



Exploring experiences of group consultation using person-centred planning tools.

Richard Amundsen

Doctorate of Applied Educational Psychology
School of Education, Communication and Language Sciences
Newcastle University
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Declaration: I declare that this work, submitted in partial fulfilment for the award of Doctorate in Applied Educational Psychology, is entirely my own, and has not been submitted or assessed for any other qualification.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'RPA' followed by a stylized flourish.

Overarching abstract

Person Centred Planning (PCP) is widely used in the education system by schools and Educational Psychologists (EPs) as a tool to support consultation and promote inclusion. By utilising their consultation skills, EPs are arguably well placed to facilitate PCP sessions. Most research regarding PCP is concerned with looking at the direct outcomes of PCP sessions rather than the consultation process involved. To further develop practice, it is deemed important to explore processes to gain a greater understanding of how facilitating the sessions might bring about desired outcomes.

Chapter 1

A systematic literature review addresses the question: *What are participants' experiences and views of person-centred planning sessions within educational contexts?* A segregated mixed methods review of six studies was carried out which utