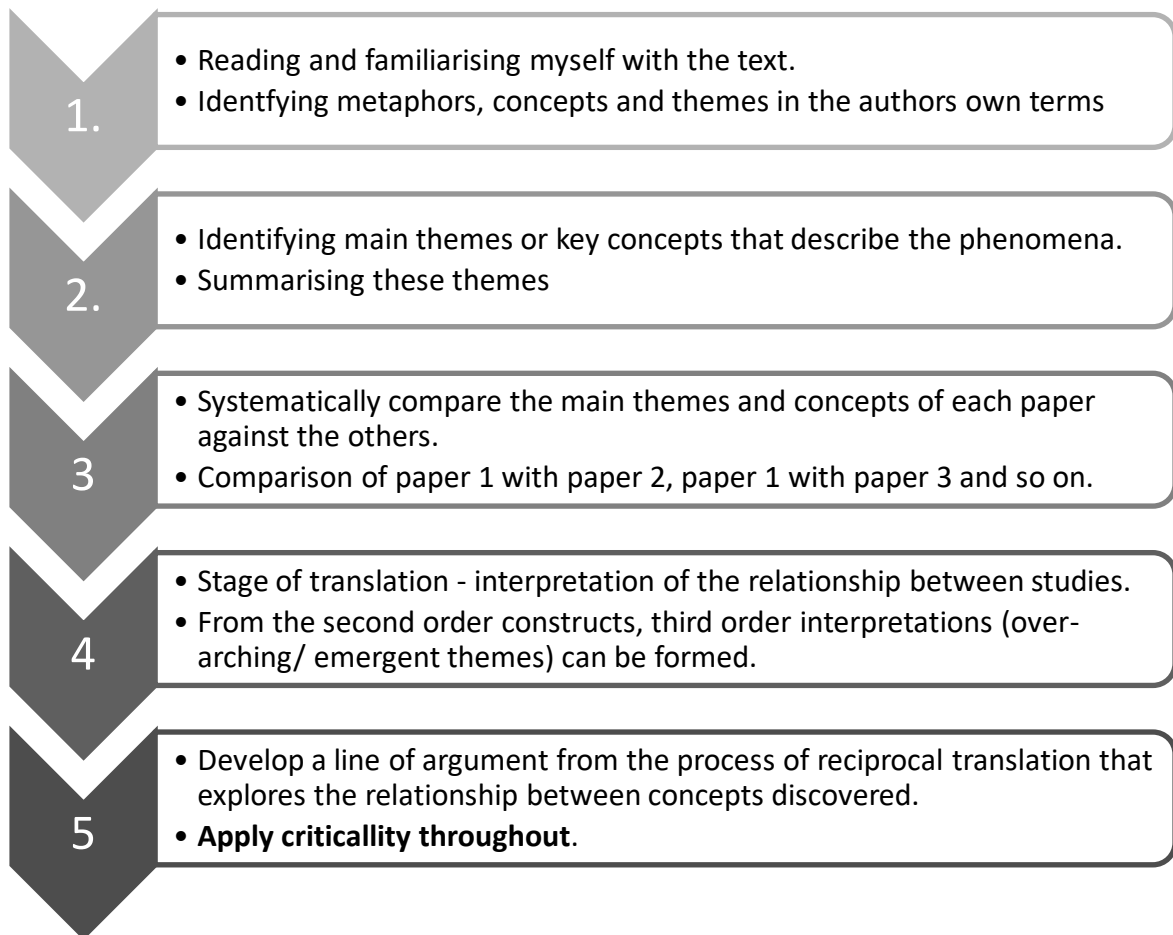


Figure 2: My Analysis Process

First, I read each text individually. Significant text extracts were highlighted and post-it notes signified developing themes. I explored these concepts and themes in a table and attempted to summarise the phenomena (

**Appendix 3).** After thorough and repeated reading, I transferred themes onto memo cards. These contained my interpretation alongside extracts of raw data to ensure contextual understanding. Themes were compared to develop overarching themes (Appendix 4).

Themes from Hollingworth (2012) were compared with Bluff et al. (2012). This translation process involved constant referral back to original texts and my interpretation. This interpretation was contrasted to the next study, Cotton et al. (2014) and the process continued. Literature was compared in chronological order to account for changes in policy. Meta-concepts were developed from my interpretation (Table 6) and a line of argument was formed (p.16).

<b>Hollingworth (2012)</b>	<b>Bluff et al (2012)</b>	<b>Cotton et al (2014)</b>	<b>Mayall at al (2015)</b>	<b>Ward et al (2015)</b>	<b>Synthesis/ Overarching themes</b>
Participation Opportunities					<b>Opportunities</b>
Support /Encouragement	Experience of Parenting	Encouragement	Encouragement & Experience	Support/ Relationships	<b>Supportive Relationships</b>
		Personal Experiences	Care Experiences	Identity/ Self perception	<b>Positive self- Perception</b>
	Role Models				<b>Positive Role Models</b>
	Stigma	Importance of Education	High Expectations	Stigma/ High Expectations	<b>Expectations</b>
Making it Possible		Practical Support			<b>Practical Support</b>

*Table 6: Translation of Themes*

## **1.4 Findings and Discussion**

This section will discuss the line of argument and the concepts drawn from the ME that answer my research question. Concepts are fluid and interact, meaning effective discussion involves overlap. This is my interpretation, with acknowledgement that another researcher may have organised and attributed meaning differently.



as central to CEI outcomes (Driscoll, 2013a). CEI identified family, social workers, school professionals, foster carers and their work colleagues as important in supporting their pursuit of HE (Bluff et al., 2012; Cotton et al., 2014; Hollingworth, 2012; Mayall et al., 2015; Ward et al., 2015). Through supportive relationships participants experienced high expectations, found role models, accessed opportunities, cultivated positive self-perceptions and gained practical support.

CEI valued meaningful relationships based on respect and genuine care. Social workers who provided a caring commitment and valued CEI opinions by working collaboratively with them were discussed as a supportive mechanism (Ward et al., 2015). Additionally, CEI' motivation for university was supported by foster carers who encouraged them by placing importance on their education (Cotton et al., 2014). Other participants discussed a lack of supportive relationships available (Bluff et al., 2012), recounting feelings of inferiority and distrust towards foster carers and social workers developed through a lack of reliability and genuine care (Ward et al., 2015). Feelings of being "*a number, a case file*" (p.957) starkly contrasted to the perceived encouragement their non-LAC peers received from their parents (Bluff et al., 2012). This included practical support for university applications and accompanying CEI to interviews (Bluff et al., 2012). The desire for support around education by outside school adults is echoed in wider literature (Day et al., 2012).

Experience of supportive relationships helps CEI to build positive self-perceptions (Ward et al., 2015). These connections allow CEI to receive recognition of their potential and provides encouragement to engage and develop their abilities, strengthening self-esteem (Hollingworth, 2012). Ward et al. (2015) noted younger university attendees discussed supportive relationships with their foster carers. Whereas those returning to education later, identified supportive relationships with their work colleagues rather than CPP or family (Mayall et al., 2015). It highlights the importance of key adults recognising CEI potential in developing confidence to pursue high levels of employment accessed through HE (Mayall et al., 2015). Similarly, Berridge (2017) found high achieving CEI had experienced supportive foster families. Stable, caring relationships allowed CEI to feel safe to engage in education and supported resilience. Participants remarked that by realising their lives mattered to someone else, they began to value education (Berridge, 2017). A lack of continuity in social workers, home and educational placements, provides little opportunity for positive relationships to be built (Ward et al., 2015), the importance of which is repeated throughout research (Day et al., 2012; Schofield, Beek, Sarget, & Thorburn, 2000; Sinclair, Baker, Wilson, & Gibbs, 2005).

It should be acknowledged that although supportive relationships are presented as critical in positive educational outcomes, other CEI find success through self-reliance with education achievement attributed to themselves (C. Cameron, 2018; Driscoll, 2013a). This alludes to the idea that, although supportive relationships are powerful in supporting CEI in their journey to university, CEI can attend without them. It is likely, those successful self-reliant CEI have unusually high resilience that cannot be expected or relied on within the wider care experienced populations (Cotton, Nash, & Kneale, 2017). Supportive relationships are consistently identified as important to positive educational experiences and thus their presence should be prioritised.

#### *1.4.1.b Expectations*

The expectations others held towards CEI shaped CEI ideas of education and motivation to pursue university (Bluff et al., 2012; Cotton et al., 2014; Mayall et al., 2015; Ward et al., 2015). Stigma and pre-conceived notions of appropriate pathways for CEI discouraged them from pursuing HE. Being told “*you know care leavers don’t go to university*” (p.955; Bluff et al., 2012) echoed international findings showing CEI being steered towards vocational pathways with less academic requirements (Honey, Rees, & Griffey, 2011; S. Jackson & Cameron, 2012). Prospects of being self-sufficient earlier than academic pathways allow, provides motivation; however, this goal was rarely actualised. CEI often engaged in a series of short courses resulting in low-level qualifications not effectively leading to employment (S. Jackson & Cameron, 2012). Arguably these expectations may link to CEI entering HE later in comparison to their peers (Harrison, 2019). CEI described needing “*to get past it*” and “*think I can do it*” (p.955; Bluff et al., 2012) before applying. Some CEI alternatively, drew determination from negative expectations, motivated to defy stereotypical notions by attending university (Bluff et al., 2012). Stigmatisation impacted on disclosure of care status during university applications (Mayall et al., 2015). This suggests, despite widening participation efforts and development of policy, CEI are not aware of supportive mechanisms and believe care experience may threaten acceptance (Mayall et al., 2015).

Negative expectations are reflected in the normalisation of truanting and acceptance of education having a diminished importance in the care population (Martin & Jackson, 2002). Challenging behaviour at school and home is noted as a prevalent risk factor for CEI (Honey et al., 2011). Carers who challenged stereotypes, questioning “*why can’t you go to university...?*” (p.343; Ward et al., 2015) were powerful in supporting CEI’ belief in their ability to resist negative narratives. High expectations prompted engagement in learning and fostered interests in academic pursuits (Cotton et al., 2014). Emphasis placed on schooling during their care experience shaped perceptions of educational value (Bluff et al., 2012).

#### *1.4.1.c Role Models*

Although the theme role models is derived from only one of the five studies (Bluff et al., 2012), the impact they have on CEI journey to university is noted in other SLR papers (Cotton et al., 2014; Ward et al., 2015). Role models are discussed as providing powerful insights into the possibility of success for CEI. They provided a contradiction to negative outcomes expected of them and fostered confidence in university as a realistic pathway (Bluff et al., 2012). CEI role models are seen as a basis for widening participation schemes in the wider literature (Gazeley & Hinton-Smith, 2018). CEI value the shared understanding provided by building relationships with CEI attending university, allowing CEI to explore their own suitability for HE safely (Gazeley & Hinton-Smith, 2018). Opportunities for CEI to build relationships with high achievers appear to widen horizons for individuals. Difficulties lie in geographical navigation and resources to facilitate this (Gazeley & Hinton-Smith, 2018).

Role models can also lie outside the care system. Positive accounts of university can be presented from family members (Bluff et al., 2012). Foster families' own ambitions can prompt interests in university attendance (Cotton et al., 2014) and social workers can provide inspiration for future careers (Ward et al., 2015). Martin and Jackson (2002) call for foster carers and residential staff to hold higher educational qualifications to provide CEI with role models and promote higher expectations for CEI in their care.

#### *1.4.1.d Positive Self-Perceptions*

CEI discussed a need to be emotionally ready to consider HE upon leaving care (Cotton et al., 2014; Mayall et al., 2015; Ward et al., 2015). CEI reported requiring time to develop positive perceptions of themselves to consider themselves as agents of change (Mayall et al., 2015; Ward et al., 2015). Possible experiences of trauma in pre-care can have lasting effects on self-perceptions and well-being, particularly if care is not ideal (Coman & Devaney, 2011). Understanding the impact life events have on education is important (Brady & Gilligan, 2018). Cotton et al. (2014), illustrates entry into care as significantly influencing CEI attitude to learning. One participant noted "*my head wasn't in a very good place*", but that her foster carer "*turned it around for me*" (p.11; Cotton et al., 2014). This aligns with other positive reports of care's association with positive self-perceptions and enjoyment of school (Honey et al., 2011). Experiences of instability in their home and education environment are likely, and entry into care may not mitigate the impact of pre-care experiences (O'Higgins et al., 2015). CEI who enter care later are further likely to have missed early interventions aimed at raising attainment and developing positive self-perceptions (Driscoll, 2013b).

CEI were motivated to embark on Social Work courses following their experiences of social workers. Participants growing realisation of their capabilities, motivated them to offer a better experience than they had received (Cotton et al., 2014). Others acknowledged the power key relationships had on their self-perceptions and aspired to do the same for others; *“that’s all it took, one person, and I could be that one person”* (p.158; Mayall et al., 2015).

#### *1.4.1.e Opportunities*

Opportunities of participating in activities like volunteering, arts, sports and community groups provided motivation for university attendance (Hollingworth, 2012). They provided a platform for CEI to reshape perceptions of themselves as learners by cultivating their interests and skills outside traditional academia. Experiences of success developed their confidence and belief in their ability to positively contribute to society (Hollingworth, 2012). Opportunities to take part in theatre productions motivated a participant to become a drama therapy teacher through studying performing arts at university. For others, activities like dance provided stability and consistency which acted as a protective factor (Hollingworth, 2012). CEI involved in afterschool clubs were found to perceive themselves as more attached to their school (Day et al., 2012) and motivation for clubs increased attendance and educational engagement (Milligan, 2005). Opportunities of wider activities allowed CEI to experience supportive relationships, high expectations, access positive role models and develop positive self-perceptions.

#### *1.4.1.f Practical Support*

CEI needed practical support to enable their entry into university (Cotton et al., 2014; Hollingworth, 2012). For many, a lack of funding made HE an unobtainable goal (Cotton et al., 2014). Government initiatives have sought to amend funding access and ‘staying put arrangements’ enable CEI to maintain care placements (DfE, DWP, & HMRC, 2013). This legislation holds potential to support; however, research notes these mechanisms are not well understood (Boffey & Thomas, 2015; The Who Cares? Trust, 2012). Knowledgeable others are required to guide individuals through the process, however severe cutbacks to advisory services have left CL less informed (S. Jackson & Cameron, 2011, 2012). CEI noted school staff, foster carers and social workers were best placed to offer support (Cotton et al., 2014).

Prior to practical support directly linked to university transitions, access to learning and extra-curricular opportunities also require practical support. Funding is required to access tutors to fill learning gaps and activities of interest (Boffey & Thomas, 2015). Participants accessed activities relating to their later degree choice via key adults support including identification of opportunities, funding and transport (Hollingworth, 2012).

### 1.4.2 Summary

The findings of the ME echo previous and international literature. It places an emphasis on relationships and presents this as a vehicle for experiencing the other concepts: expectations, role models, opportunities, positive self-perception and practical support.

Documents of CEI indicate university attendance is possible without these concepts, however, I argue for us to fulfil our roles “*as the best possible parent*” for CEI (1.15; DFE, June 2015) we should prioritise building positive, supportive relationships. Findings suggest these relationships should be characterised by holding high expectations for CEI, encouraging them to find and cultivate their interests. We should seek out opportunities for the CEI to explore and enable them to form aspirations for their future. Opportunities to access role models who provide examples of positive outcomes will also serve to widen horizons. I propose the effective focus on these aspects will support the development of positive self-perceptions for CEI, motivating them to aspire to university. Lastly, it is pertinent for the practical support to be in place to support CEI to access appropriate learning and developmental support throughout their journey and enable them to thrive at university.

## 1.5 Further Considerations

The contributions and quality of the papers should be considered when considering the SLR findings. Each study contributed to a minimum of 3 concepts derived from the research question. Due to a lack of literature available, papers were not directly focused on the research question. Data was selected from each study on its relevance. Significantly not all participants in Hollingworth (2012)’s study attended university. Following inclusion criteria, data was selected from those extracts where university attendance was explicitly stated. This is not ideal and information is likely to have been overlooked. Direct exploration is needed to ensure data is truly relevant and true to experience.

In respect of Mayall et al. (2015) and Ward et al. (2015) findings should be taken with caution. Firstly, it is apparent both papers obtain their findings from a shared data set. Both were included due to different focuses on exploration; however, this has implications for generalising findings to the wider care populations. Secondly, participants were social work students. The nature of their degree may lead to greater depth and understanding of their care experience. Lastly Bluff et al. (2012), alongside others, present limited exploration of its analysis. This is a common difficulty of descriptive data, where publication platforms place restrictions of word count (Joffe, 2012). It results in less transparency meaning findings should be viewed with caution (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006).



### *1.5.1 Future Research*

The SLR presents several weaknesses in the research base available to inform professional practice. It highlighted a lack of English contextual literature exploring CEI' reflective accounts. More research focused on supportive mechanisms leading to the ambition and achievement of university during CEI educational career is needed. This will enable professionals to draw from evidence-based knowledge of what works for CEI and tailor the support in response. Further, I believe Educational Psychologists' can play an important role in offering effective support to the mechanisms identified (see p.40). The SLR identified a gap in the literature, showing research is needed to explore the support EPs currently and could potentially provide for CEI in their journey to university.

## **1.6 Answering the Research Question**

Educational outcomes and consequently life trajectories of CEI is reportedly negative. This SLR aimed to explore university attending CEI' perspectives on supportive mechanisms which contributed to their university attendance. An exploration of the English specific literature, presenting reflective accounts of CEI attending university revealed one overarching mechanism and five supportive concepts. Supportive relationships were discussed as highly conducive to positive educational experiences and HE engagement. Supportive relationships arguably offer CEI access to high expectations, role models and, opportunities which support a development of positive self-perception. Lastly, practical support is required to enable goals of university to be realised. These mechanisms provide an effective platform for CEI to feel safe and secure to focus on and make progress with their educational career. Despite increased focus on CEI outcomes in both government agenda and research, a lack of literature exploring this focus suggests more needs to be done.

## Chapter 2: Bridging Document

# **Linking the Systematic Literature Review to Empirical Research**

## 2.1 Introduction

This document provides context to the research and transparency to the journey I have undertaken. It explores the influences my personal experiences have had on the research construction and my thought progression throughout the experience. I will explore the research paradigm to which I align and how this has contributed to my research methodology. Lastly, I will explore some ethical issues and reflect on my role as a researcher.

### *2.1.1 Conceptualisation of the Research Interest*

My Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) placement has been undertaken in a LA in the North West of England. The Principal Educational Psychologist (EP) maintains a dual role being Virtual School (VS) Head Teacher. This allows a close commissioning relationship between the VS and Educational Psychology Service, with TEPs working with the VS for 50% of their time. During practice, I was often struck by the potential of CEI but frustrated by their lack of ambition. CEI rarely considered university as a viable option, citing a lack of intelligence, missed opportunities and a sense of university not being for them. Research into this phenomenon was saturated with literature detailing negative life outcomes with a lack of identification of what works. Coming from a Solution-orientated approach (Rees, 2008), discussed later (p.27), I was keen to identify what works to enable effective support to be provided.

As a TEP I am concerned with the holistic development of individuals (Ferne & Cubeddu, 2016). Positive outcomes are viewed widely including academic, social and emotional development and experiences such as extra-curricular activities are valued to support this (Brodie, 2010). The choice to explore university as an outcome was driven by several factors. Firstly, it provides a solid outcome that aligns with government, LA and schools raising attainment initiatives (p.5). Further, HE is linked to positive life outcomes (see p4 for more information). Practically, CEI are a notoriously hard to recruit population, university provided a mechanism through which to access participants. Finally, although I do not claim university is a pathway for all, I do argue it should be an option for all and it is our responsibility as Corporate Parenting Professionals to support this.

### *2.1.2 Meta-ethnography Findings*

The original aim of the SLR was to explore the ways in which EPs can support CEI to attend university. My initial searches resulted in low or inappropriate results, leading to reframing the questions. This highlighted a scarcity of EP involvement in this area. Secondly, papers used within the SLR did not directly address the research question. The ME presented

supportive concepts that EPs can arguably contribute; however, it is important to develop a robust evidence base to better understand our involvement. First-hand accounts of the support CEI experienced in their journey toward university is highly valuable, allowing EPs' practice to be responsive to what works. These considerations lead to the development of two interlinked research questions. Firstly, I wanted to explicitly explore what CEI attributed their educational achievement to and secondly, how EPs can practically support the mechanisms identified in a real-world context.

## **2.2 Research Paradigm**

Research enquiries begin and develop according to a person's view of the world (Grix, 2002). The questions we generate and how we attempt to answer them are shaped by our ontological and epistemological stance (Grix, 2002; Willig, 2013). Reflection and transparency on these positions allow the reader to consider the research process and knowledge presented (Grix, 2010). Here I present my evolving understanding of the world and how I believe it applies to my research.

Ontology is a researcher's belief of what there is to know about, including their assumptions of, social reality (Grix, 2001). I identify my ontological worldview as realism, accepting that reality exists independent of our investigation of it (Willig, 2013). It is context dependent, shaped by our social, cultural and political influences that overtime are refined into a series of structures and objects we experience (DeForge & Shaw, 2012; Scott, 2005; Willig, 2013). My identification with this ontological position is pertinent to research set within the educational and psychological context as it acknowledges that historical and current decisions made by society have constructed social reality such as educational and LA systems and it is the outcome of these that we experience (DeForge & Shaw, 2012; Scott, 2005). Furthermore, this view of reality is important as it accounts for the existence of other conceptions of reality and as such provides room for conflicting experiences to be considered and accounted (Scott, 2005).

Epistemology is what and how we can know about knowledge (Grix, 2010). It is concerned with the gathering of and limits of knowledge (Grix, 2001). Despite my belief in an existing reality, I propose knowledge of this reality can only be accessed through human understanding and perceptions. This leads to an epistemological relativism, where knowledge is understood as subjective (Bhaskar, 2008; DeForge & Shaw, 2012; McLachlan & Garcia, 2015). I believe knowledge is created as part of a social world, leading me to be inherently ingrained in the research process. The exploration of reality is interpreted according to my own subjective conceptual schemas, with my values and experiences influencing analysis and findings (DeForge & Shaw, 2012; McLachlan & Garcia, 2015; Scott,

2005). This highlights the importance of reflexivity in research to ensure prejudices are acknowledged and transparent (DeForge & Shaw, 2012).

Aligning with the beliefs described above, a critical realist perspective is taken (Bhaskar, 2008; Scott, 2005). Critical realism aims to develop an understanding of an experience of a particular reality; however, it does not presume research data represents a true picture of the phenomenon (Willig, 2013). In an aim to understand the underlying structures involved in generating the explored phenomenon, interpretation is required (Willig, 2013). It is realist in that it is subscribed to the notion of reality and critical in that research is viewed as a social process, influenced by contextual factors resulting in an imperfect access to reality (Bhaskar, 2008; Forrester, 2010). This study attempts to understand the experiences that CEI identify as having positively impacted upon their outcomes to inform how EPs can develop their practice as part of a supportive mechanism. Critical Realism values reflective accounts and acknowledge social actors to have agency in which they are able to influence structures, systems and mechanisms (Scott, 2005). This study therefore places importance on understanding CEI' experiences within the context of education and care systems and identifies EPs, who are often commissioned to contribute to these systems, as able to positively influence the systems and create supportive mechanisms to support CEIs outcomes.

### *2.2.1 Overarching Methodology*

Methodology is the approach taken to explore a research topic (Willig, 2013), including how a project is undertaken and understood (Grix, 2001). Methodological choices are influenced by our connection with and understanding of our ontological and epistemological stance (Etherington, 2004). In my pursuit for an increased understanding of CEI experiences and how to best support them I adopted qualitative methods of research. This allowed rich data to be gathered, which captures the individual perspectives of CEI (Howitt, 2016). It further aimed to uncover psychological mechanisms involved in everyday life that lead to their university attendance and an EPs role in supporting these.

#### *2.2.1.a Solution-Orientated Practice*

Solution-orientated practice (Rees, 2008) is a theoretical framework guided by a set of principles (Table 7). It originates from solution focused brief therapy, pursuing the question of how-to-best effect change (Fernie & Cubeddu, 2016). It acknowledges the negatives, recognising them as valuable, whilst building competence through recognition of what works (Harker, Dean, & Monsen, 2017). This is fitting for my exploration of what encourages and supports CEI university attendance as the negatives are well documented and solutions that place focus on what works are currently lacking. It offers an opportunity to make real world

change. Further, solution-orientated practice aligns with my values as a critical realist, by acknowledging care and educational systems as real whilst promoting individual experiences.

My methodological decisions were guided by my philosophical position and solution-orientated practice. Firstly, I wanted to understand what worked for CEI currently attending university. To explore this, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009) was undertaken. Secondly, I wanted to explore how EPs could support these positive experiences. Focus groups, with a Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) were employed to explore how these experiences were currently being supported and how practice could be further developed.

<b>Solution-Orientated Contributions</b>			
<b>Principles</b> p.170 -172	<b>Explanation</b>	<b>Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis</b>	<b>Focus Group with Thematic Analysis</b>
<b><i>“If it works, do more of it; if it doesn’t work, do something else.”</i></b>	To identify, highlight, develop and expand what works to achieve progress.	CEI were asked to explore what had supported them on their journey to university.	Focus groups spent time exploring current practice and discussing the positives.
<b><i>“Small change in any aspect of a problem can initiate a solution.”</i></b>	<i>“If you only look at the large and complex you will overlook the small and simple”</i> p.171	CEI were asked to discuss anything that made a difference, large or small.	We gave equal acknowledgement to small changes as well as bigger systemic ones.
<b><i>“People have the necessary resources to make change possible”</i></b>	<i>“You will find strength, resilience, energy, and hope in the most desperate of situations and people.”</i> P.171	CEI were asked for their unique perspective and experiences of what supported them or could have supported them better.	CEI’ experiences were taken as the basis for discussion as we acknowledge how much we can learn from them, taking into account the unique experiences of EPs in a LA context.
<b><i>“A focus on future possibilities and solution enhances change.”</i></b>	We cannot ignore the past but must seek to orientate towards the future.	Acknowledging negative outcomes for CEI and learning from them.	Acknowledging negative outcomes for CEI and learning from them.
<b><i>“No sign up, no change”</i></b>	People need to believe the goal is achievable and worthwhile.	CEI involved in research to support change.	EPs involved in focus group to promote motivation to apply ideas generated as

			part of their practice.
<b><i>“Cooperation enhances change”</i></b>	Working together and finding a way. Allowing space for imperfect possibilities whilst continuing to work.	EPs working together with CEI to bring about positive change.	A reflective process not confined to research data collection.
<b><i>“The problem is the problem, not the person.”</i></b>	This allows conversations free from restricting labels and allows control to be regained over the problem.	Acknowledgment that the systems surrounding CEI are not perfect and require improvement.	To remember throughout our work, behaviours that contribute to negative outcomes are a result of experiences and systems not the individual.
<b><i>“Possibilities are infinite”</i></b>	Positive and negative live side by side, it calls for the acknowledgement of one and the promotion of the other.	Acknowledge that whilst participants were successful, their experiences were unlikely to be ideal.	Perusing research due to the negative outcomes and looking towards the future to improve upon these.
<b><i>“People have unique solutions to their problems.”</i></b>	Curiosity and interest in ideas and ways of moving forward.	Research was undertaken to explore and represent CEI ideas for improving services.	EPs all have valuable ideas to improve upon services. Focus groups were conducted with interest and curiosity.
<b><i>“Keep one foot in the pain and one in the possibility.”</i></b>	An accommodation of both pain and possibility with	Conducting interviews with respect and	EPs respected all participants’ quotes and accepted them



	peaceful tolerance and a respect for others.	acceptance of individuals opinions and perceptions.	as true to their experience.
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Table 7: Solution-orientated Practice in Research

## 2.2.2 Methodology One

### 2.2.2.a Interpretative Phenomenological Approach

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) aims to understand the meaning of participants' experiences and the psychological interpretations of these (Forrester, 2010). It assumes individuals reflect and give meaning to phenomenon they encounter (Howitt, 2016) and IPA aims to engage with these reflections (Smith et al., 2009). IPA is informed by three key philosophical areas of knowledge: phenomenology, hermeneutics and ideography (Smith et al., 2009). Phenomenology is the study of lived experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2008). It refers to the unique perception of the world, interlinked by our relationships with the world and others (Smith et al., 2009). Hermeneutics is our interpretation, how we understand. IPA involves a double hermeneutic, meaning the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants' sense making of their lifeworld (Smith, 2004, 2007, 2019). It accepts the researcher's beliefs as valuable in interpreting the individuals experience (C. Clarke, 2009). Finally, IPA is ideographic. It focuses on detailed analysis of a unique experience, person and context rather than making generalisations across groups (Smith, 2004). The associated small sample sizes can be viewed as a weakness (R. Jackson, Drummond, & Camara, 2007), however, it offers in-depth and powerful understanding of the individual's particular experience. Further, multiple perspectives can be used in analysis to develop a greater understanding of the multifaceted nature of the phenomena (Reid, Flowers, & Larkin, 2005). It offers an interpretative perspective on how individual meaning of a shared phenomenon interacts (Larkin, Shaw, & Flowers, 2019).

IPA, like critical realism, accepts reality as existing, and explores the participants' perspective of this reality (Forrester, 2010). It was developed as a qualitative approach to psychological enquiry. It is suited to exploration of underlying psychological mechanisms and has a growing popularity in educational research (Crowley, 2019; Saddler & Sundin, 2020). As "*the educational experience is inherently subjective*", IPA allows voices of marginalised students to be heard (p.80; Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006; Noon, 2018). It, therefore, provides a useful approach for understanding CEI' lifeworld (Goodall, 2014). Following the preferred method, I collected data through semi-structured interviews (C. Clarke, 2009). This provided space for sensitive discussion and for participants to process experiences and be heard (Gauntlett et al., 2017; Reid et al., 2005). I believe semi-structured interviews enabled

rapport to be built and supported a collaborative and genuine approach to developing understanding of CEI' narratives.

### *2.2.3 Methodology Two*

#### *2.2.3.a Focus Groups*

Focus groups explore the perspective of a group of individuals on a topic directed by the researcher (Forrester, 2010). Focus Groups form a dynamic process that utilises interaction between participants to generate rich data (Howitt, 2016; Jamieson & Williams, 2003). They provide insights into assumptions, norms and shared ways of making sense within a group (Wilkinson, 1998). A focus group was chosen over questionnaires and individual interviews for several reasons. Firstly, I wanted to gain in-depth understanding of how EPs perceive their role supporting CEI' educational journey and examples of this in practice. Questionnaire data would have constrained this area of enquiry.

Secondly, EPs are notorious for struggling to communicate their role (Ashton & Roberts, 2006). Focus groups provided opportunities to question and validate comments, elaborate and defend opinions, and develop a joint understanding of this role (Jamieson & Williams, 2003; Wilkinson, 1998). It provided space for reflection, allowing the implicit normative assumptions to become explicit (Bloor, Frankland, Thomas, & Robson, 2001).

Debate around the use of pre-existing groups remains. Recruitment of strangers can encourage more genuine curiosity in discussions, encouraging detailed explanations (Parker & Tritter, 2006). Others argue ideal focus groups reflect natural interactions and provide access to collective understandings and norms best displayed through pre-existing groups (Willig, 2013). As I aimed to induce real change, this research was used to develop my own LA's EP practice, recruiting participants from an established group of EPs. As a researcher, I was also a member of this group. I was familiar and well attuned to group dynamics and was able to foresee difficulties like dominant speakers (Willig, 2013). On reflection the absence of the Principal EP, may have reduced possible impact of societal factors such as hierarchical relationships restricting candour (Bloor et al., 2001).

Furthermore, focus groups reduced the possibly of my own influence upon group discussions (Parker & Tritter, 2006). As the facilitator posing open ended questions, participants were encouraged to talk to each other about the aspects most pertinent to them (Parker & Tritter, 2006). This sought to reduce possible social desirability effects of my colleagues wanting to be helpful. Additionally, focus groups are noted to provide natural quality control mechanisms through encouraging authentic discussion due to group presence (Jamieson & Williams, 2003).

A considerable limitation of focus groups is the lack of consensus and often discussion of analysis (Wilkinson, 1998). They are not linked to a specific epistemological field, leaving interpretation open to align with researcher's values (Parker & Tritter, 2006). Content analysis is often favoured in market or political research linking to positivist values (Parker & Tritter, 2006). Others explore data for patterns and concepts (Jamieson and Williams, 2003), resembling a Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Joffe, 2012). Thematic Analysis was chosen here, to provide a systematic approach to data exploration. Its epistemological flexibility allowed me to approach the data with a critical realist perspective, exploring how EPs understand their impact within current LA systems (Joffe, 2012; Scott, 2005).

### *2.2.3.b Thematic Analysis*

Thematic Analysis (TA) seeks to highlight patterns of meaning in qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Debate remains on its classification as a method or a tool due to its lack of epistemological alignment (Willig, 2013). I accept TA as a method that offers a transparent and systematic approach to exploring my research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Joffe, 2012). The TA took an inductive approach, meaning codes were developed from the data itself, rather than an existing coding frame (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). It is then framed within existing literature for exploration. Themes developed represent a pattern of meaning, in line with social representations theory, showing how individuals and organisations understand social phenomena (Sammut, Andreouli, Gaskell, & Valsiner, 2015; Willig, 2013; Zbróg, 2019). They were drawn from both latent and manifest content, the former an exploration of underlying concepts and the latter from directly observable content (Joffe, 2012).

Themes are presented in relation to few evidential extracts due to word restrictions. This is likely to impact on clarity (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Reflexivity of the researcher's part in analysis acts to prevent the engineering of bias themes (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). As a piece of doctoral research, the data was reviewed by me only. Although I approached the data with an open, curious mind, my experiences and bias are likely to have impacted upon the theme development. Validity of themes was supported by frequent reassessment, discussions with my supervisor and discussion of the themes with focus group participants (Berger, 2015; Jamieson & Williams, 2003).

### *2.2.4 Summary*

This exploration represents two linked, but distinctive research questions derived from a critical realist perspective. The differing aims call for a variation in methodology. Part one aims to explore what works for CEI. CEI hold commonality in their LAC or CL status, however, they are not a homogenous group. They have individual pre-care, in-care and

post-care experiences impacted upon by a wide variety of factors (Mendes et al., 2014). Semi-structured interviews allowed participants to discuss these personal experiences in depth, with IPA exploring the meaning individuals attribute to their experiences and contributing psychological mechanism (Gauntlett et al., 2017; Reid et al., 2005; Willig, 2013). Part two aims to explore how EPs can support CEI. Focus groups were selected to support real world change through discourse prompting EPs to identify strengths and possibilities in their service delivery (Forrester, 2010). TA of these interaction highlighted how EPs conceptualise their professional role in relation to and scope for supporting CEI (Joffe, 2012). Both lines of enquiry are informed by a solution-oriented methodology, endeavouring to inform practice of what works.

### **2.3 Ethics and Reflexivity**

Guillemin and Gillam (2004) suggest qualitative research has two ethical elements: procedural and in-practice ethics. Procedural ethics refers to guidelines and practical elements of research. I have adhered to the BPS (2018a) and HCPC (2016) ethical guidelines throughout my research and gained approval from the Newcastle University Ethics Committee.

An ethical researcher reflects on their practice (Rossman & Rallis, 2010). Ethics in practice relates to behaving ethically in the face of everyday research (BPS, 2018a; Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). It is the act of reflecting on several levels and taking a reflexive stance towards the research (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). Examples of reflexive practices taken are presented in Appendix 18. Reflexivity involves self-awareness and critical reflection of our positionality, interpretations and biases and how these may affect research outcomes (Berger, 2015; Finlay, 2008). It is closely tied to epistemological assumptions of the researcher's influence on research (Berger, 2015). As a critical realist I acknowledge my role in constructing and interpreting the research phenomenon presented. Reflexivity supports notions of quality and validity in qualitative research, recognising the limitations of knowledge and accounting for bias and beliefs (Berger, 2015; Guillemin & Gillam, 2004).

Literature discusses the merits of transparency around reflexive processes in research development, analysis and evaluation (Finlay, 2008). Others view reflexivity as a continuous process, ongoing throughout all stages of research including data collection (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004), which actively takes account of the researchers position with participants and the relationship between them (Rossman & Rallis, 2010). This is the stance I take, and I will now discuss some ethical and reflexive considerations of my research journey.

### 2.3.1 Working with a Vulnerable Population

CEI are considered a vulnerable population by government policy (DfE & DoH, 2015). The Children's Commissioner defines vulnerability as a group of individuals who are "*likely to be associated with lower child wellbeing or worse outcomes in later life*" (p.6; T. Clarke, Chowdry, & Gillhooly, 2019) and those with "*experience of local authority care*" are cited as the first category (Bright, 2017; Children's Commissioner, 2019). CEI often experience the care system following a "*complex interplay of vulnerabilities*" (p.37; Coman & Devaney, 2011). Government statistics cite the primary area for care entry to be 'abuse or neglect' (DfE, 2019a). Such experiences are suggested to have a profound impact upon wellbeing and future life outcomes (Braden et al., 2017). Being looked-after is often characterised by additional placement moves, lack of consistent care giving and limited quality relationships further impacting upon wellbeing and outcomes (Bruskas & Tessin, 2013; Mallon, 2005; Sinclair et al., 2005). The impact of pre and within care experiences on wellbeing and outcomes remains debated, however, may contribute to over half of LAC identified as having a Special Educational Needs, with Social, Emotional and Mental Health cited as the primary need (DfE, 2019b).

The impact of these experiences and vulnerabilities appear to continue in adulthood. A review of international literature suggested mental health continues to be a concern for care leavers (Bruskas & Tessin, 2013; Murray & Goddard, 2014). It is also cited as a contributing factor for withdrawal from university (Harrison, 2017). Qualitative research methodology, particularly IPA can involve discussion of sensitive subjects (Råheim et al., 2016). Knowledge of the likelihood of CEI having faced difficult experiences and vulnerability to mental health difficulties, increases the importance on ethical considerations of the research.

Steps were taken to ensure participants could provide full informed consent (HCPC, 2016). A meeting was held with the gatekeeper to explain the project and comment on information sheets were requested. Participants had the opportunity to read the information sheet and ask the gatekeeper questions (Appendix 6). They were then given a further opportunity to discuss their participation with me before consenting to participation. This included discussion of the project methodology and the potential for sensitive subjects to be discussed.

A methodological weakness of focus groups is a lack of control over confidentiality (Morgan, 1998; Parker and Tritter, 2006). Pseudonyms were used and discussion centred around themes rather than individual details. Although I could not ensure participants would adhere to requests of confidentiality and respect (Jamieson and Williams, 2003), EPs are held accountable to the HCPC (2016) and BPS guidelines (2018a). Practice regularly involves

confidential and sensitive information and participants were requested to treat the discussions with the same professionalism.

Appreciating the possibility that disclosure of sensitive information could re-open wounds (Baheim et al., 2016), I took care to respect what the participant chose to share and did not pursue information that was not readily shared (BPS, 2018a; HCPC, 2016). Despite this, approaching interviews with a genuine curiosity and active listening did prompt disclosure of sensitive information. Steps were taken to account for this possibility and employed when appropriate. Active reflexivity was maintained through a high level of attunement applied to interviews, where continuous interpretation of verbal and non-verbal cues was noted to ascertain emotional wellbeing. Throughout our interactions I upheld the core principles of ethical practice; respect, competence, responsibility and integrity in an effort to ensure full consent was maintained throughout our interaction (BPS, 2018a; Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). Participants were reminded of their right to withdraw, take a break, and move on at regular intervals. All participants were signed posted to relevant, local and freely accessible support systems verbally, via email and via a debrief sheet (Appendix 7). When sensitive topics arose, the gatekeeper was asked to check in with the participants. Details of the disclosures were not shared in order to protect confidentiality, and participants were informed of this procedure prior to and after interviews. Importance was placed on these check-in's as research shows access to a supportive adult during university to be of vital importance to CEI completion of university (Cotton et al., 2017). For my own wellbeing, a research diary was kept, and frequent check-ins were made with my research supervisor.

### *2.3.2 Researcher Positioning*

Berger (2015) suggests three positions a researcher can take; insider, where the researcher has shared the experience being researched; moving, where the researcher shifts from outsider to insider during research and outsider, the studying of unfamiliar phenomenon. The level of familiarity with participants' experience is likely to impact upon the research processes (Berger, 2015).

During part one of my project I was an outsider. I have no personal experience with the care system, having grown up in a two-parent, safe and economically secure household. My role as a TEP provided me with a familiarity with the psychological implications of care experience. IPA was chosen as it is an empathic method, undertaken with a genuine desire to understand experiences from another's perspective (Forrester, 2010). I hoped it would place participants as the expert of their experiences, providing an empowering experience (Berger, 2015). It is however, noted from an outsider position, my understanding is limited and may result in subtle nuanced aspects of data being missed (Berger, 2015). A reflexive

research diary was kept focusing analysis development on the participants' lived experiences rather than my own assumptions and bias as a TEP.

As an insider of the EP focus group, I had a detailed understanding of the experiences and systems that relate to practice. This was likely to have several implications. As previously discussed, focus group methodology limited my influence on group conversation. Still, my prior understanding of EP practice is likely to have resulted in a lack of questioning that may have challenged assumptions. Further it is likely that in my analysis of the data, my training and practice within the field will have created a bias towards development of certain concepts. I employed several strategies to reduce the impact of these possibilities. This included member checking my thematic map with several participants, discussions with my research supervisor and a continuous reflexive position that involved questioning my assumptions and position towards the data.

## **2.4 Summary**

This chapter has offered transparency to the research journey I have undergone. It provides an understanding of the research paradigm I have taken and has presented some of the considerations in developing my research question, methodology and analysis. I have explored the ethical implications of working with CEI and how I accounted for these. Lastly, I considered my position as a researcher and how this may have impacted upon the research phenomenon presented.

## Chapter 3: Empirical Research

### **How can Educational Psychologists support Care Experienced Individuals in their Journey to University?**



### **3.1 Abstract**

Care Experience Individuals (CEI) are highly vulnerable to negative life outcomes such as unemployment, lack of stability in housing and mental health difficulties. Education is argued to be a powerful contributor towards positive outcomes. Gaining a university degree is associated with greater job satisfaction, job security and economic status. Throughout education, CEI have significantly poorer attainment than their non-LAC peers. CEI are amongst the lowest represented population within HE. Despite recent government legislation developed to support the raising of educational achievement, this remains true.

This research aims to develop an in depth understanding of the experiences that supported a group of high achieving CEI to gain a university place. It uses semi-structured interviews and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis to explore the lived experiences of four CEI attending university. Three master themes were developed from the data: relational approach, value of education and a sense of safety with seven superordinate themes.

This research additionally explores the contribution Educational Psychologists can make in supporting the psychological mechanisms highlighted from CEI' experiences. An Educational Psychology Service took part in a focus group that explored how Educational Psychologists currently, and could potentially, support the mechanisms highlighted through analysis of the CEI. Educational Psychologists discussed using psychology as a specialist knowledge to inform supportive practices such as developing understanding, supporting a holistic perspective, upskilling and empowering others. This is done through a variety of activities undertaken at the individual, group, and systemic levels.

## 3.2 Introduction

### 3.2.1 Care Experienced Individuals

Care Experienced Individuals (CEI) are noted to be vulnerable to poor life outcomes (Brady & Gilligan, 2018; T. Clarke et al., 2019). Education provides means to access social mobility, meaningful employment and reduce the risk of social exclusion (Day et al., 2012; S. Jackson & Cameron, 2012). Performance of CEI in education is, however, much poorer than their non-care experienced peers and they are less likely to continue education through to degree level (Harrison, 2019; O'Higgins et al., 2015). Government policy has attempted to raise educational attainment of CEI (DCSF, 2010; DfE, 2016, 2018). For more information see Chapter 1 (p.3).

### 3.2.2 Educational Psychologist Role

Educational Psychologists (EP) form a professional group trained to work across 3 main levels of individual, groups and systems (Fallon, Woods, & Rooney, 2010). Across these levels, they hold a range of roles (Fallon et al., 2010). A Scottish review of Educational Psychology Services found EPs to be practicing across five main areas, consultations, assessment, intervention, research and training (SEED, 2002). EPs are valued for their specialist psychological knowledge and skills applied throughout their practice (Farrell et al., 2006; Kelly & Gray, 2000; Law & Woods, 2019; K. Lee & Woods, 2017). Further, EPs have been cited as essential for upskilling those contributing to children and young people's outcomes, identifying Special Educational Needs and contributing to Education, Health and Care assessments (Ashton & Roberts, 2006; Lyonette, Atfield, Baldauf, & Owen, 2019).

The basis of EP work is to act in the best interest of the child (BPS, 2015) meaning EPs are involved with supporting vulnerable populations such as CEI (Bradbury, 2006; Dent & Cameron, 2003; Farrell et al., 2006). For many EPs this work is enhanced through a commissioning relationship between the Local Authority (LA) and Virtual School (VS) (K. Lee & Woods, 2017). EPs are argued to hold skills well suited to working with CEI by utilising methods such as training, casework and meetings (Bradbury, 2006). Norwich et al. (2010), surveyed 107 EPs, exploring their practice with LAC. Responses indicated 80% of EPs undertook work with CEI as part of their school commissions, with 18% holding a specialist LAC role. It was noted, without specialism, work with LAC represented a small proportion of EPs' workload. (Norwich et al., 2010). This could reflect the relatively small population of CEI or how schools prioritise cases for EP involvement. It can be argued with SEN identified in over half the LAC population (DfE, 2019b) alongside their vulnerability to difficulties and focus of government policies, as discussed above, supporting the effectiveness of EPs input is of vital importance.

### *3.2.3 Care Experienced Individuals' Voice*

EPs aim to deliver evidence-based practice to support effective delivery (R. J. Cameron, 2006; Gersch, 2004). Recognition of CEI voice in highlighting what has worked is becoming increasingly valued (Day et al., 2012; Harrison, 2017; S. Jackson et al., 2005; S. Jackson & Cameron, 2011; Sugden, 2013; The Who Cares? Trust, 2012). It seems logical that our evidence-based should come from those who have experienced the impact of the care system and can reflect on what went well as well as what needs to be improved.

## **3.3 Warrant for Research**

Findings from the Meta-ethnography (p.16) revealed two linked but distinct lines of enquiry. They will be explored in two parts.

### *3.3.1 Research Question 1*

Previous research has predominately focused on participants' experiences of and transition to university. There remains a call for exploration into the supporting mechanisms that contribute to CEI accessing university (Geiger & Beltran, 2017). This thesis hopes to add to this knowledge by exploring:

*What do CEI believe supported them on their journey to university?*

### *3.3.2 Research Question 2*

I wished for my thesis to have practical applications. Research into EPs' roles with LAC although growing, remains limited. For EPs to deliver evidence-based practice (R. J. Cameron, 2006), it is important for research to reflect what is effective in current practice and explore future possibilities of work EPs can undertake to support CEI. This thesis hopes to add to this knowledge by exploring:

*How can EPs support CEI in their journey to university?*

## **3.4 Part One: What Works?**

### *3.4.1 Method*

This section will outline the method in relation to research question 1. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used to guide data collection and analysis.

### 3.4.1.a CEI Participants

The aim of IPA is to gain understanding of a particular experience (Smith et al., 2009). This methodology is best suited to relatively homogenous groups (Noon, 2018). As such, four participants who attended a Russell group university in the North West of England were purposely selected. Participants were between 18-25 years old and had experienced the English care system for over a year. Pseudonyms are used for anonymity. The university LAC Widening Participation Project Officer acted as a gatekeeper and selected suitable participants to be invited to take part. Possible participants were provided with participant information sheets (Appendix 6) and consent form (Appendix 8). Only once participants had agreed to take part were their contact details passed onto me. Participants booked a time for their interview through the gatekeeper. As part of the university custom and practice, participants were paid an hourly rate by the gatekeeper to take part in the research.

Name	Gender	Ethnicity	Age	Year of University Study	Studying
Nasha	Female	White British	20	2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	Psychology
May	Female	White British	21	2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	Sociology
Emma	Female	White British	20	3 <sup>rd</sup> Year	Psychology
Terry	Male	Indian	18	Access Course	Engineering

Table 8: CEI Demographic Data

### 3.4.1.b Data Generation

Participants completed an initial online questionnaire to gather their demographic data and a brief overview of their care and educational history (Table 8 and Table 9).

Following the preference of IPA methodology, semi-structure interviews were used for data collection (C. Clarke, 2009). To facilitate a comfortable interaction that enabled participants to provide in depth accounts of their experiences, an interview schedule was developed following Smith et al. (2009) guidelines. The schedule (Appendix 9) was developed to be flexible and responsive to the natural flow of conversations and questions were designed to be open, curious and sensitive (Howitt, 2016).

Interviews were conducted within a clearly visible university classroom. Interviews lasted around 1 hour and were audio recorded. I transcribed audio recordings by verbatim.

Name	Number of Years in Care	Age of Entry into Care	Type of Care Placement	Educational Experience
Nasha	6 years	13 years	Emergency Care Kinship Care 3-5 Foster Carers Special Guardianship	Home Schooled (Primary Yrs) 2 x Secondary School College (3yrs) 2 x University
May	5 years	13 years	Kinship Care 2 x Foster Care Sheltered Accommodation	Infant School Juniors School Secondary School Sixth form 2 x University
Emma	2 years	3 months	Foster Care Adoption	2 x Primary School 1 x Secondary School Sixth form University
Terry	4 years	10 years	Emergency Care 3-5 Foster Care Special Guardianship	3-5 Primary 1 x Secondary Pupil Referral Unit College University via Access Course

Table 9: CEI Education and Care Data

### 3.4.1.c Data Analysis

Interviews were analysed following guidance from Smith et al. (2009)'s framework for IPA analysis. IPA is a flexible, not prescriptive, approach to analytic development. It encourages inventive, reflective engagement with data guided by the exploratory focus.

Taking each transcript individually, I engaged with the text, reading and re-reading to immerse myself within the participant's narrative. This also involved listening to the audio recording which supported an understanding of the flow and allowed attunement to the participant's dialogue. Initial noting included recording immediate thoughts, feelings and impressions, underlining key phrases, and asking questions of the data. Analysis focused on descriptive, linguistic and conceptional commentary (Smith et al., 2009). Following this I generated a deeper level of interpretative analysis by asking myself questions, derived from Smith (2019) typology of meaning (Table 10). This highlighted my reflective experiences and applied my professional psychological knowledge to the process (Appendix 10).

A Typology of Meaning – Smith (2019)			
	Type of Question	Level of Analysis	Density of Focus
1	What does <i>that</i> mean?	Literal	I
2	What does (s)he mean?	Pragmatic/ textual (puzzle)	III
3	What does it <i>mean</i> ? <i>What is the significance of this?</i>	Experiential (significance)	IIII
4	What does it <i>mean</i> for my identity	Existential (Significance)	III
5	What does my life <i>mean</i> ?	Existential (Purpose)	II

Table 10: Typology of Meaning (Smith, 2019)

Emergent themes attempt to capture the “*psychological essence*” of my interpretative analysis and the participants' narrative (p.92; Smith et al., 2009). Themes were transferred to note cards where I engaged in active grouping to reflect conceptual connections and importance within participants' accounts (Smith & Osborn, 2008). This produced a set of superordinate and subordinate themes (

Appendix 11). Models were developed to illustrate each participant's experience (Appendix 19). Analysis was a iterative process that involved moving backwards and forwards between

stages, my interpretative notes and original transcripts (Noon, 2018). This supported validity and ensured analysis stayed true to participants' experiences (Smith et al., 2009). Each transcript was analysed following the process detailed above before moving on to the next. Steps were taken to support a fresh, open and exploratory mind to each new transcript, although it is acknowledged that each previous participant's analysis is likely to have influenced the next.

To explore patterns across cases, superordinate and subordinate themes of each participant were transferred onto note cards. This allowed the process of developing master group of themes to be creative, reflective and incorporate physical and spatial connection between themes (Appendix 12).

#### *3.4.1.d Ethics*

CEI are known to be vulnerable adults (Bright, 2017). Care was therefore taken in recruitment and data collection. The university LAC Widening Participation Project Officer acted as a gatekeeper to participants. The gatekeeper invited appropriate participants, avoiding possible vulnerable individuals from taking part. He agreed to offer support to all participants and provided check-ins for those who discussed subjects that may trigger emotional thoughts. As students were over 18 years, they were eligible to give their own permission. As a TEP, I have received both LA and university training on safeguarding. I frequently work with individuals considered to be vulnerable and understand the need for sensitivity and respect (BPS, 2018a, 2018b). Participants were informed of their right to withdraw should they become upset, and information on local support services was supplied. Data was treated with anonymity and confidentiality; however, participants were reminded exceptions would be made if concerns of harm arose. The research project was accepted by the Newcastle University Ethics Committee and conforms to BPS (2018a) and HCPC (2016) guidelines.

### **3.5 Findings and Discussion**

Through IPA, three master themes and seven superordinate themes were developed. Fourteen subordinate themes further illustrate key components making up superordinate themes (Appendix 13). I propose these reflect what CEI participants believe supported their educational experience (Table 11). Here I discuss each master theme and superordinate theme with reference to its subordinate themes (*italicised*). They are presented alongside wider research, psychological theory and SLR findings (p.16). I provide sample quotes relating to themes identifiable by participants' pseudonym and line number. Although themes are presented as separate, my analysis shows them to be dynamic, interacting and

influencing each other. It is important to consider each theme in relation to the holistic experience of CEI (S. Jackson & Cameron, 2011).

Master Themes	Superordinate themes	Subordinate themes
Relational Approach	Key Adults	Genuine
		Sense of Belonging
	Expectations	Encouragement
		Subjective Norms
	Being Heard	Locus of Control
		Dialogic Space
Knowledgeable Others		
Value of Education	Goals and Focus	Life Outcomes
		Structure
		Sense Making
	Enjoyment	Love of Learning
		Extra-curricular Activities
Sense of Safety	Life Events	Stability
	Understanding	Flexibility

Table 11: IPA Themes

### 3.5.1 Master Theme One: Relational Approach

Relational Approaches run throughout and influence the other two master themes. This strongly resonates with wider literature and SLR findings, highlighting supportive relationships as key to CEI educational achievement (Brady & Gilligan, 2018; Driscoll, 2013a; Geiger & Beltran, 2017).

#### 3.5.1.a Superordinate Theme One: Key Adults

Participants identified a range of key adults who supported their educational success. Schools are viewed to play a significant role in caring for CEI (C. Cameron et al., 2015b; Edwards, 2016; Sugden, 2013). May, Nasha and Emma identified individual teachers they had *genuine* relationships with. Genuineness was conveyed through an openness, availability and attunement to CEI' emotional needs. This genuine, caring commitment was also noted as key in the SLR. Emotional support was highly valued, appearing to significantly contribute to educational success within the literature (Best & Blakeslee, 2020; Day et al., 2012).



*“but it was that she came to me and was like you know “I’m here if you need me”. So, I just kind of like, took her up on the offer and ye we bonded.”*

[May.141]

The quality of relationships in the educational environment, closely linked to their *sense of belonging* (Johnson, Strayhorn, & Parler, 2020). Belonging can be conceptualised by our perceived social support, feeling of connectedness, feeling valued and cared for (St-Amand, Girard, & Smith, 2017; Strayhorn, 2012). Developed through all formal and informal interactions, it can have a powerful impact on students’ behaviour towards education (Johnson et al., 2020; Sugden, 2013) It provides motivation, a purpose and a sense of duty to succeed (Berridge, 2017; Tillery, Varjas, Roach, Kuperminc, & Meyers, 2013).

Relationships within the home environment also impacted upon CEI educational journey (Driscoll, 2013a; Gilligan, 2007; S. Jackson & Ajayi, 2007). Nasha and May discussed their foster mothers taking an active interest in their schooling, whereas education was rarely discussed in Terry’s home. As the SLR notes, recognition of CEI’ potential by key adults encouraged positive self-perceptions around learning to be developed (Berridge, 2017; Cotton et al., 2014; Ward et al., 2015).

Research shows multiple adult connections are required rather than one key adult (Best & Blakeslee, 2020; Brewin & Statham, 2011). Nasha, May and Emma highlighted several adults who impacted on their educational experience including, teachers, foster families, pastoral support, senior leadership and social workers. Terry’s experience contrasts, indicating a distinct lack of supportive adults. This reflects a continued need for improvement in CPP models (The Who Cares? Trust, 2012).

### *3.5.1.b Superordinate Theme Two: Expectations*

High expectations from key adults were important in empowering participants and supporting the development of university aspirations. Having others believe in their ability to succeed and encouraging them to do so was important.

*“she’d really believed in me like as a person. Rather than like, me finding inspiration from somebody else, she kind of believed in me to be able to do it.”*

[May.109]

Feelings of self-doubt were powerful. *Encouragement* provided challenge to this. This strongly reflects SLR findings, showing the belief of others, communicated through their actions and words, was powerful in developing CEI' positive beliefs about themselves (Bluff et al., 2012; Cotton et al., 2014; Happer, McCreadie, & Aldgate, 2006; Hollingworth, 2012; Ward et al., 2015). Nasha discusses the empowerment she drew from others' genuine desire for her to do well.

*“The people there want you to do well and  
you’re passionate about the subject so ye I  
guess that’s very empowering”*

[Nasha.126]

Encouragement also questioned *subjective norms*. University was expected for Emma but not May and Terry. May explained encouragement reformed her aspirations, whereas a lack of encouragement meant Terry did not consider his future trajectory until much later. Stigma of CEI further limited expectations of him. Terry noted teachers had pre-formed ideas of him; a phenomenon echoed in the SLR and wider literature, where LAC labels appear to narrow chances and acceptance given (Boffey & Thomas, 2015; Mannay et al., 2017). Although policy developments have resulted in greater support for continued education, research notes CEI are traditionally encouraged into vocational trajectories, limiting university aspirations (Bluff et al., 2012; S. Jackson & Cameron, 2011).

### *3.5.1.c Superordinate Theme Three: Being Heard*

A need to be heard was significant throughout the narratives of CEI. Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 2010), state children have the right to express their opinion and for adults to listen. It is noted this is not regularly or effectively adhered to (McLeod, 2007). All participants expressed frustration at their voices not being valued, particularly during mechanisms set up to support them such as LAC reviews (Bazalgette, Rahilly, & Trevelyan, 2015; Diaz, Pert, & Thomas, 2018; Gaskell, 2010).

*“you feel as though you’re being talked about  
and not too and that was definitely a case for a  
lot of them until I sort of gave my confidence a bit  
more and asserted myself and said what I  
wanted really...”*

[Nasha.266]

These experiences stood in comparison to the power of having their voices heard and acted upon. Being heard is a factor strongly influenced by relationships, as true listening may

involve challenges to authority (McLeod, 2007). Positive relationships allowed for trust and supported an open dialogic space. A *dialogic space* was characterized as a safe place where participants could explore thoughts, feelings and hopes for their future without judgement. This space allowed them to access both informal and formal knowledgeable others. *Knowledgeable others* provide guidance and advice on practical support mechanisms noted in the SLR as important for university aspirations and attendance (Cotton et al., 2014). Such conversations formed the basis for CEI to consider their educational pathways, make choices and co-create goals (Harding & Atkinson, 2009; Hobbs, Todd, & Taylor, 2000; Sugden, 2013). The co-creation of their educational experience supported participants to develop an internal *locus of control*, allowing them to take ownership of their future direction. As the SLR discusses, this sense of control supported CEI' positive self-perceptions (Ward et al., 2015). Key discussions identified had a significant impact upon CEIs' educational trajectory, acting as a gateway for empowerment, engagement and understanding.

### 3.5.2 Master Theme Two: Value of Education

All participants discussed developing a perceived value of education and recognising its ability to improve life outcomes, fulfil goals and potential as a source of enjoyment.

#### 3.5.2.a Superordinate Theme One: Goals and Focus

Emma, May and Terry communicated a sense of apathy towards education prior to considering their future. The formation of goals allowed them to develop an appreciation for the value of education on their *life outcomes*. For example, Terry recognised the opportunities education can provide for social mobility (Wolf, 2011). Goal setting is conceptualised as the process of forming clear and functional targets for learning (Moeller, Theiler, & Wu, 2012).

*“definitely the idea that I have something to work  
towards because when I wasn't really interested in  
education and I didn't really have an end goal”*

[Emma.287]

This process focused CEI' educational engagement by providing a step-by-step *structure* to their aspirations. It increased attention, motivation and determination to achieve (Locke & Latham, 2002). Furthermore, focus on future outcomes prompted participants to engage in *sense making*. Most participants hoped to give meaning to their care related experiences by using their understanding to help others in similar circumstances.

Active participation of CEI in planning their educational goals was key to their success (Happer et al., 2006). May and Emma discussed the co-creation of goals with key adults who provided valuable guidance whilst allowing them to maintain control. In comparison Terry lacked this opportunity and his educational path appeared to be formed by impulsive and ill-informed decisions. Closely linked with the master theme; being heard, dialogic space provided a basis for goal setting. Furthermore, as participants began to experience success in relation to their goals, they developed positive self-perceptions, as identified in the SLR. It is noted, goals can have adverse effects creating significant emotional burden, as Emma discussed the impact of valuing academic success above her mental health.

### *3.5.2.b Superordinate Theme Two: Enjoyment*

A *love of learning* and interest in education was discussed as important in the continuation to Further and Higher Education. Positive teaching practices and relationships supported this interest and enjoyment (Lumby, 2011; Sabol & Pianta, 2012).

*“I think probably I stopped seeing it as a chore, like  
and it’s something that you can actually enjoy”*

[Terry.462]

Activities undertaken for enjoyment provided important experiences and supported continued engagement with education. As noted in the SLR, opportunities for *extra-curricular activities* act as a protective factor for well-being (Day et al., 2012; Hollingworth, 2012). Participation increased motivation by promoting positive self-esteem, the development of coping mechanisms, positive social networks and providing focus (Quarmby, 2014).

### *3.5.3 Master Theme Three: Sense of Security*

CEI discussed the importance of feeling secure in their environments and relationships on their learning. Where adults understood, school provided a safe place in the mist of difficult life events.

#### *3.5.3.a Superordinate Theme One: Life Events*

All CEI referenced significant *life events* which impacted upon their educational experience (Brady & Gilligan, 2018).

*“there was a lot, doing my GCSE’s there were a lot  
going on like I was at my aunt and uncles and well  
basically, so there was a lot of problems”*

[Terry.120]

*Stability* in the home environment supported educational engagement (Boffey & Thomas, 2015; Fernandez, 2009; Mihalec-Adkins, Christ, & Day, 2020). International reviews show English CEI are more likely to experience placement moves than CEI in other European countries (S. Jackson & Cameron, 2012). Changes of environment are not conducive to relationship building, placing CEI on guard, knowing new relationships may be broken too (Happer et al., 2006). When home environments were not consistent, education offered stability and safety for them to process adverse experiences (Claire Cameron, Graham Connelly, & Sonia Jackson, 2015a; Happer et al., 2006; Johnson et al., 2020). May and Nasha noted this with particular warmth, whilst Emma noted education as an escape that can have downsides on wellbeing.

### *3.5.3.b Superordinate Theme Two: Understanding*

*Flexibility* in approach derived from understanding promoted a sense of safety in education. May and Nasha valued the relational approach, where difficulties with engagement and completing work were understood and not punished. This allowed them to continue to engage and succeed in education.

*“and they, if... I didn’t hand in homework on time or  
if I needed to have extra lessons they would  
understand and be flexible”*

[Nasha.402]

Terry perceived the experience of high level of punishments as having a significant impact on his low outcomes. He called for greater understanding and discussion in response to difficulties.

*“because the amount of time I was in isolation or  
excluded, I missed a lot of school [...] like, maybe  
especially kids in care, [...] they should maybe like  
speak to, I don’t know like, approach them in a  
different way like, like sit them down.”*

[Terry.529]

Previous research has shown how CEI experience misconceptions, which label them as ‘problem kids’ and serve to alienate them from others (Johnson et al., 2020). Such perceptions result in unsympathetic responses to difficulties related to their care status (S. Jackson & Cameron, 2012). This echoes Terry’s experience where he believed teachers made quick, negative assumptions instead of understanding. Day et al. (2012)’s findings further mirror participants’ narratives, who express a need for teachers to be flexible and

responsive in providing opportunities for students to recover missing learning. Time in a Pupil Referral Unit and isolation resulted in Terry experiencing a sense of hopelessness, diminishing his engagement, whereas Emma, Nasha and May received additional tuition when needed.

### ***3.5.4 Summary***

A relational approach supported the development of genuine relationships between key adults and CEI. This promoted a sense of belonging, supporting their educational engagement. High expectations and encouragement enabled CEI to challenge subjective norms and overcome feelings of self-doubt. A relational approach further supported an open dialogic space, allowing CEI to be heard and exert control over their educational trajectory. Aspirations were developed through making sense of their experiences and goals provided structure to achieve them. Education was valued for the recognition of its potential in generating positive life outcomes. Further, enjoyment of learning was cultivated through positive education experiences and extra-curricular activities, motivating HE aspirations. Life events impacted on CEI' educational engagement and school often provided stability amidst the upheaval. Where difficulties were responded to with understanding and flexibility rather than punishments, CEI were able to continue to positively engage.

Themes developed present connections to SLR findings (Appendix 14). Relationships are central to both explorations, influencing and interacting with other themes and expectations similarly hold importance. Additionally, echoes of SLR themes of opportunities, practical support and role models appear within CEI' experiences. It is argued, positive self-perceptions identified through the SLR are likely contributed to by aspects of relational approach, value of education and sense of safety.

## **3.6 Part Two: Implications for Practice**

### ***3.6.1 Method***

To explore the practical implications and address research question 2, I presented my initial analysis themes to an Educational Psychology Service (EPS) within a focus group. This aimed to triangulate my findings and explore current and potential practice for EPs supporting CEI.

#### ***3.6.1.a EP Participants***

An EPS in the North West of England was recruited. Participants invited to take part were given an information sheet at a team meeting and via email. EPs had time to review and ask questions before signing a consent form. Not all EPs could be in attendance, leaving 6 participants.

All participants were qualified EPs, with experience ranging from less than a year to over 7 years. 4 EPs did not identify a specialism, 1 participant identified a specialism's in Autism Spectrum Disorder and Specific Learning Difficulties and 1 in LAC.

The Principle EP had a dual role as VS Head Teacher leading to a strong commissioning relationship (Table 13). The VS shared funding for 2 TEP, who worked equivalent to 1.5 days a week within the VS (1 unavailable and I am the other).

EPs' demographic data.								
<b>Gender</b>	<i>Male</i>		2		<i>Female</i>		4	
<b>Age</b>	<i>26-34</i>	2	<i>35-45</i>	2	<i>46-59</i>	1	<i>60 &amp; over</i>	1
<b>Qualification</b>	<i>Doctorate</i>		5		<i>Masters</i>		1	

Table 12: EP Demographic Data

Annual hours commissioned by VS for each EP.		Estimate of how often EPs work with LAC outside of VS commissioned time.	
0 hours	2	Once a month	1
20 hours	1	Once every 2-5 months	2
40 hours	1	Once every 6 months	1
80 hours	1	Once a year	/
150 hours	1	Very rarely	2

Table 13: EP Work with CEI

### 3.6.1.b Data Generation

Participants completed a questionnaire collecting demographic and job experience data (Table 12 and Table 13).

The focus group lasted 90 minutes and took place at a regularly scheduled team meeting, within a private conference room in the LA building (Parker & Tritter, 2006). I presented my research journey alongside initial themes developed from CEI' data which formed the general discussion of Question 1. Two further open-ended questions structured the discussion. Questions were developed from Solution Oriented principles for example "if it

works, do more of it” (Question 2) and “A focus on future possibilities and solutions enhances change” (Question 3).

*1) General Discussion - What experience have you had of these themes within your practice?*

*2) What is Working Well? - What are you and other EPs currently doing to support CEI?*

*3) The Dream - Ideally, what would we like to do to support these factors?*

Upon completion participants were debriefed verbally and provided with the debriefing sheet. The focus group was audio recorded and transcribed verbatim.

### *3.6.1.c Data Analysis*

Focus groups were analysed using an inductive Thematic Analysis guided by Braun and Clarke (2006)’s method (Table 14). Codes are descriptive comments on units of meaning within data extracts that related to; how EPs understand their work with CEI, what they do within their work and, what they would like to do. Themes represented both latent and manifest meaning. Themes presented here, respond to the research question.

### *3.6.1.d Ethics*

The research project was accepted by the Newcastle University Ethics Committee and subscribed to BPS (2018a) and HCPC (2016) ethical guidelines. Sharing of analysis was discussed with CEI verbally and explained in the participants information sheet. Verbal consent was explicitly gained. Pseudonyms were used to protect identity and discussion focused on analysis themes rather than detailing individual experiences.



<b>Step</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Application</b>
1. Familiarising yourself with your data	Transcribing data, reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.	Transcribing the data followed by repeated reading of hard copy of the transcript alongside listening to the audio to increase familiarisation. Initial notes were taken on post-it notes.
2. Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion, collating data relevant to each code.	Working line by line, codes represented descriptive notes of points of interest and meaning within the text. Sections were highlighted and codes were written alongside text (Appendix 15)
3. Searching for themes	Organising codes into possible themes.	Codes were typed into word document and printed off. Codes were then physically moved to explore how codes fit together.
4. Reviewing themes	Reviewing themes against the coded extracts and whole data set. Generation of a thematic map of analysis.	Reviewing of themes to ensure a coherent pattern. Moving back and forth between themes and transcript to ensure it reflects the data set. A thematic map was drawn by hand in the same way as a spider diagram.
5. Defining and naming themes	Refining the themes and reviewing the overall story the analysis tells. Ensuring clear definitions and names for each theme.	Refining names of themes and organising themes in relation to each other. The thematic map was further developed into a table (Table 15).
6. Producing the report	Final opportunity for analysis. Relating the analysis to the research question and literature.	The Currie Matrix level of EP involvement was applied to the thematic map providing further clarity of themes. Discussion of the themes was done within the existing literature and in answering my research question.

Table 14: Application of Braun and Clarke's Thematic Analysis

### 3.7 Findings and Discussion

From the focus group three superordinate themes were developed (Table 15) Psychology as specialist knowledge, supportive practices and activities undertaken (Appendix 16 and Appendix 17). In my interpretation, this represents a bottom up approach EPs use to support CEI in their journey to university.

<b>Activities Undertaken</b>	<i>Systemic</i>	Research	Multi-Agency Working	Training
	<i>Group</i>	Consultation		Working with Key Adults
	<i>Individual</i>	Voice of the Child		Interventions
<b>Supportive Practices</b>	Upskill and Empower			
	Support Holistic Perspective			
	Develop Understanding			
	Inform Practice			
<b>Specialist Knowledge</b>	<p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; margin: 0;">Psychology</p>			

Table 15: EP Role in Supporting CEI

#### 3.7.1 Specialist Knowledge

Psychological knowledge and theory acts as the foundation block of EP practice (Boyle & Lauchlan, 2009; R. J. Cameron, 2006). The British Psychological Society explains psychology to be the “*study of the mind*” and how it “*influences our behaviour*” and discusses its power in understanding and responding to difficulties faced in society (Para 1 BPS, 2020). Participants placed importance on exploring underlying causes and contextual influences behind the behaviour CEI displayed (Law & Woods, 2018). This use of psychology was found throughout their discussion and across all other themes. They discussed both explicitly and implicitly a multitude of psychological theories that contributed to their understanding and how they support the CEI they work with (Appendix 16) It highlighted EPs’ ability to apply psychology in everyday contexts, for example, using trauma informed approaches to understand challenging behaviour.

*“Yer, if they had those experiences, that’s an adaptive response”*

[Line.582]

The use of psychological knowledge is considered to be valuable with service users highlighting EPs’ training as characteristics of their unique contribution (Farrell et al., 2006; Kelly & Gray, 2000). Although service users thought EP practice could be performed by another profession, EPs were identified as having a specialist role in detailed assessment, training and consultations (Farrell et al., 2006). My findings add to wider research and serve to relieve concerns of EPs moving away from applying psychology in their practice (Boyle & Lauchlan, 2009).

*“I’m glad you’ve brought this sense of belongingness up”*

[Line.524]

### ***3.7.2 Supportive Practices***

EPs discussed using psychology to support a holistic perspective of CEI, developing understanding, upskilling and empowering others (Ashton & Roberts, 2006).

*“I think trying to develop that understanding”*

[Line.348]

EPs are able to adopt a meta-perspective of the wider systems around CEI (Beaver, 2011; Coman & Devaney, 2011) and adapt service delivery in relation to socio-economic context (K. Lee & Woods, 2017; Love, 2009; Stobie, 2002). These mechanisms support CEI participants’ view that a greater understanding of factors affecting their engagement should be considered. EPs provide these supportive practices through the activities they undertake.

### ***3.7.3 Activities Undertaken***

EPs referenced seven main activities they engage or would like to engage in to support CEI: training, multi-agency working; consultation; working with key adults; intervention; voice of the child and further research. These can be mapped onto three levels EPs are identified to be working at; individual, groups and systems (Fallon et al., 2010; SEED, 2002). Due to document constraints, I will discuss activities undertaken within these levels.

#### ***3.7.3.a Systemic***

Systemic working was described as desirable, working strategically to build capacity (Farrell et al., 2006) and develop supportive environments for vulnerable pupils (Dent & Cameron,

2003). EPs considered systemic working as restricted by significant individual casework commissioning (Farrell et al., 2006; Law & Woods, 2019).

Both EPs and CEI participants highlighted training as important in providing understanding, upskilling key adults and supporting informed practice (Fallon et al., 2010; Kelly & Gray, 2000; SEED, 2002). Although, Boyle and Lauchlan (2009) warn training commissions may limit the profession, focus group EPs believed they were well placed to offer training around CEI (Hyde & Atkinson, 2019; Sugden, 2013). Training can inform key adults of how CEI experiences may impact on behaviour, learning, and relationships as well as develop skills to effectively respond to their individual needs (Bradbury, 2006; Honey et al., 2011; S. Jackson & McParlin, 2006), additionally addressing, whole school approaches to behaviour and developing belonging (Sugden, 2013).

*Ppt 1: "I would say training, having touched upon it."*

*Ppt2: "Yes, particularly round nurture basis and  
nurturing in schools"*

[Line.636]

EPs' roles in multi-agency panels and VS commissioning were discussed as being supportive of CEI achievement. EPs are skilled in taking holistic perspectives, co-ordinating agencies and bridging school and community contexts (Farrell et al., 2006). Presence in multi-agency contexts was discussed as reinforcing the prioritisation of CEI learning where tensions exist between social services and education (S. Jackson & Cameron, 2012; Norwich et al., 2010). EPs also placed value on developing the evidence base through research to inform effective practice for CEI (Gersch, 2009).

### *3.7.3.b Group*

Consultation was discussed as powerful in changing attitudes through developing understanding of holistic perspectives rather than within-child factors (Farrell et al., 2006; Squires et al., 2007). It can provide a collaborative way to work with schools, families and wider CPP (Wagner, 2008). Although arguably stemming from a casework perspective, EPs perceived a wider intervention, upskilling professionals to create positive change (Beaver, 2011). Wider research show EPs are involved in consultation on: behaviour management, learning, attachment, developmental trauma, providing emotional support for key adults and systems around CEI (Norwich et al., 2010).

*"So, I think we have a lot to contribute...it's often about  
working with the adults to get them to understand."*

*Once they've understood they can then run with it."*

[Line.519]

### **3.7.3.c Individual**

EPs responded to CEI' need to be heard, acknowledging seeking and representing of CEI' voices as key in their roles (Alexander et al., 2014; Harding & Atkinson, 2009). Despite SEN CoP (DfE & DoH, 2015), outlining this as important, CEI often considered their involvement in consultation to be tokenistic (Gaskell, 2010). EPs highlighted consulting CEI in a genuine way to support understanding, empowerment and support positive self-perceptions (Harland, 2014; Hobbs et al., 2000).

*"using the voice of the child, to feedback and reiterate, how he was feeling"*

[Line.439]

EPs also discussed the desire to offer interventions to CEI to support resilience and the development of individual skills. Social, emotional and mental health needs are prevalent within CEI and rising amongst the general population (DfE, 2019b). EPs are arguably skilled to effectively support increasing strain placed on other services such as CAMHS (Atkinson, Bragg, Squires, Wasilewski, & Muscutt, 2012; Honey et al., 2011). Despite arguments of limited time allocations and service capacity restricting effective delivery, evaluations show EPs produce positive therapeutic outcomes (MacKay, 2007).

### **3.7.4 Summary**

EPs discussed using psychology as a specialist knowledge. This enabled supported practice by informing their approach, developing understanding, supporting holistic perspectives and upskilling and empowering key adults around CEI. They engaged in these supportive practices through the activities they undertook. These activities spanned across individual, group and systemic levels. Training and multi-agency working was used to promote a holistic understanding and upskills systems. EPs valued research to develop evidence-based practice. Consultation and working with key adults around the CEI were noted as a well-used mechanism to support positive outcomes. Although EPs favoured more systemic and group approaches to their work, they valued individual work. Identifying with CEI need to be heard and believing themselves to be well placed to offer therapeutic interventions.

## 3.8 Further Considerations

### 3.8.1 Limitations

My research should be considered in context of its limitations. IPA relies on participants to engage in reflexive articulation and analysis can favour eloquent participants (Gauntlett et al., 2017; Noon, 2018; Smith, 2004). Although some participants offered more descriptive accounts, steps were taken to avoid bias. By immersing myself in participants' worlds, through repeated reading and listening of accounts, I attempted to attuned to emphases and topics of importance, representing these in my analysis.

CEI participants reflected a small sample of 18-25-year-old university-attending individuals, which does not provide a representative sample of CEI. Further, research has shown university-attending CEI often enter HE later and so my sample does not include older CEI experiences of getting to university. Selection of CEI was chosen to explore successful mechanisms allowing CEI to follow similar educational pathways as non-LAC who predominately enter within this age bracket (Harrison, 2017).

IPA is not developed to support generalisation but present in-depth accounts of lived experience (Smith et al., 2009). Insights of patterns and common mechanisms are cautiously offered through multiple case comparisons (Smith & O, 2008). Additionally, focus group data reflects a unique perspective generated from one LA in 2019 (Parker & Tritter, 2006). Socio-economic context is noted to impact on service delivery and represent organisational culture (K. Lee & Woods, 2017; Love, 2009; Stobie, 2002). Themes across CEI and EPs accounts are tentatively considered in the context of existing literature (Noon, 2018). Generalisability is not claimed but it is believed that lessons can be learnt.

### 3.8.2 Future Research

Research pertaining to supportive mechanisms of CEI university attendance is lacking. It is, however, acknowledged that wider research exploring supportive mechanisms for a positive educational experience is likely to contribute valuable knowledge and understanding to this study's goal. It may be that participants have forgotten, or not placed importance on aspects of their early childhoods or wider experience that could be accessed through taking a longitudinal study of CEI educational experiences.

It is important for CEI perspectives to be represented if EPs are to take an evidence-based approach (R. J. Cameron, 2006). Further research should consult and recruit CEI as co-researchers, providing the opportunity to be heard, experience agency and offer their own expertise in practice that affects their outcomes (Day et al., 2012; Wilson, Mendes, & Golding, 2018).

Lastly, this research presented a model of EP practice with CEI from one LA. It would be pertinent to explore the practice of wider EPs in supporting CEI, contributing to evidence-based practice and greater understanding of the EP role.

### **3.9 Over Arching Summary**

Current research portrays a negative picture for CEI educational outcomes. This document represents an exploration of what works for CEI. It takes a Meta-ethnography of literature, IPA of CEI interviews and a Thematic Analysis of EPs' focus group data to identify firstly, what supports CEI in their journey to university and secondly, how EPs can support these mechanisms.

The relationships CEI experience have been central to all lines of exploration. Both the SLR and IPA highlighted relationships as a powerful mechanism for supporting educational outcomes. EPs' practice serves to support these relationships by working with key adults in CEI systems. They use psychology to promote understanding and shift potentially limiting expectations and attitudes. Increases in understanding encourage high expectations from key adults which both IPA and SLR noted to be important for CEI' aspirations and perception of themselves. Increased knowledge of both educational pathways and the impact of care experiences were noted as important across explorations, with CEI and EPs identifying the importance of training and multi-agency communication to support this. CEI and EPs both valued CYP voice in supporting CEI holistic development and pursuing university. EPs identified using consultation to empower adults in their ability to respond to CEI in an understanding, flexible and encouraging manner. Further, opportunities to develop enjoyment of education provided motivation for CEI continuation to university and supported well-being.

### **3.10 Conclusion**

This project set out to explore how EPs can support CEI in their journey to university. Exploration has highlighted EPs' skills in psychology as highly valuable in promoting positive educational and wider holistic outcomes for CEI. EPs identified practice spanning three levels that is responsive to the mechanisms CEI identified as important to achieving university ambitions. I conclude EPs are able to offer effective, multi-facilitated support for CEI and collaborative relationships between EPs and VS should be highly prioritised.

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## Appendix

### **Appendix 1: CASP Example**

#### **CASP: Critical Appraisal Skills Program**

##### CASP Checklist: 10 questions to help you make sense of a Qualitative research

**How to use this appraisal tool:** Three broad issues need to be considered when appraising a qualitative study:

- Are the results of the study valid? (Section A)
- What are the results? (Section B)
- Will the results help locally? (Section C)

The 10 questions on the following pages are designed to help you think about these issues systematically. The first two questions are screening questions and can be answered quickly. If the answer to both is “yes”, it is worth proceeding with the remaining questions. There is some degree of overlap between the questions, you are asked to record a “yes”, “no” or “can’t tell” to most of the questions. A number of italicised prompts are given after each question. These are designed to remind you why the question is important. Record your reasons for your answers in the spaces provided.

**About:** These checklists were designed to be used as educational pedagogic tool, as part of a workshop setting, therefore we do not suggest a scoring system. The core CASP checklists (randomised controlled trial & systematic review) were based on JAMA 'Users' guides to the medical literature 1994 (adapted from Guyatt GH, Sackett DL, and Cook DJ), and piloted with health care practitioners. For each new checklist, a group of experts were assembled to develop and pilot the checklist and the workshop format with which it would be used. Over the years overall adjustments have been made to the format, but a recent survey of checklist users reiterated that the basic format continues to be useful and appropriate.

**Paper for appraisal;** Bluff, King, McMahon (2012). A Phenomenological Approach to Care Leavers' Transition to Higher Education. Social and Behavioural Sciences, 69, p.952-959

**Section A: Are the results valid?**

<b>1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of research?</b>	<b>Yes</b>		<b>HINT: Consider</b> a. What was the goal of the research? b. Why it was thought important c. Its relevance.
	<b>Can't Tell</b>		
	<b>No</b>		

**Comments:** *"The present study focuses on care leavers' transition to university, taking into consideration any other transition the participants may experience during this time, to explore how care leavers manage transitional periods and what effect if any this has on their overall educational experiences"* (P.953). Clear aim for the focus of the study.

b. *"Educational transitions remain under researched"* (p. 953). Discusses a gap still present in exploring the experiences of CL transition to HE and wider literature suggests this is important.

The aim of the research is clearly thought out and presented within the rational, representing a gap in the literature.

<b>2. Is the quality of methodology appropriate?</b>	<b>Yes</b>		<b>HINT: Consider</b> a. If the research seeks to interpret or illuminate the actions and/or subjective experience of research participants b. Is qualitative research the right methodology for addressing the research goal?
	<b>Can't Tell</b>		
	<b>No</b>		

**Comments:** *"This research aims to investigate personal experience"* (p.953). Interpretative phenomenological approach explained and warranted.

The researcher wished to interpret the phenomena described from the participants perspective.

*"Statistics offer little explanation as to why care leavers 'underachieve', suggesting the importance of researching care leavers' personal experience of education"* (p.952).

Following the rational laid out it is logical to use qualitative methods and the researchers explore phenomenology as a method. Section discussing

phenomenology as a methodological approach (p.953).			
<b>Is it worth continuing?</b>			
<b>3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?</b>	<b>Yes</b>		<b>HINT: Consider</b> a. If the researcher had justified the research design (e.g. have they discussed how they decided which method to use).
	<b>Can't Tell</b>		
	<b>No</b>		
<p><b>Comments:</b> <i>“Through the use of IPA, thematic analysis was carried out and the researcher drew upon patterns and themes from the transcripts of the care leavers’ experiences”</i> (p.953).</p> <p>Following discussion of phenomenology which is clearly laid out it drops in Thematic Analysis without further explanation of why it was chosen or how it was done. Wider literature acknowledges methods have overlapping features but are considered different. Thematic Analysis can be considered a tool to use rather than a standalone method and it is acknowledged that TA is a basis for many other methods. No reference for thematic analysis is given to allow understanding of procedure. Needs more explanation.</p>			
<b>4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?</b>	<b>Yes</b>		<b>HINT: Consider</b> a. if the research has explained how the participants, were selected b. If they explained why the participants, they selected were the most appropriate to provide access to the type of knowledge sought by the study c. If there are any discussions around recruitment (e.g. why some people chose not to take part).
	<b>Can't Tell</b>		
	<b>No</b>		
<p><b>Comments:</b> <i>“nine care leavers aged between 18-33, in their first or second year at university” “Participants were from a mixture of universities across Greater Manchester and Yorkshire”.</i> (P.954)</p> <p><i>“The research findings here are from the first stage of a larger study, which will go on to examine transition experiences longitudinally.”</i> (P.954)</p> <p>Explained the demographics but did not discuss how these participants were selected. Presumably through the longitudinal study? Longitudinal study not found.</p>			

Participants selected can be considered appropriate for the purpose of the research. Students in their first or second year have recent experiences of transition. A mixture of universities provides a wide sample.

<b>5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?</b>	<b>Yes</b>		<b>HINT: Consider</b> a. If the setting for the data collection was justified. b. If it is clear how data were collected (e.g. focus group, semi-structured interviewing etc). c. If the researcher has justified the methods chosen. d. If the research has made the methods explicit (e.g. for interview methods, is there an indication of how interviews are conducted, or did they use a topic guide?) e. If methods were modified during the study. If so, has the researcher explained how and why? f. If the forms of data is clear (e.g. tape recordings, video, notes etc). g. If the researcher has discussed saturation of data.
	<b>Can't Tell</b>		
	<b>No</b>		

**Comments:** a. no  
b. *“Each participant took part in semi-structured interviews and was asked questions about their application process, the support they received from their local authority and their first few weeks at university”* p.954 Did not supply any additional information of how the data was collected. Credit given as semi-structured interviews are the preferred method for IPA and provided overview of the interview topics.

<b>6. Has the relationship between research and participants been adequately considered?</b>	<b>Yes</b>		<b>HINT: Consider</b> a. If the researchers critically examined their own role, potential bias and influence during (a) formation of the research questions, (b) data collection, including sample recruitment and choice of locations. b. How the researcher responds to events during the study and whether they
	<b>Can't Tell</b>		
	<b>No</b>		

			consider the implications of any changes in the research design.
<b>Comments:</b> Credit given due to exploration of phenomenology methodology through which relationship can be deduced but no discussion in direct reference to the researchers and data collected.			
<b>Section B: What are the results?</b>			
<b>7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?</b>	<b>Yes</b>		<b>HINT: Consider</b> a. If there are sufficient details of how the research was explained to participants for the reader to assess whether ethical standards were maintained. b. If the researcher has discussed issues raised by the study (e.g. issues around informed consent or confidentiality or how they have handled the effect of the study on the participant during and after the study). c. If approval has been sought from the ethics committee.
	<b>Can't Tell</b>		
	<b>No</b>		
<b>Comments:</b> Approved by university ethics committee and identifying information has been changed. Ethical issues were not discussed further.			
<b>8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?</b>	<b>Yes</b>		<b>HINT: Consider</b> a. If there is an in-depth description of the analysis process. b. If thematic analysis is used. If so, is it clear how the categories/themes were derived from the data? c. Whether the researcher explains how the data presented were select from the original sample to demonstrate the analysis process. d. If sufficient data are presented to support the findings. e. To what extent contradictory data are taken into account. f. Whether the researcher critically examined their own role, potential bias and influence during analysis and select of data for presentation.
	<b>Can't Tell</b>		
	<b>No</b>		



<p><b>Comments:</b> <i>“Through the use of IPA three prominent themes have emerged from the interview transcripts”</i> (p.954).          No description of data analysis or explanation of how themes were derived from the data.          As analysis and discussion are intertwined – data is used to provide evidence for their theory. Cannot be claimed as rigorous.</p>			
<p><b>9. Is there a clear statement of findings?</b></p>	<p><b>Yes</b></p>		<p><b>HINT: Consider</b></p> <p>a. If the findings are explicit?</p> <p>b. If there is adequate discussion of the evidence both for and against the researcher’s arguments</p> <p>c. If the researcher has discussed the credibility of their findings (e.g. triangulation, respondent validation, more than one analyst).</p> <p>d. If the findings are discussed in relation to the original research question.</p>
	<p><b>Can’t Tell</b></p>		
	<p><b>No</b></p>		
<p><b>Comments:</b> The findings are explicitly stated <i>“From these preliminary findings, care leavers’ experience of transition to university appears to be influenced by the identity of care leaver, the presence of role models in their lives and the nature and level of parenting experienced.”</i> (P.957)          I do not believe adequate discussion around evidence for and against researchers’ argument was there. Findings were used to argue a theory and furthered by other researchers’ evidence. Credibility of findings are not discussed and as questions asked during interviews were not explicitly stated I wonder how much was found from looking for it e.g. <i>“care leavers experience of role models was investigated during the interview process, leading to the development of the theme “lack of positive care leaver role model”</i> (p955). – however only 2 participants are noted as talking of care leaver role models.</p>			
<p><b>Section C: Will the research help locally?</b></p>			
<p><b>10. How valuable is the research?</b></p>	<p><b>Valuable</b></p>		<p><b>HINT: Consider</b></p> <p>a. If the researcher discusses the contribution the study makes to existing knowledge or understanding (e.g. do they consider the finding in relation to the current practice or policy, or relevant research-based literature.</p> <p>b. If they identified new areas where research is necessary.</p>
	<p><b>Reasonable</b></p>		
	<p><b>Limited</b></p>		

			c. If the researchers have discussed whether or how the findings can be transferred to other populations or considered other ways the research may be used.
<p><b>Comments:</b> No discussion of the relevance of these findings to the wider understanding or context is made. No discussion of further researcher. <i>“The findings from this study will inform the longitudinal stage of this research, which aims to explore care leavers’ transitions to university, through a series of interviews, as their transition occurs.” (P.957).</i></p>			
11. Does the research answer my own research questions?	Yes		<b>Hint; Consider</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Does it provide insight into your question?</li> <li>- Does it add to your knowledge base?</li> </ul>
	Can't Tell		
	No		
<p><b>Comments:</b> It provides three themes and evidence that contribute to directly answering my research question.</p>			
<p><b>Conclusion:</b> Although this papers transparency is questionable the paper contributes clear knowledge to my research question and thus is valuable.</p>			

## Appendix 2: Translation and Synthesis Comparison

	Rice (2002)	Schumm et al. (2010)	Britten et al. (2002)	Toye et al. (2013)	Jamal et al. (2013)	Campbell et al. (2003)	Atkins et al. (2008)	Greig (2016)
<b>No. papers</b>	20 studies	14 studies	4 studies	77 studies	19 studies	10 studies	44 studies	6 studies
<b>Topic</b>	Professional development schools	Patients decision making – (medical procedures)	Lay meaning of medicines.	Chronic pain	School environment on health	Experience of diabetes and diabetes care	TB medication adherence	Attitudes towards ability grouping.
<b>1</b>	“Themes were <u>collected</u> using Open Coding strategies” (Creswell, 1998).	“the first, then second order constructs were systematically <u>identified.</u> ”	“Careful reading of the chosen papers in order to <u>identify</u> the main concepts”	“Reading and rereading... to <u>identify</u> and describe the concepts.” NVivo 9 software.	“Reading... memos were used to <u>describe</u> second order constructs.”	“Lists <u>summarising</u> the authors original findings, using their terms and concepts were drawn up.”	“the process of <u>extracting</u> metaphors and emerging themes.” Summarise main themes.	“Reading... to <u>identify</u> themes highlighted by the authors”
<b>2</b>	“themes relating to different aspects... were <u>categorized</u> ”	“From second order constructs, third order <u>constructs were developed</u> ”	“Looked across the different papers for <u>common</u> and recurring concepts”	<u>Combined</u> authors description of second order concepts and our interpretation to form raw data for synthesis.	“Studies were... <u>grouped</u> according to... topics”	“At the bottom of list, “ <u>key concepts</u> ” were identified”	Created a grid “with the emphasis on reducing the themes into relevant <u>categories</u> as we progressed.”  Thematic	“followed the process of a critical synopsis”

							Analysis.	
3	“Within these categories... subcategories or emergent themes could be <u>formed</u> .”	“Individual papers, themes and concepts were agreed upon, they were <u>compared</u> systematically across studies.”	Developed a grid to explicitly <u>compare</u> concepts. Used Schutz’s notion.	The team were given a list of second order constructs to <u>organise</u> into shared meaning through <u>comparison</u> .	“Key concepts from individual studies... were synthesised, which resulted in lists of <u>overarching themes</u> .”	<u>Compared</u> side by side and relationships between concepts drawn with arrows and lines.	Reciprocal translation – “ <u>Comparing</u> the themes and concepts from paper 1 with paper 2... and so on.”	“I then listed each theme and corresponding language, using original terms... and <u>compared</u> these original themes”
4	Check by another researcher.  “themes were <u>categorized</u> using a framework created from <u>theories</u> about...”	“Translation can then <u>give rise</u> to higher order, over-arching concepts across studies.”	Second order interpretations <u>arising</u> from each paper.	“The team met to discuss their categorisation and definitions.”  “Developed a structure of <u>categories</u> that ‘made sense’ of the developing team analysis.”	“ <u>Translating</u> studies into one another <u>to produce</u> ‘meta-themes’.	“A systematic search... for the <u>presence or absence</u> of these concepts”  “The papers were found to <u>cluster</u> into three ‘sets’.”	“listed the translated themes and subthemes in a table, <u>juxtaposed</u> with secondary themes derived from authors interpretations.”	“reviewed and <u>interpreted</u> the matrix to determine relationships between studies and concepts.
5		Reciprocal analysis followed	By reading the concepts and	“construct a <u>diagram</u> to	“We extracted findings, and then	“these concepts were brought	“Developed an <u>overarching</u>	Developed a line-of-argument

		by a final line of argument <u>syntheses</u> .	interpretations. .. establish the <u>relationship</u> between”	develop and refine our line of argument.”	<u>compared and</u> contrasted these findings with the findings of a second study and the resulting synthesis... then contrasted with a third study.”	together to form a ‘line of argument’ <u>synthesis</u> ”	<u>model</u> that linked together the translations and authors interpretations”	<u>synthesis</u> .
6			“second order interpretations of the original studies from which we <u>constructed</u> (third-order) interpretations.		“ <u>Synthesizing</u> the translation... of these meta-themes to develop a ‘line of argument’.”			

### Appendix 3: Theme Extraction

Paper	Hollingworth, K. E. (2012). Participation in social, leisure and informal learning activities among care leavers in England: positive outcomes for educational participation. <i>Child &amp; Family Social Work</i> , 17(4), 438-447.		
Aims	“This paper will examine the ways in which social, leisure and informal learning activities could be said to integrate this highly disadvantaged group of young people into their social worlds and help to facilitate a broadly defined education.” (p.440)		
Participants	5 LA in England; 32 Care Leavers 18-24yrs who showed ‘educational promise’; 14 professional and carers.		
Method	Semi-structured interviews x 2;	Analysis	Conceptual framework; ‘education in its broadest sense’ and integration into society.
Theme 1: Engaging in sports			
<p>Authors own language:</p> <p>Playing football was popular among those participating in our research</p> <p>She had acquired a large <u>network</u> of friends and had developed a very active social life through football club.</p> <p><i>“I spend like quite a lot of time with them... just cos there’s <u>so many different people we can talk to and do stuff with.</u>” (p.440).</i></p> <p>Through which many had been able to <u>develop friendships</u> and widen their social networks.</p> <p>Participating in sports activities or clubs for many years and this had provided an important source of <u>stability and consistency</u> in their lives.</p>		<p>My interpretation; Involvement/ participation?</p> <p>Being involved in sporting teams and clubs provided CEI with opportunities to socialise and build social networks. It additionally provided a sense of stability and consistency in their lives.</p> <p><u>Note: only football given as an example + 1 quote.</u></p>	

Theme 2: Volunteering	
<p>Authors own language:</p> <p>Her social worker had encouraged her to volunteer because of her own experience... and her <u>interest</u> in working with children.</p> <p>Peer mentoring enabled Gabrielle to reflect on her own experience in care, increase her sense of <u>self as a learner</u> and to feel that she was making a positive contribution to society.</p> <p>Her voluntary work experience helped her <u>identify</u> the career she wanted in the future... and prompted her to undertake a social work degree course.</p> <p><i>“And so then I kind of saw where my <u>passion</u> lies.” (p.441).</i></p> <p>Volunteering formed a major part of Louise’s <u>life and identity</u>.</p> <p>Involvement in voluntary work had had a significant impact upon her <u>attitude</u> towards formal education; she wanted to pursue her <u>interests</u> in theatre through formal education.</p>	<p>My interpretation; Involvement/participation</p> <p>Being involved with volunteering opportunities allowed participants to explore their interests and with this develop their identity including aspects of self-esteem and their view of themselves in formal education.</p>
Theme 3: The arts	

<p>Authors own language:</p> <p>Expressive arts were a prime outlet for young people to develop their skills and abilities.</p> <p><i>“dancing kind of got me through all that [...] if I didn’t do dance I don’t really know what I’d do.” (p.442).</i></p> <p>Dancing/expressive arts had a direct impact on her well-being and feelings of self-worth and helped her to create a new more positive identity for herself.</p> <p>Her love of dance prompted her to re-enter full time education.</p> <p>Suggests dancing/expressive arts can provide important opportunities for young people, open doors and help them to pursue their educational and career aspirations.</p> <p><i>“I realised that if I wanted to do something I can do something for my life.” (p.442).</i></p> <p>Helped transform Tom’s views on the importance of education and his learning identity.</p>	<p>My interpretation; Involvement?</p> <p>Involvement in the arts provided opportunities for young people to develop their identity, skills and passions.</p> <p>Through engaging in arts they were passionate about their sense of self positively grew and enabled them to engage in education as a result.</p>
<p>Theme 4: Professionals and carers</p>	



<p>Authors own language:</p> <p>Support that had been given to them... which had made it possible for them to access.</p> <p>Sally was helped by her leaving care worker into voluntary work... to help her decide whether childcare was indeed the career she wanted it to pursue in the future.</p> <p><i>“cos I was interested in children and that kind of... well I weren’t sure where I wanted to go yet” (p.443).</i></p> <p>Facilitated invaluable informal connections with community groups and local leisure activities.</p> <p><i>“which one of the people who worked for the Care and After Team, he knew somebody.” (p.443).</i></p>	<p>My interpretation; Support?</p> <p>Researchers found the support they received from professionals and carers was invaluable in providing opportunities to access activities that were of interest to them, which contributed to their continuation of education.</p>
<p>Theme 5: School professionals</p>	
<p>Authors own language:</p> <p>A crucial role to play in actively encouraging young people in care to take part in extracurricular activities in their leisure time.</p> <p>Staff who believed in her potential and recognised her abilities in the area of the</p>	<p>My interpretation; Support/Encouragement?</p> <p>School professionals provided significant influence over the direction of participants’ lives. By offering their support and encouragement they helped to foster skills and interests</p>

<p>performing arts.</p> <p><i>“He went up to my head of year and said ‘look, she’s got talent, I want her to do it’ and that’s what got me into drama.” (p.443).</i></p> <p>They helped to foster Lucy’s interests... heavily influenced Lucy’s ambition to study at university.</p>	<p>which resulted in participants following these interests through education.</p>
<p>Theme 6: The school or college environment.</p>	
<p>Authors own language:</p> <p>Simply attending school or college appeared to be a major facilitator</p> <p>Frequent placement moves sometimes meant school or college was the only consistent aspect of their lives.</p> <p>Young people’s experiences highlight how important stable schooling and attendance are.</p>	<p>My interpretation; Involvement?</p> <p>Attendance at school is shown to be a facilitator for these young people accessing opportunities to foster their interests, maintain social networks and it provided a consistent aspect of life.</p>
<p>Theme 7: Involvement in community or faith group</p>	
<p>Authors own language:</p> <p>Involvement in community or faith groups was a major facilitator for building social networks, developing skills and giving young people the opportunity to utilize them.</p>	<p>My interpretation; involvement</p> <p>Involvement in community or faith groups provided participants with an opportunity to develop skills, interests and also a sense of</p>

These experiences had clearly influenced her education and employment aspirations; she was studying for a degree.

*“I sort of wanted to give something back” (p.444).*

purpose.

#### Appendix 4: Developing Individual Paper Themes

Paper; Hollingworth (2012)			
	Organising/emerging/overarching theme	Authors themes/ Sub themes	Original text
<p><b><u>Theme 1:</u></b> <u>Involvement/ Participation</u></p>	<p>Being involved in organisations, teams and clubs provides CEI with motivation to pursue higher education. This is achieved as they provide opportunities for CEI to explore and develop their skills and interests which can provide motivation to return to education to pursue these interests. It can foster a positive sense of self and reframe education and themselves as a learner. It additionally provides an opportunity to socialise and build social networks which supports wellbeing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Engage in Sports</li> <li>- Volunteering</li> <li>- The Arts</li> <li>- The school or college environment</li> <li>- Involvement in community or faith groups</li> </ul>	<p><i>She had acquired a large <u>network</u> of friends and had developed a very active social life through football club.</i></p> <p><i>“and so then I kind of saw where my <u>passion</u> lies.”</i></p> <p><i>“I realised that if I wanted to do something, I can do something for my life.”</i></p> <p><i>Her love of dance prompted her to re-enter full time education</i></p> <p><i>These experiences had clearly influenced her education and employment aspirations; she was studying for a degree.</i></p>
<p><b><u>Theme 2:</u></b> <u>Support/ Encouragement</u></p>	<p>Support and encouragement provided by professionals around the CEI has a significant influence upon their decision to pursue higher education. Professionals were able to provide</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Professional and Carers</li> <li>- School Professionals</li> </ul>	<p><i>“which one of the people who worked for the Care and After Team, he knew somebody.”</i></p> <p><i>“he went up to my head of year and said “look, she’s got talent, I want her to do it”... and that’s</i></p>

	opportunities through their social networks that tapped into individuals' skills and interests.		<i>what got me into drama.”</i>  <i>They helped to foster Lucy's interests... heavily influenced Lucy's ambition to study at university.</i>
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### Appendix 5: Synthesis of Studies

Themes/ concepts	Hollingworth (2012)	Bluff et al (2012)	Mayall et al (2015)	Cotton et al (2014)	Ward et al (2015)
<b>Supportive Relationships</b>	<p><i>“he went up to my head of year and said ‘look, she’s got talent, I want her to do it’ and that’s what got me into drama.”</i></p> <p>They helped to foster Lucy’s interests, heavily influencing her ambition to study at university.</p>	<p>Her partner received encouragement in filling out the application forms and this has not been her experience of parenting.</p> <p><i>“you become a number, a case file... I think, if you were actually parents, we should be taken into care by now.”</i></p>	<p><i>“it was that encouragement from her that I think was the biggest thing”</i></p> <p><i>“they were all saying to me, you know, ‘why are you just working here, why when you can go and do more?’”</i></p>	<p>Encouragement from school or college staff, encouragement from foster carers or birth family.</p> <p><i>“they were very keen to get me to think about academic work as well... so they turned it around for me really.”</i></p> <p><i>“It wasn’t until my head of sixth form, we got on really well, she was ‘you can go to uni’”</i></p>	<p>CEI... who had the confidence to pursue higher education by their mid-20s had encouragement from foster parents or in one case staff in an independence unit.</p> <p><i>“He was always like, ‘why can’t you do it, why can’t you go to university.’”</i></p> <p>Valued her relationship... who had treated her with respect</p>
<b>Positive Self-</b>			<i>“I knew how she felt,</i>	<i>“cos I wanted to</i>	Had taken some time

<p><b>perception</b></p>			<p><i>and I could empathise with everything”</i></p> <p>Believed their care experiences would help them to be an empathetic and effective social worker.</p>	<p><i>make sure that it’s the children who are listened to rather than the adults.”</i></p> <p>Their care experience influenced their desire to come to university to study a particular course such as Social Work</p> <p>Their time in care had made them more determined to succeed.</p> <p><i>“I proved them that you shouldn’t judge a book by its cover.”</i></p>	<p>to turn their lives around but had achieved confidence in shaping it.</p> <p><i>“you really need to sort of be ready to do the course emotionally.”</i></p> <p>Care leavers’ growing realisation that they were in charge of their destinies; that they could succeed in their career aims</p>
<p><b>Positive Role Models</b></p>		<p><i>“I wanted to know that people from less privileged</i></p>			

		<p><i>background could make their way in life and do really well</i></p> <p><i>“Meeting John... that is in uni... that filled me with confidence... and I was like, “if he can do it, I can do it, it’s not impossible.”</i></p> <p><i>“Grandad was my biggest role model because he went to university... and he loved Open University”</i></p>			
<b>Expectations</b>		<p><i>“you know care leavers don’t go to university”</i></p> <p><i>“they know what they’re talking about,</i></p>	<p><i>“it’s quiet negative. Yes it’s quiet negative about ex-looked after children”</i></p> <p><i>“I don’t want anyone</i></p>	<p><i>“I proved them that you shouldn’t judge a book my its cover.”</i></p> <p><i>“they were very keen to get me to think</i></p>	<p><i>“she must be struggling with the fact she was brought up on care”</i></p> <p><i>“I think it is part of my</i></p>



		<p><i>and so you think 'you're not going to do it'"</i></p> <p><i>"I did know that the news and stuff you hear rubbish things"</i></p>	<p><i>to feel sorry for me. I mean that's things that's happened in the past and I've overcome them."</i></p> <p><i>"I don't want that stigma basically"</i></p>	<p><i>about academic work as well... so they turned it around for me really."</i></p> <p><i>"It wasn't until the head of sixth form... and she was you can go to uni."</i></p>	<p><i>identity... I think other people feel it is more of an issue than I do".</i></p> <p><i>"It's not always the case and it does make you feel a bit of second-class citizen almost"</i></p>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<p><i>Her love of dance prompted her to re-enter full time education</i></p> <p><i>These experiences had clearly influenced her education and employment aspirations; she was studying for a degree.</i></p> <p><i>"and so, then I kind of saw where my</i></p>				

	<i>passion lies.”</i>				
<b>Practical Support</b>	<p><i>Cite support given to them... which had made it possible to access... advising them of an activity or group that might be of interest... providing transportation or financial support.</i></p> <p><i>Sally was helped by her leaving care worker into voluntary work at a nursery.</i></p> <p><i>One of the people who work for the Care and After Care Team, he knew somebody.</i></p>			<p><i>Access to funding from their local authority varied enormously and represented something akin to a postcode lottery.</i></p> <p><i>“We worked out that all the help I get and stuff”</i></p>	



How can Educational Psychologists support Looked After Children and Care Leavers  
in their journey to achieve a place at University?

**Researcher:** Hannah-Naomi Francis

**Research Supervisor:** Dave Lumsdon

You have been invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide if you would like to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it involves. Please take time to read the following information and decide if you would like to take part or not.

**What is the purpose of this study?**

The aim of this study is to explore the factors that support Looked After Children and Care Leavers in their journey to achieve a place at university.

It intends to contribute to the knowledge base of factors that contribute to a positive education experience for Looked After Children and Care Leavers. It hopes to promote what works well and provide ideas for improvements of the professional practice of Educational Psychologists involved in supporting Looked After Children and Care Leavers. This research aims to explore how Educational Psychologists can use their roles to more effectively support Looked After Children and Care Leavers in their educational achievements.

**Who can take part?**

I would like to invite any person, aged between 18-25 years old, born in England, who has achieved a place on a Higher Education course and has experience of being a Looked After Child for a year or more by an English Local Authority.

**Do I have to take part?**

No. It is up to you to decide if you would like to take part. If you agree to take part you will be asked to complete a consent form. All participants have the right to withdraw at any time. You can choose the extent of your participation in this study. You do not have to answer questions you are not comfortable with and have the right to request the removal of your

data. Data can be removed from the study up until the end of analysis, when all raw data will be destroyed.

### **What will happen if I take part?**

Should you agree to take part in this study, [*Gatekeeper*] (Project Officer- Looked after children and care leavers) from the [*University*], Widening Participation Team, will contact yourself to arrange a time and place to participate.

An internet questionnaire will be delivered to your university email address to complete. This will ask for demographic information and a brief overview of your care and education history.

Upon arrival, I will explain the procedure and you will have a chance to ensure all questions you have are suitably answered.

You will be asked to take part in a semi-structured interview. This should take approximately one hour and does not require any preparation on your part. I am interested in discussing your experiences and how these have impacted on your education and in gaining a place on your university course. The interviews will be audio recorded and will be transcribed. Once I have analysed the data, the audio recording will be destroyed.

After the interview you will receive verbal and written debrief information with my research supervisor's and my contact details should you have any questions.

Once I have analysed the data, factors highlighted throughout yours and other participants interviews will be discussed with a group of Educational Psychologists and Educational Psychologists in training. They will not have access to your audio recording or transcripts and all data will be anonymous. The group will be asked to explore these themes and discuss how they could best support the factors identified.

Should you wish to follow my research journey and read the results, I will confirm your contact details and you will receive updates via email as to the progress of my research.

### **Are there any risks/benefits involved?**

This research hopes to contribute positively to the live experiences of Looked After Children and Care Leavers. By eliciting your voices, we hope to gain a greater understanding of your experiences and build greater knowledge of the factors that contribute to a positive experience of education.

There are no foreseen risks in participation of this study. However, by taking part in the study, participants may reflect on issues that they were previously unaware or illicit a feeling

of discomfort or emotional distress. Should this occur you will be encouraged to invoke your right to decline to answer or withdraw your participation and make use of appropriate services.

### **Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?**

You have been contacted via your University/ Virtual School representative. I will not have collected or have knowledge of any potential participants until you agree to take part.

All data will be treated confidentially. All names will be coded so that they are not identifiable, and a pseudonym will be assigned and use in the research write up. The university you attend will not be specified.

Data will be kept electronically. It will be kept in a secure, zipped and password protected file. It will be appropriately coded, and pseudonyms will be used in storage. Raw data will be deleted after data analysis is complete. If participants request it, their data can be removed from the study and destroyed up until the completion of data analysis.

Consent forms will be scanned into electronic format and kept separate to the data collected. Once converted into electronic format they will be disposed of using confidential waste bins. The electronic consent forms will be kept in a secure, zipped and password protected file upon Newcastle University's secure system. Consent forms will be destroyed after 5 years.

### **Has this study been approved by an ethics committee?**

This study has been approved by Newcastle University Ethical Committee.

### **Who shall I contact if I have questions about this study?**

If you have any questions please feel free to contact myself; [Hannah-Naomi Francis](mailto:h.francis3@newcastle.ac.uk) at [h.francis3@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:h.francis3@newcastle.ac.uk) or [Dave Lumsdon](mailto:david.lumsdon@newcastle.ac.uk) at [david.lumsdon@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:david.lumsdon@newcastle.ac.uk)

### **What Next?**

**Thank you** for taking the time to read this information sheet. If you have decided to take part in this study, please fill out the corresponding consent form and return to [gatekeeper] (Project Officer- Looked After Children and Care Leavers) from the [*University*] Widening Participation Team.

## **Appendix 7: CEI Debrief Sheet**



## **Research Project Debriefing Sheet**

### How can Educational Psychologists support Looked After Children and Care Leavers in their journey to achieve a place at University?

**Researcher:** Hannah-Naomi Francis ([h.francis3@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:h.francis3@newcastle.ac.uk))

**Research Supervisor:** Dave Lumsdon ([david.lumsdon@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:david.lumsdon@newcastle.ac.uk))

### **Thank you for participating in this study.**

#### **Why did I take part in this research?**

The aim of this study was to explore the factors that support Looked After Children and Care Leavers in their journey to achieve a place at university.

By taking part you have contributed to the knowledge base of factors that contribute and hinder a positive education experience for Looked After Children and Care Leavers. It hopes to promote what works well and provide ideas for adjustment to the practices of professionals involved in supporting Looked After Children and Care Leavers to make their support more effective. In particular, this research hopes to explore how Educational Psychologist can use their roles to more effectively support Looked After Children and Care Leavers in their educational achievements.

#### **How is my data stored and kept anonymous?**

All data will be treated confidentially. All names will be coded so that they are not identifiable, and a pseudonym will be assigned. The university you attend will not be specified.

Data will be kept electronically. It will be kept in a secure, zipped and password protected file. It will be appropriately coded, and pseudonyms will be used in storage. Raw data will be deleted after data analysis is complete. No other parties will have access to the raw data collected besides myself and my supervisor. If participants request it, their data can be removed from the study and destroyed up until the completion of data analysis.

Consent forms will be scanned into electronic format and kept separate to the data collected. Once converted into electronic format they will be disposed of using confidential waste bins. The electronic consent forms will be kept in a secure, zipped and password protected file upon Newcastle University's secure system. Consent forms will be destroyed after 5 years.

### **What happens next?**

I will transcribe our conversations about your experiences. I will then use Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis to explore yours and other participants' data. This method has been chosen as it ensures your personal experiences and perceptions will be explored and results will represent your unique and valuable voice and experience.

Once the data has been analysed, the factors highlighted in your and other participants' interviews will be discussed with a group of Educational Psychologists and Educational Psychologists in training. They will not have access to your audio recording or transcripts and all data will be anonymous. The group will be asked to explore these themes and discuss how they could best support the factors identified.

### **What if I want to withdraw?**

You are able to choose the extent of your participation. Should you believe a part of the recorded interview did not accurately reflect your opinion, this can be clarified or stricken from the record and so will not be used in analysis.

All participants have the right to withdraw at any time. If any requests are made for data to be destroyed, I will comply with this request and remove all your data from the study.

### **I have some questions.**

If you have any questions please feel free to contact myself; [Hannah- Naomi Francis](mailto:h.francis3@newcastle.ac.uk) (the researcher) at [h.francis3@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:h.francis3@newcastle.ac.uk) or my research supervisor; [Dave Lumsdon](mailto:david.lumsdon@newcastle.ac.uk) at [david.lumsdon@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:david.lumsdon@newcastle.ac.uk)

### **For further support and advice.**

If you feel any level of emotional distress or discomfort, please feel free to contact the services below;

[\[Gatekeeper\]](#) (Project Officer- Looked After Children and Care Leavers)

[\[University\]](#) Widening Participation Team.

[\[Gatekeeper email address\]](#)

[Mental Health Advisory Service](#)

[\[Address, email and contact information\]](#)

Appendix 8: CEI Consent Form



# Newcastle University Research Project Consent Form

## How can Educational Psychologists support Looked After Children and Care Leavers in their journey to achieve a place at University?

**Researcher:** Hannah-Naomi Francis

- 1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information provided for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered.
- 2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and that this will not affect my legal rights.
- 3. I understand that any personal information collected during the study will be anonymised and remain confidential.
- 4. I understand should the researcher feel I am at risk of serious harm they have a duty to inform the university through the relevant procedures.
- 5. I agree to take part in the above study.

**Name of Participant**

**Date**

**Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Participants university email address**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Researcher**

Hannah Francis

[H.Francis3@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:H.Francis3@newcastle.ac.uk)

**Name of University Supervisor**

Dave Lumsdon

[David.Lumsdon@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:David.Lumsdon@newcastle.ac.uk)



## Appendix 9: CEI Interview Schedule



## Interview Schedule

### How can Educational Psychologists support Looked After Children and Care Leavers in their journey to achieve a place at university?

**Researcher:** Hannah-Naomi Francis

**Research Supervisor:** Dave Lumsdon

### Introduction

- Information from participant has been checked (online questionnaire)
- All participant's questions have been answered
- Explain aim of research
- Explain EP's role
- Remind participant of their right to withdraw or not answer questions.
- Consent form is signed

### Interview

- 1) Please could you tell me a bit about your education, how did you find it overall?
- 2) How do you think your educational experience contributed to getting to university?
  - What impact did that have on you?
  - Can you remember anything specific?
- 3) Had you always wanted to go to university?
  - Why was that?
  - When did you start thinking about going?
- 4) What was your motivation to attend university?
- 5) What helped you to realise you wanted to do \*chosen course\*?
- 6) Did you receive support from anybody in particular?
- 7) Have you ever had involvement with an Educational Psychologist before?

### Prompt questions

- Can you tell me a bit more about that?

- Was there anything else you felt?
- Can you give me an example of this?
- Can you tell me how that impacted on you?

### If Distressed

“I can see you find this upsetting. Would you like to take a break now, or move on to a different topic? We can always come back to this point later if you feel like it. If you want to stop the interview altogether that’s fine too.” (p.113; Forrester, 2010).

### Debrief

- Verbal Debrief
- Provide participant with debrief sheet
- Check email is correct should participant want research updates.

## Appendix 10: IPA Emergent Themes

<p>Teacher approaching you</p> <p>Valued as an individual</p> <p>Genuine Relationships</p> <p>Feeling of connectedness</p> <p>Flexibility in approaches</p>	<p>64 <b>Hannah:</b> what was it about them that supported you do you</p> <p>65 think?</p> <p>66 <b>Nasha:</b> Urm, I don't know. I guess it's, you start off getting to</p> <p>67 know them because <u>they take an interest in what you're</u></p> <p>68 <u>actually doing</u> and if you enjoy that subject and you're</p> <p>69 interested in it, you, you appreciate any teacher coming up to</p> <p>70 you and sort of making the time and effort to invest it in you.</p> <p>71 urm But I think also they had an <u>openness and a willingness to</u></p> <p>72 talk urm and I guess sort of doing stuff that wouldn't be seen</p> <p>73 as proper incorrect but doing it anyway, so it's sort of showing</p> <p>74 that they've made an investment in you. For example, the</p> <p>75 media teacher taking the time out to stay later with me and</p> <p>76 take me home. Maybe some people would not see that as the</p> <p>77 orthodox but that urm <u>shows me that someone's actually taking</u></p> <p>78 <u>the time and effort to care about me personally.</u> urm and the</p> <p>79 music teacher she probably shouldn't have done it but urm I</p> <p>80 was sleeping on the streets for quite a bit of time and she</p> <p>81 ended up giving me some money and some food so doing stuff</p> <p>82 like that</p> <p>83 <b>Hannah:</b> ye, so it was making that extra effort almost would</p> <p>84 you say?</p> <p>85 <b>Nasha:</b> Ye</p>	<p>Receive positive attention for your work?</p> <p>Enjoyment of learning as significant in building relationships.</p> <p>Teacher approaching you – being noticed.</p> <p><i>Investing in someone – alludes to showing belief in their abilities, seeing something special, Being valued as a individual.</i></p> <p>Teacher being open to a <i>reciprocal relationship – building a feeling of connectiveness. A genuine two-sided relationship.</i></p> <p>Aware of the element of risk – not bound to school roles, <i>showing flexibility in their approaches allowed trust and relationships to be built.</i></p> <p><i>Time and effort are important – not experienced this before? A feeling of being a burden previously?</i></p> <p><i>Genuine care shown through time and effort.</i></p> <p>Significance of this support at the time, large impact, providing for her basic needs.</p>
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	86	<b>Hannah:</b> Please tell me if I'm interpreting this wrong. <b>Nasha:</b> No no, that's completely right.	
New confidence Ongoing foster family relationships Relationships as motivation	87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98	<b>Hannah:</b> ok great urm, so I urm wondering about you as a person, how would you describe yourself now and has that changed throughout your education do you think? <b>Nasha:</b> Urm well I'd say the friends I've made at uni they would describe me as more confident and outgoing, and urm before I was very shy and the <u>foster mum that I'm still in touch with, she, she remembers how I was when I first came and I couldn't make eye contact</u> and I ye, very different I'd say and ye I think the only thing that's stayed consistent is my <u>people pleasing nature</u> . Which is good but sometimes is bad ye. <b>Hannah:</b> ok <b>Nasha:</b> Does that answer that?	<i>At university feel confident and safe to be outgoing?</i> <u>Reflected in her presentation during interview where she seems to have a high level of interpersonal skills and her use of language is sophisticated and confident in nature.</u> Struggled to make eye contact – how did this affect her ability to form relationships? Showing a large transformation in her confidence, <i>reflects her feelings of self-worth?</i> Wants to receive positive attention from others. Time and effort important due to her desire to be liked? <i>Linked to attachment styles. A motivating factor for her – responsive to praise and positive attention?</i> <i>Her follow up question shows an example of her people pleasing nature – wants to be helpful – be aware of social desirability effect.</i>





### Appendix 13: Evidence of across Studies Themes

Master Themes	Superordinate Themes	Subordinate themes	Example Quotes and analytical commentary <u>Key:</u> [Participant. Line number] <i>Quotes in italics</i> – analytical commentary in plain text
<b>Relational Approach</b>	<b>Key Adults</b> A range of key adults noted as important for educational success. Relationships appeared central to their experiences.	<b>Genuine</b> Relationships were built on a genuine connection and care. Key adults showed genuine care through their time and effort, welcoming students outside of class time, offering company and emotional support.	<p>[Emma.80] <i>“ye very engaged with the students and always offered like free time for her to just go, I spent like, every week, just went to her she probably got really annoyed with me”</i> – Teachers showed genuine care for students through her availability and openness for them.</p> <p>[Nasha.363] <i>“There was a particular member of staff in the pastoral team and then the head of year as well was very, very supportive. But them two they weren’t the assigned person... what are they called the assigned people is it...”</i> - Relationships were built with those who were available and open for connection. It was a natural formation not an assigned person.</p> <p>[May.611] <i>“the way she actually cared about her students like she was just there for everything”</i> - Communicates a genuine care for students and that this relational aspect was important for her motivation in education. Acknowledgement of being there for everything implies a complete sense of security and trust to support individual holistically.</p> <p>[Terry.166] <i>“Urm ye, I think I had teachers I liked and teachers I didn’t like and that I think that’s, but I think I disliked most of them”</i> – a lack of notable relationships, leading to a feeling of me vs them? Lack of engagement due to lack of relationships. A sense of this being normal.</p> <p>[May.141] <i>“but it was that she came to me and was like you know “I’m here if you need me”. So, I just kind of like, took her up on the offer and ye we bonded.”</i> – Offer of support and recognition of her situation. Seemed key she was able to choose to accept. Sense of control.</p> <p>[Nasha.71] <i>“But I think also they had an openness and a willingness to talk”</i> – reciprocal relationships, approachable. Interpersonal skills important.</p>
		<b>Sense of Belonging</b> Feelings of	<p>[Nasha.349] <i>“knowing that there were people there that genuinely cared about me and were invested in me.”</i>- School held positive relationships for her, a place of comfort and safety. A feeling of belonging at school compared to lack of belonging at college.</p>

		<p>belonging seemed to relate to the quality of relationships experienced within their educational environment and the extent to which they felt seen, supported, and cared.</p>	<p>[Emma.125] <i>"I didn't really have that many friends, or ones I was, you know, close enough with that I could, you know, disclose things to, ye so it was mainly just those two teachers."</i> - Found her place amongst teachers rather than peers. Teachers as main source of emotional support.</p> <p>[May. 395] <i>"and so, we got it done, like we got it done literally it was like 2 days before the actual deadline."</i> - Use of word 'we' to symbolise a joint effort, relational approach important in her ability to succeed. A feeling of a joint endeavour, connectedness and belonging.</p> <p>[Terry.242] <i>"I don't know, in school I always felt like, a problem, you know, with the teachers, I always felt like they were out to get me, I don't know."</i> - A sense of me vs them, closely linked with not being heard. Appeared school was uninviting and a place of conflict, not comfort and support – alludes to a lack of belonging.</p>
	<p><b>Expectations</b> The expectations of others had a profound impact on their believe that they could achieve.</p>	<p><b>Encouragement</b> Encouragement from others was important for their believe and ambitions. Despite high levels of encouragement, self-doubt continued to be a strong factor.</p>	<p>[May. 109] <i>"she'd really believed in me like as a person. Rather than like, me finding inspiration from somebody else, she kind of believed in me to be able to do it."</i> - Having someone with high expectations for her to encourage and support her holistically. Not experienced this before.</p> <p>[Nasha.250] <i>"my foster mum was one of them that was very... making sure the school were in line and keeping the toe and when she didn't know me that well she was still ringing pastoral every day and seeing if I was alright"</i> - By her foster mum taking an active interest in schools this encouraged her to positively engage. Importance placed on education made it more of a focus.</p> <p>[Emma.309] <i>"ye my teachers did [believe in her] but I didn't really believe them"</i> - teachers held high expectations of her, however, she struggled to align her own self-belief.</p> <p>[May.574] <i>"I mean he's said it to me when I was like probably like, probably just going into sixth form and I laughed about it and thought I don't think, I could never do that job but now I'm actually thinking oh maybe I could do that job"</i> – Disbelief in encouragement but it had a lasting impact.</p> <p>[Nasha.114] <i>"Well for a long time, even, even still now, you don't really believe them."</i> – takes a</p>



			long time to build self-belief and disprove negative through patterns. Need constant encouragement.
		<p><b>Subjective Norms</b></p> <p>Subjective norms often pre-determined a pathway for participants. This was closely tied with stigma. Encouragement and high expectations challenged these subjective norms.</p>	<p>[Emma.235] “<i>ye, my school was in a very middle-class, middle-class area so it was kind of expected that you went to university</i>”– The normative pathway for students.</p> <p>[May.65] “<i>like with my background it had always been like you do the school that you had to and then, because they changed it from our year to 18, so it was just do like a really naff college course and then that’s it, you done, you don’t ever have to like do any sort of education ever again.</i>”– The normative pathway for students. Education as something to get through and no value placed on further education. Lack of possibilities for other pathways noted.</p> <p>[Terry.150] “<i>a lot of teachers like, they assume stuff [...] like if they see you as a troublemaker from the start, they’d just always come at you like that.</i>” – Assumptions about care status lead to a low expectation and a lack of encouragement. Pre-determined his educational experience.</p> <p>[Nasha.186] “<i>Well, at negative points in my life, I guess it would make me feel that the people saying you could do it, were sort of saying, you could do it but you can only get a C, you can only get that much but it’s still good. It just felt as if it was, I don’t know, a confidence boost that maybe they didn’t believe in. ye, I don’t know</i>” – Encouragement needed to be genuine or they would act to reinforce negative subjective norms and could be limiting to their ambition and motivation.</p> <p>[May.135] “<i>Because at that time I was so embarrassed to say that I was in foster care, because of all the negative connotations that come with it.</i>” – did not want to align herself with low expectations.</p>
	<p><b>Being Heard</b></p> <p>Where discussions were open and available, this</p>	<p><b>Dialogic Space</b></p> <p>Space for informal conversations prompted CEI to seriously think</p>	<p>[Emma.82] “<i>but just speaking to her about all these issues, like and really kind of like, I don’t know, made me even more interested in pursuing it with a degree.</i>” – Room for open conversation cultivated her interest. Able to pursue curiosity and find enjoyment in learning.</p> <p>[May.81] “<i>I don’t know she was just like this amazing person, like I just, like the way that she spoke to you [...] I was thinking like what am I actually going to do with my life</i>” – Conversation with a role model about her experience of university prompted consideration of May’s future.</p>

	acted as a gateway for empowerment, increased engagement and understanding.	about their futures and educational commitments. It was also important for providing emotional support.	<p>[Terry.397] <i>“and he started telling me stuff about what his plans were, what his goals were, I was like, it was, it got me thinking as well like, when he was saying stuff like that and like I wana do something like that, or like get somewhere.”</i> –Importance of informal conversations with friends to prompt consideration about his own future. Presents different possibilities for next steps.</p> <p>[Emma.133] <i>“I started talking, but that didn’t really last for long because my parents, well I say my parents, my mum, wanted to know everything [laughs]. Urm, and I kind of shut down at that point and didn’t want to talk to anyone.”</i> – Importance of a safe, trusted space to openly talk in confidence. Needed a sense of control over it.</p> <p>[Terry.139] <i>“The only time I did gain something from it [LAC review], they had some psychologist come in, after school, and I’d go see him just someone you’d talk to about problems in school. That was quite good.”</i> – Appreciated a neutral person to talk, particularly in consideration of the difficulties with his teachers. Opportunity for emotional and practical support.</p> <p>[May.862] <i>“I knew it was a safe place, I knew I could talk to her, I knew I could say the most stupidest question and not be judged, not judged that’s the wrong word but I don’t know, it was a safe place.”</i> – Important to have a source where informal questions could be asked and not be noted officially in care records. Shows consideration of the downsides of multi-professional communication.</p>
		<p><b>Knowledgeable Others</b></p> <p>Being heard supported their engagement with education by offering support and created space for</p>	<p>[Terry.154] <i>“as well I dunno if I had a problem in my classes, he’d go and sort it out, he’d go straight away and help me out, so I think that was one of the good things.”</i> –Importance of being heard by someone who was able to act upon their opinions.</p> <p>[Emma.229] <i>“ye my form tutor was really good with that. He would take us once a week into the library and we would look at the different, urm, the books, the... urm prospectuses and ye and look at all that, so ye there was a lot of support within school about university school and applying for it.”</i> – Active support for getting into university. Guidance from knowledgeable others.</p> <p>[May.159] <i>“it was just nice to have somebody that, coz like social... my social worker was absolutely amazing, I would not ever say anything negative amount him but he wasn’t very good</i></p>

		<p>CEI to be open to guidance for their future direction.</p>	<p><i>at explaining the actual processes, whereas like that designated person they had at school had obviously like seen it before with other young people but it was just kind of nice to have people there to talk to about it.</i> – importance of having someone who could provide information and guidance around process and producers. Allowed safe explorations of possibilities.</p> <p>[Nasha.699] <i>“so I know a lot of foster carers have not been through the higher education, they left school at 16 and they have no clue. Because that is the experience of mine and still is and they can’t help it, they are trying their hardest urm”</i>– A call for more knowledgeable others to provide guidance on post 16 options.</p> <p>[Terry.337] <i>“Yer, well I guess just having urm, talks throughout the year. I’d say constantly like questioning kids, you know, and getting them thinking about the future”</i> - Highlighted a lack of discussions with key adults about future pathways. A lack of conversations lead to a lack of consideration.</p>
		<p><b>Locus of Control</b> Where participants believed they were not being heard, they had feelings of helplessness and a lack of control. This was contrasted to the power of having their voice heard and being able to make decisions</p>	<p>[May.738] <i>“I just felt like I didn’t have a voice, it was kind of everyone else was just talking for me but not how I would have wanted them to talk to me. So, I don’t think it was representing me, it was just representing like themselves but through me.”</i> - A sense of frustration over a lack of control over how she was portrayed and perceived. A sense of not being understood or consulted.</p> <p>[Nasha.266] <i>“you feel as though your being talked about and not to and that was definitely a case for a lot of them until I sort of gave my confidence a bit more and asserted myself and said what I wanted really...”</i> – feeling of helplessness and lack of control but this was overcome with effort.</p> <p>[Emma.265] <i>“I would like self-harm and things like that and you know people would try and tell me “it’s because of this, that’s why you’re doing it” and I was like “I don’t think it is” so ye”</i> – A sense of others providing their opinion and not effectively listening to her. This had considerable impact on her mental health.</p> <p>[Terry.364] <i>“no, I just felt like, quiet in there. I hated them, from what I can remember they were just depressing being in there, ye.”</i> - Terry discusses finding LAC reviews unhelpful and</p>

		<p>about their future which motivated them to engage.</p>	<p>demotivating due to a lack of voice. A negative impact rather than a supportive mechanism.</p> <p>[Nasha.663] <i>“but it definitely feels amazing that I’m finally doing something I want to do and someone’s actually gave me the break so when I was doing A-levels they said I couldn’t do it. I remember school when I wanted to move up sets coz I felt like I wanted to be more engaged and not with the naughty kids, they wouldn’t let me and just finally [Current university] turned around and said yerp, we believe that you can do it.”</i> – The difference between being heard, and her voice being acted upon was significant. She was visibly happy when discussing this and explained how motivating it was for her. Showed a belief in her abilities to succeed.</p> <p>[May.765] <i>“having that meeting about retaking the year at year 12 was probably that moment. Like having more control over what I would want to do”</i> – Being actively listened to and having an impact on her pathway was a key moment for her in getting to university.</p>
<p><b>Value of Education</b></p>	<p><b>Goals and Focus</b></p> <p>Goals were developed in relation to their understanding of education’s value and impact on life outcomes.</p> <p>Goals provided structure and motivation to</p>	<p><b>Life Outcomes</b></p> <p>Participants acknowledged the importance of education on future life outcomes.</p>	<p>[Terry.65] <i>“I thought it was the only way to get somewhere in life.”</i> – recognition of university on life outcomes.</p> <p>[May.87] <i>“I was thinking like what am I actually going to do with my life, coz I just don’t want to go through the same root as like my family had gone down before, I wanted to like break that tradition type thing... and here I am.”</i> – importance of education as a way to gain positive employment and life outcomes.</p> <p>[Terry.69] <i>“I just thought people at Uni are normally successful”</i> – recognition of higher education’s impact on life outcomes. What does he mean by success?</p> <p>[Nasha.759] <i>“because education is the way out”</i> – Importance of education in breaking cycles of socio-economic difficulties.</p> <p>[Terry. 481] <i>“Yer, I think mainly I got sick of working, especially in a warehouse it’s really depressing so urm... yer no I’m glad, I’m glad I actually decided to go to uni, it’s a better choice.”</i> – recognition of university providing opportunity for more fulfilling job prospects.</p> <p>[May.553] <i>“I’ve kind of not gone down that self-fulfilling prophesy root and I’ve actually changed”</i> – discussion of moving away from stigma related assumptions of CEI and making a better life for</p>

	<p>their engagement and provided a mechanism to place value on their experiences.</p>		<p>herself. Said with pride and a touch of amazement.</p>
		<p><b>Structure</b> Goals provided structure and motivation. It was important that these were co-created with the YP and knowledgeable others.</p>	<p>[Nasha.102] <i>“I’d say that education was a big part of it. Because like I said before, when you’re focusing on something”</i> – Focus of goals provided structure to achieve and motivate herself towards higher education.</p> <p>[Emma.294] <i>“so ye mainly the idea of having an end goal has definitely motivated me because it’s like, well, you know to get here you need to do, this, this, and this, whereas before it was like well there’s nothing there so I don’t know what to do. I was kind of lost which kind of made me less motivated to work”</i> – A lack of goals reduced the purpose of engaging in education and thus provided limited motivation. Goals provided achievable steps to achieve her aspirations.</p> <p>[May.629] <i>“we went to sit down in school and they were like; “you can either you know, you can redo the year again with the same subjects, you can do different subjects or we can look at alternatives” for education and I was like “I don’t want to go anywhere new” and they were like “was there any subjects your enjoyed” and I was like “I did enjoy sociology out of all of the other that I took”</i> – co-creation of goals was important for motivation and engagement.</p> <p>[Terry.39] <i>“I found that out all last minute and obviously I did everything last minute so from there I just picked a course. That’s really it like [laughs]”</i> – Shows a lack of structure to his educational engagement and impulsive decision making.</p> <p>[May.76] <i>“I just, it was just this like, I don’t know, it was just like this curtain, there was just nothing there, like, nothing to look forward to or anything.”</i> – A lack of direction in her education resulted in disengagement and lack of interest in education.</p>
		<p><b>Sense Making</b> Goals often related to CEI bringing meaning to their experiences.</p>	<p>[May.526] <i>“I really want to do well and get a degree, just to kind of go through all of this and like all of it, every single experience I’ve ever had. I want it to like mean something.”</i> – a way of making sense of her experiences and prove herself.</p> <p>[Terry.66] <i>“I thought like I don’t know because everything that happened in my life I just wanted to get somewhere”</i> – placing meaning on his experiences. As he has just started to enjoy education, wants his education to continue now it has a purpose and meaning.</p>

			<p>[Emma.195] <i>“so I kind of related that to other people because other people slip under the radar and don’t get the help they need and I just, you know I had an aspiration to help people like that and so I was like, you know, what goals are there that I can work towards that I can end up helping people like that”</i> – Relating her own experiences to those of others and hoped to make their experiences better. Identifying with their struggles.</p> <p>[May.563] <i>“especially with children... you meet a lot of children who might just feel like, the same as I did, you know feel like just what’s the point, I just hope that I can be just kind of that person that shows them that there is a means to an end.”</i> – Identifies with others and hopes to use her understanding to make others experiences more positive.</p>
	<b>Enjoyment</b>	<b>Learning</b> Participants discussed an enjoyment of learning as key in motivating their continuation to HE.	<p>[Terry.459] <i>“I think probably I stopped seeing it as a chore, like and it’s something that you can actually enjoy”</i> – Enjoyment and interest in education provided a new motivation to engage. This seems closely related to the relationships present.</p> <p>[Emma.38] <i>“I did psychology at A-level and realised wow this is great; I love this and I just feel in love with it and decided to do a degree in it. Urm ye.”</i> – Finding an interest in an educational area provided motivation to achieve across areas to fulfil ambitions. Related to teaching practices discussed.</p> <p>[May.169] <i>“I loved, but I loved going to school, it was my little, I just liked the routine of it”</i>– Education held a safety and enjoyment because of this. Linked to relationships.</p> <p>[Nasha.204] <i>“urm, coz I love learning that much. Like it, there is so many things to learn about the world that I just wana be a part of it and want to contribute to it as well to expanding knowledge ye”</i> – Interest in learning and applying it positively motivated her engagement to continue education. Related to teaching practices discussed.</p>
		<b>Extra-curricular Activities</b> Extra-curricular	<p>[Nasha.299] <i>“I enjoyed playing live music to people and it’s the process of practicing something and then mastering it really you’ve got a result out of it, and end product I guess and it’s also complete focus in a lot of way people do mindfulness and stuff you, you lose yourself in learning a song. Ye”</i> – Importance of alternative interests on emotional wellbeing and in developing</p>

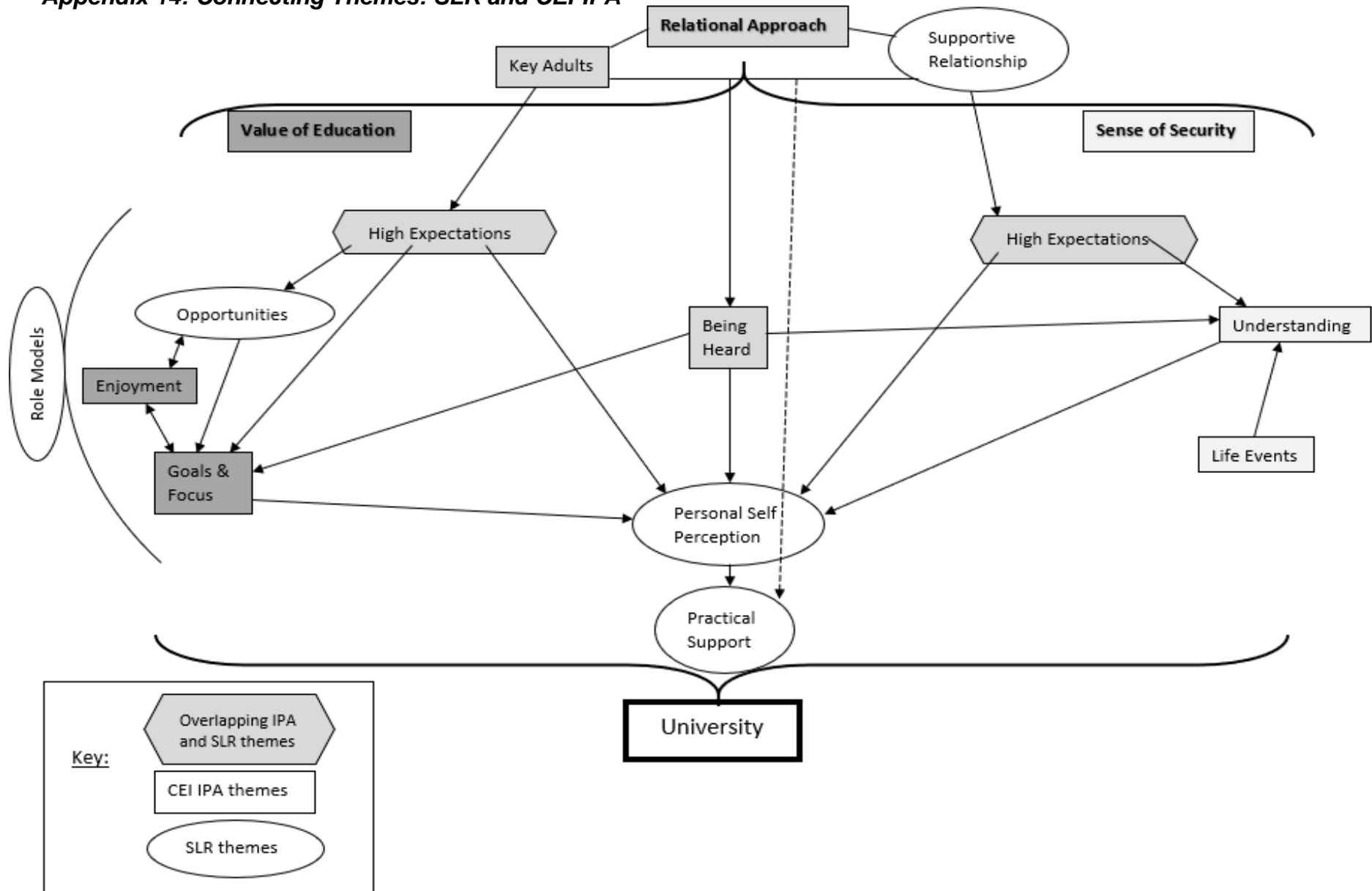
		<p>activities supported the development of positive coping mechanisms, wellbeing and provided opportunities to build social networks where HE is discussed.</p>	<p>determination and enjoyment of achieving. Developed a positive perception of herself as a learner through experiencing success.</p> <p>[Emma.53] <i>"I did a lot of music because I played the trumpet and that kind of, that was my escape really during those times and urm when I was on stage and performing you know it was, I felt really confident in myself and I kinda took what I had from there and applied it to my other areas that I wasn't as confident in."</i> – Alternative interests provided the development of positive coping mechanisms and skills to apply in academia.</p> <p>[Terry.390] <i>"someone I met on NCS, who was on my, urm this guy was probably the first person I ever met, or was friends with actually, was proper like smart, because I was never friends with like, with smart, you know like the people in set ones, the ones in set ones, so when I spoke to him"</i> – Extra-curricular activities provided opportunity to make positive peer relationships that encouraged thinking of the future.</p>
<p><b>Sense of Safety</b></p>	<p><b>Life Events</b></p> <p>All CEI noted significant life events impacting on their educational progress.</p>	<p><b>Stability</b></p> <p>Where CEI did not experience consistency this significantly impacted on their ability to engage in educational traditionally. For some, school offered consistency.</p>	<p>[Nasha.25] <i>"Urm ye, it was quite traumatic cause at the point when I was moving from in year 9, the point when I was moving, I was also sort of getting into the care system."</i> – Acknowledgment of life events impact on education. Several transitions at the same time.</p> <p>[May.145] <i>"well it was at that time that my placement was starting to breakdown so obviously I was having that like, I think people could see a difference in my behaviour anyway"</i> – Life experiences impacting on her behaviour at school. Emotional upheaval impacting on her ability to engage positively.</p> <p>[Nasha.207] <i>"And it's a stability, no matter what's going on in your life you can still continue to learn things and succeed in academia, really so ye."</i> - Education provided consistency and a safe place despite lack of stability outside of school. Able to be a place of stability due to understanding.</p> <p>[May.200] <i>"but I guess at school like everything has been paused on the outside and it was just something different in school."</i> – School as an escape from life difficulties. A safe consistent space.</p> <p>[Terry.263] <i>"I think that was mainly towards my sister, because I always used to have to make</i></p>

			<p><i>sure she didn't do anything naughty or else, it was like, if you do something that's it [clicks] you're kicked out and I always trying to, stop, stop that from happening. I guess, it's hard to say but it was kind of a relief coz it was always me trying to stop problems between them constantly but..."</i> – Home life had a significant impact on his ability to engage in education. Took a caring role at home likely causing anxiety in school and impacting on behavioural presentation.</p>
	<p><b>Understanding</b></p> <p>A sense of safety was developed through others having an understanding of the impact of these life events.</p>	<p><b>Flexibility</b></p> <p>Flexibility generated from understanding allowed continued engagement in education. Where flexibility was not provided it served to alienate and exclude participants.</p>	<p>[Nasha.276] <i>"Urm there was a time when I was going through a rough patch and I would be, I'd be turning up at school quite late or I think I didn't want to go to PE because I was being bullied in PE and urm I sort of said like I'm either at school and I'm learning but you've got to you know make some allowances and I travelling all the way across town so they needed to realise and appreciate and not punish me and I sort of stood up and said ye."</i> – A need for understanding and compromise of difficulties that impact upon education. Taking a holistic approach of education.</p> <p>[May.427] <i>"it was just the fact that I wasn't able to do something because of a reason, I wouldn't get like a detention for it and I wouldn't be made to feel bad about it they'd actually be like, its ok that it's not done now but we will get it done"</i> - Allowed flexibility in following instructions, deadlines, and rules due to an understanding of her circumstances. This understanding and flexibility supported a sense of safety and enabled continued engagement.</p> <p>[Terry.27] <i>"I think as well, they shouldn't be so quick to punish a student for something, because the amount of time I was in isolation or excluded, I missed a lot of school [...] like, maybe especially kids in care, they should, it's not like a free pass but they should maybe like speak to, I don't know like, approach them in a different way like, like sit them down. Because most kids in care, they're all going through something in life, like so ye, be a bit, don't be as harsh. Because sometimes they're acting out its just I don't know, it's just them, and I don't know, you've been brought up different and it's not like, not your fault."</i> – An area of significant importance for Terry. He felt a lack of understanding drastically impacted on his education and resulted in him spending a lot of time in isolation and in a Pupil Referral Unit. A cumulative effect of a lack of understanding.</p> <p>[May.403] <i>"I don't think I would have done it, I feel like, if I hadn't had that like, somebody going</i></p>



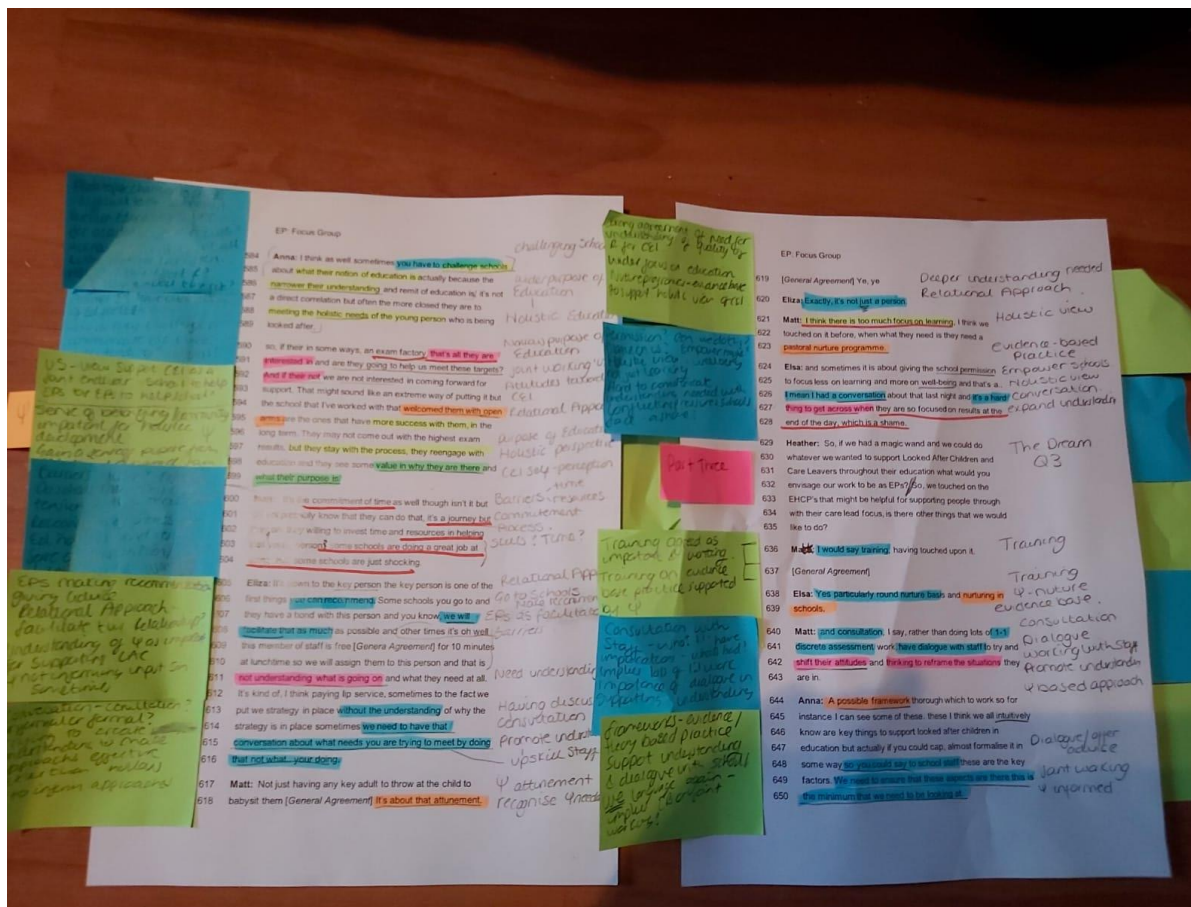
			<p><i>through, coz I'd missed the lessons and I know some teachers can be really like "ooh if you weren't here you're never going to know" do you know like, I don't know, it's just like."</i> – Understanding that care status may result in missed lessons or varied engagement. Opportunities for catch up lessons allowed continued engagement and supported progress.</p> <p>[Emma.323] <i>"I had a really good SENCo who gave me like free tutoring in Maths which got my grade up"</i> – A recognition of flexibility needed to support academic achievement.</p> <p>[Nasha.402] <i>"and they if... I didn't hand in homework on time or if I needed to have extra lessons they would understand and be flexible"</i> – Opportunities of increased academic support. Increased sense of security of school as a safe space.</p>
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**Appendix 14: Connecting Themes: SLR and CEI-IPA**



## Appendix 15: Thematic Analysis

\*Pseudonyms are used in transcript to maintain anonymity



## Appendix 16: EP Theme Evidence

Superordinate	Subordinate	Quotes
<b>Specialist Knowledge</b>	<b>Psychology</b>	<p>[Line.618] <i>"it's about that attunement [General Agreement]"</i></p> <p>[Line.311] <i>"Because if you've not got that secure base, it's going to impact on your education"</i></p> <p>[Line.582] <i>"Yer, if they had those experiences, that's an adaptive response, ye."</i></p> <p>[Line.524] <i>"I'm glad you've brought this sense of belongingness up"</i></p> <p>[Line.24] <i>"it's connection before correction [...] it's that kind of approach isn't it"</i></p> <p>[Line.694] <i>"I don't always feel very confident that they know the psychological frameworks behind some of the work we would want them involved with."</i></p> <p>[Line.554] <i>"it's just a constant cycle of rejection and that feeds into the whole self-worth."</i></p>
<b>Supportive Practices</b>	<b>Inform Practice</b>	<p>[Line.929] <i>"how they are more likely to become disaffected because that control of their social care and often things happen to them"</i></p> <p>[Line.350] <i>"Like Maslow, the children aren't having their basic needs met sometimes and so you need to have a different approach in schools"</i></p> <p>[L.938] <i>"about reducing that power imbalance [...] so what can we do to kind of even out the playing field in a way?"</i></p> <p>[Line.501] <i>"we've talked about things that would just include him and make him feel he's part of that school community"</i></p> <p>[Line.887] <i>"if young people in your study Melissa found them very negative, why can't we shift it to a solution focused. Get the same information but just in a different way [General Agreement]"</i></p> <p>[Line.402] <i>"one thing we were talking about in terms of the team around him was how to boost"</i></p>

		<p><i>those personal attributes he's got."</i></p> <p>[Line623] <i>"what they need is, they need a pastoral nurture programme."</i></p>
	<p><b>Develop Understanding</b></p>	<p>[Line.348] <i>"I think trying to develop that understanding and being a little bit flexible"</i></p> <p>[Line. 521] <i>"Once they've understood they can then run with it".</i></p> <p>[Line.640] <i>"have dialogue with staff to try and shift their attitudes and thinking to reframe the situations they are in."</i></p> <p>[Line.227] <i>"The mystery of what EPs actually do."</i></p> <p>[Line.155] <i>"I think it would be helpful if, if they were, if they knew and it was part and parcel sort of when they have meetings, saying there are educational psychologists who can be involved, and this is what they do."</i></p> <p>[Line.406] <i>"Urm, making sure that understanding is carried through to the other school staff."</i></p> <p>[Line.571] <i>"because it's probably not helpful but referring to a child as deeply troubled when actually their response is perfectly normal response to the situation they are in and it's helping staff and the adults around that child to accept that and I find that really really hard."</i></p> <p>[Line.612] <i>"sometimes to the fact we put we strategy in place without the understanding of why the strategy is in place sometimes we need to have that conversation about what needs you are trying to meet by doing that not what... you're doing."</i></p>
	<p><b>Support Holistic Perspective</b></p>	<p>[L.350] <i>"like Maslow, the children aren't having their basic needs met sometimes, the fundamental needs and so you need to have a different approach in schools and I think trying to move away from some very ridged behaviour systems sometimes is something I think we have a lot of involvement in."</i></p> <p>[Line.491] <i>"they start them on a phased integration so they are there for part of the day and that gives them no access to friends or social they don't get the access to the curricular activities that</i></p>

		<p><i>are on etc and its moving them on from thinking about it as we are here to teach these subjects or this curriculum material to we're here to teach children and so some of my recommendations have been about including this young person in the community"</i></p> <p><i>[Line.624] "and sometimes it is about giving the school permission to focus less on learning and more on well-being."</i></p> <p><i>[Line.387] "he was really interested in his guitar, so they were focusing on, school and the care home were working together making sure he was getting his guitar lessons but that's one of the ways he used to relax as well, so school were making sure, they could put, and give him time in school times, at break times, if he wanted to go and play his guitar"</i></p> <p><i>[Line.584] "I think as well sometimes you have to challenge schools about what their notion of education is actually because the narrower their understanding and remit of education is"</i></p> <p><i>[Line.264] "given those circumstances, there's a case for perhaps more Looked After Children for an Education Health and Care Plan to be put into place, around the care aspect?"</i></p>
	<p><b>Upskill and Empower</b></p>	<p><i>[Line.468] "there was a lot of making sure adults were on board with it and relating it back to the training they had etc and looking at the data collection because we had the ABC chart etc to say actually we are moving in the right direction."</i></p> <p><i>[Line.435] "Urm, but I think it was just in terms of reassuring staff that they were doing the right things for him kind of"</i></p> <p><i>[Line.343] "I think the flexibility in approach one is something, I try to talk to school's a lot about, I don't know about everyone else? [General agreement]"</i></p> <p><i>[L.480] "and for those I find myself doing is making sure the school understands that we prioritise improvements in emotional wellbeing above the learning, Schools find that quite a challenge because they feel that they are about education not the needs of that child, so the first</i></p>

		<i>thing I find myself doing is that.”</i>
<b>Activities Undertaken</b>	<b>Voice of Child</b>	<p>[Line.439] <i>“using the voice of the child to feedback and reiterate how he was feeling”</i></p> <p>[Line.862] <i>“So, she’s obviously not been given a chance to voice, you know, if she doesn’t feel like she has the chance, no one’s encouraged it. She just had to sit there quietly hasn’t she.”</i></p> <p>[Line.763] <i>“I was thinking but also them [CEI] sharing their strategies with each other so they support each other. [...] Possibly Eps could help facilitate that in some way, that’s bigger picture thinking but...”</i></p> <p>[Line.872] <i>“It needs to be design in a way which is child centred rather than sitting around a table all formalise and probably using language which the young person can understand.”</i></p> <p>[Line.357] <i>“I think through using the voice of the child sometimes and stuff like that and a kind of, conveying how they feel in these situations and because, you know, their getting a lot of negative feedback sometimes from school and their trying to convey how they feel in school.”</i></p> <p>[Line.39] <i>“the control is really linked with the voice of the young person and them being able to discuss what was going on for them, so it wasn’t “this is going to happen to you”, it was sitting down and having those joint conversation and guiding, guiding them through it.”</i></p> <p>[Line.927] <i>“make their own voice known.”</i></p>
	<b>Intervention</b>	<p>[Line.754] <i>“I think there is a lot of factors around the child and young people we need to start skilling them as well.”</i></p> <p>[Line.736] <i>“Yer to do interventions as well, not just recommending them.”</i></p> <p>[Line.718] <i>“I have just been on Thera play training, to be able to implement that work that I learnt, whether it was set up in groups in schools or doing one on one with the secure, if they have a secure carer, or a key adult, I would love to be able to do some work on that.”</i></p> <p>[Line.698] <i>“working with those adults but also so that they can have some continuity but also</i></p>

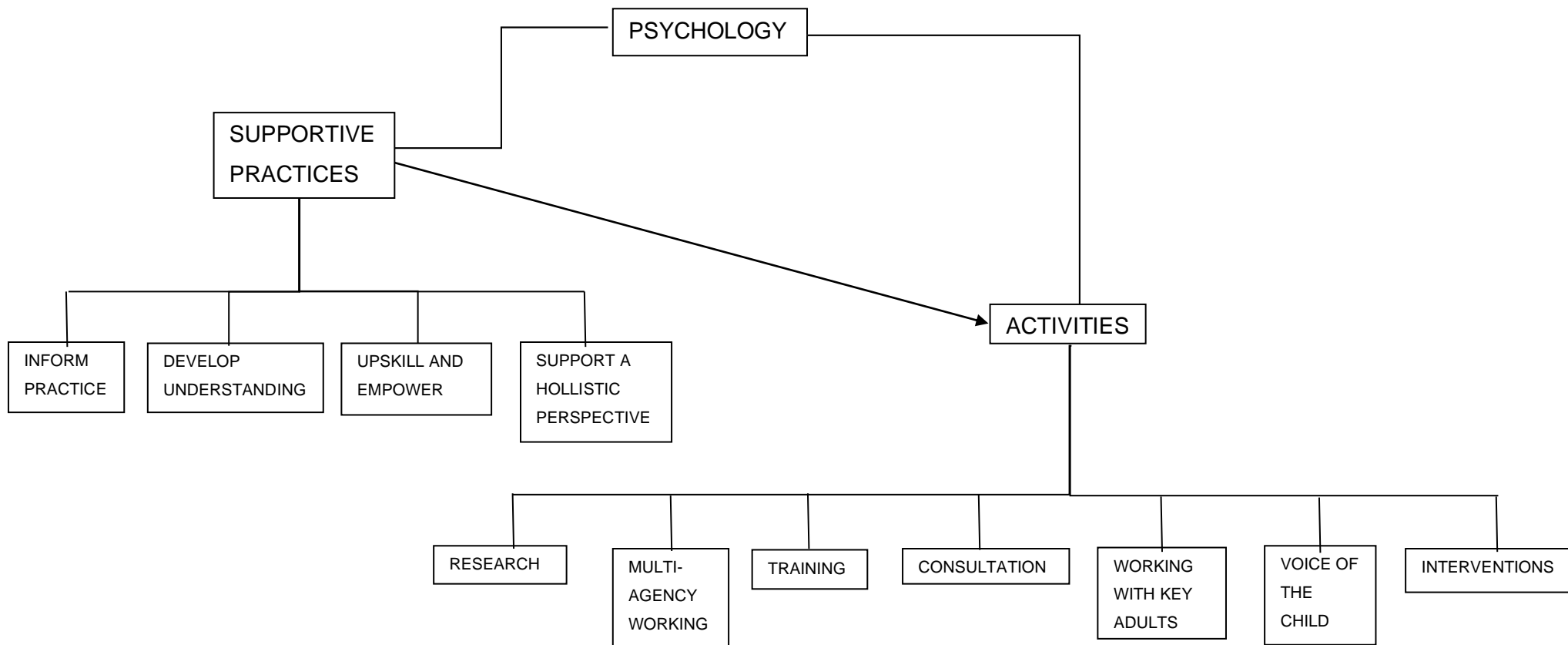
		<p><i>build some psychological interventions into their program”</i></p> <p>[Line.757] <i>“I think it’s about harnessing what it is about that young person and the strengths and have that strengths base and building on those strengths that they’ve got to give them the best kind of personal skills that they can use to help them succeed in the future and not just at uni but beyond that as well.”</i></p>
	<b>Consultation</b>	<p>[Line.640] <i>“and consultation, I say, rather than doing lots of 1-1 discrete assessment work”</i></p> <p>[Line.357] <i>“Yer, I think through consultations, and speaking to staff”</i></p> <p>[Line.519] <i>“So, I think we have a lot to contribute as [participant] says it’s often about working with the adults to get them to understand.”</i></p> <p>[Line.435] <i>“Urm, but I think it was just in terms of reassuring staff that they were doing the right things for him kind of”</i></p> <p>[Line.402] <i>“one thing we were talking about in terms of the team around him was how to boost those personal attributes he’s got.”</i></p> <p>[Line.692] <i>“With learning mentors you’ve got a lot more that you can discuss with them”</i></p> <p>[Line.498] <i>“So we talk about giving him a position of responsibility”</i></p>
	<b>Working with Key Adults</b>	<p>[Line.519] <i>“So, I think we have a lot to contribute... it’s often about working with the adults to get them to understand. Once they’ve understood they can run with it”</i></p> <p>[Line.688] <i>“I think one of the helpful things is to work with those people and supporting them”</i></p> <p>[Line.692] <i>“With learning mentors you’ve got a lot more that you can discuss with them and so on”</i></p> <p>[Line.402] <i>“one thing we were talking about in terms of the team around him was how to boost those personal attributes he’s got.”</i></p> <p>[Line.519] <i>“So, I think we have a lot to contribute as [participant] says it’s often about working</i></p>



		<p><i>with the adults to get them to understand.”</i></p> <p>[Line.414] <i>“kind of have that conversation with the home”</i></p>
	<b>Training</b>	<p>[Line.636] <i>Ppt 1: “I would say training, having touched upon it.” Ppt2: “Yes, particularly round nurture basis and nurturing in schools [General Agreement]”</i></p> <p>[Line.459] <i>“they asked for the EP from the virtual school so they could train the whole staff”</i></p> <p>[Line.442] <i>“and if need be, it would have been around training and support for staff in terms of supporting him as well.”</i></p> <p>[Line.700] <i>“but I was thinking of providing training and support for foster carers in terms of how to support the children’s education.”</i></p> <p>[Line.715] <i>Ppt1: “In terms of topics [training], Attachment” Ppt2: “Developmental trauma”</i></p> <p>[Line.186] <i>“even if it’s just training adults that are around in what children may go through”</i></p>
	<b>Multi-agency Working</b>	<p>[Line.541] <i>“I go to In Year Fair Access [...] but just to highlight to them this is not the way they should be talking about these young people and they should be part of your school community, you should look after each and every one the same.”</i></p> <p>[Line.667] <i>“I think the work through virtual schools that’s not perfect, but I think the fact that we do have, or a lot of us have virtual school time does facilitate, facilitate that”</i></p> <p>[Line.672] <i>“and there a bit of freedom in that work, because schools aren’t commissioning it, it’s not like, oh can you do just like a quick piece of work casework, you know I’ve not got much time left. With virtual school you do have the ownership of the amount of time you want to spend on a case.”</i></p> <p>[Line.969] <i>“I think here we are getting to work with a few colleges now so maybe we can extend that to reaching out to local universities as well if there is a role that we could fulfil.”</i></p>
	<b>Research</b>	<p>[Line.775] <i>“What is it about, what are their strategies and resilience that they could support each</i></p>

		<p><i>other or young people in that process, that's a really powerful aspect that we maybe don't tap into as much."</i></p> <p><i>[Line.789] "Looking at how they've done that, how they've managed all of, of those really tricky times they are resilient and have got through them. It would be really interesting to know."</i></p>
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Appendix 17: EPs Thematic Map



## Appendix 18: Examples of Reflexive Practices

Reflexive Practice	Explanation
<p><b>Exploring world view</b></p>	<p>Chapter 2 address's my world views and the impact this has on my research, please see Sections 2.2 and 2.3 for the main discussion. This involved exploring my own beliefs and assumptions about the world and the concept of knowledge so I could better understand how this world view impacts on the construction and interpretation of my research. It further supports the notion of quality and validity (Berger, 2015; Guillemin &amp; Gillam, 2004). My understanding of the world and my own epistemological assumptions was an on-going process throughout my research and was supported by supervision, reviewing literature, and keeping my research diary.</p>
<p><b>Research Positioning</b></p>	<p>Throughout Chapter 2 I explore my personal experiences and how these affect my understanding and approach to the research presented. Please see Section 2.3.2 for the main discussion. This was an ongoing and evolving process supported my practices such as supervision and my research diary.</p>
<p><b>Researcher role</b></p>	<p>By extension of my researcher position I also engaged in active reflexivity around my role as a researcher. This included exploring how my role as a research differed from my role as a TEP and how the two roles may influence each other. For example, this included exploring the similarities and differences between semi-structured interviews and consultation and the development of research skills.</p>
<p><b>Research</b></p>	<p>Discussed throughout Chapter 1, 2 &amp; 3, I spent time researching the participant populations and the factors impacting on them. For example, from an outsider research position, research into CEIs supported by ability to understand interview data more holistically and account for wider contextual factors.</p>
<p><b>Research Methods</b></p>	<p>Discussed within Chapter 1, 2 &amp; 3, research methods were chosen carefully and as a result of reflexive processes. They closely linked with my epistemological, ontological and axiological positions in addition to how these research methods may impact on the participants. For example, IPA is argued to be an empowering method, however, it can often generate sensitive discussions with complex ethical implications. A further example is that focus groups were chosen to limit my influence on the data generation and</p>

	priorities participants voice.
<b>Construction of interviews/ focus groups</b>	Careful consideration was taken to develop interview schedules and chose language within the interview processes to ensure a sensitive, genuine and curious exploration of the research topic with participants. For example, interview question development required a reflexive stance to address and challenge my own assumptions of their experiences which supported the reduction of possibly leading questions and ensure sensitivity. Further, all communication including, information sheets, consent forms and interview schedules were discussed with the University Widening Participation Project Officer to aid reflexivity.
<b>Active Reflexivity</b>	Discussed in Chapter 2, please see section 2.3.1 for more details. Active reflexivity was required to minimise the possibility of harm and gather appropriate, open, in depth data from participants. Active reflexivity was aided by a number of techniques including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Approaching the interview with genuine curiosity</li> <li>- Respecting participants choice of inform to share.</li> <li>- Using active listening skills.</li> <li>- Using interpersonal skills to support a trusting relationship.</li> <li>- Maintain a high level of attunement.</li> <li>- Continuous interpretation of verbal and non-verbal cues to monitor wellbeing.</li> <li>- Maintaining awareness of possible power dynamics.</li> </ul>
<b>In Practice Ethics</b>	Throughout the interview process I endeavoured to constantly question the efficiency of upholding the core ethical principles: respect, competence, responsibility and integrity (BPS, 2018a). I frequently reminded participants of their right to withdraw, take a break or move on. This was particularly important during discussions of a sensitive nature. I provided debrief both verbally and by written communication and sign posted participants to support services. Where participants had discussed possibly upsetting topics, I informed them that I would ask the Gatekeeper to provide follow up check-ins to review their wellbeing.
<b>Reflexive Diary</b>	I maintained a reflexive diary throughout my research to support my awareness of my own beliefs, assumptions, thoughts and feelings. After each interview I would record my 'hot thoughts' and immediate

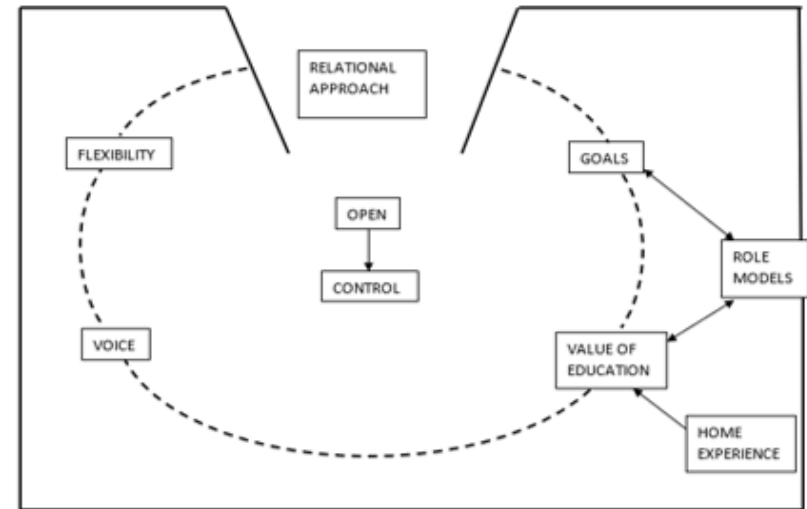
	<p>reactions, this would often including any lasting impressions, areas I felt were most important for the participant, my own thoughts and feelings about the interview, comments about attunement and how successful the interviewee/researcher relationship felt.</p>
<b>Research Diary</b>	<p>Separate to my reflexive diary I also maintained a research diary to record and track all decisions throughout my research. This enabled me to reflect and be reflexive on my motivations for decisions and review the warren for decisions throughout my research process. They further helped me to refine my techniques, for example, before my next interview I could return to my notes to adjust my techniques over time.</p>
<b>Research Supervision</b>	<p>I maintained frequent research supervision. These sessions had two main functions, firstly to monitor and support emotional well-being and secondly to support research vigour, quality and validity and finally to frequently review ethical matters. The process of speaking out loud to others helped me to further question, develop and refine my ideas, thoughts and interpretations. The act of verbalising my thoughts and feels further supported reflexivity by making the implicit explicit, bringing my bias into awareness so I was able to best account for these.</p>
<b>Placement Supervision</b>	<p>In addition to supervision with my research supervisor I also frequently used practice supervision sessions to discuss my research. I felt this was key as I was able review my evolving understanding as provided by interviews and understand how these may impact my practice and how my practice may have impacted interviews and interpretation processes. This process was particularly important for supporting the development of Part Two interpretations. Peer supervision with EP focus group participants allowed me to member check my interpretations.</p>

**Appendix 19: Individual case IPA models**

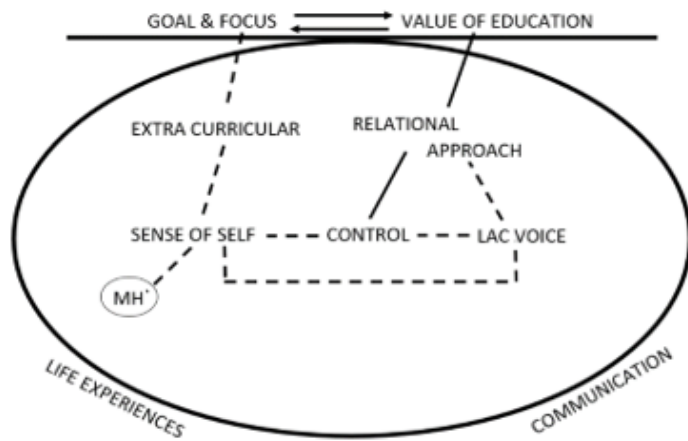
**1. Nasha's experience**



**2. May's experience**



**3. Emma's Experience**



**4. Terry's experience**

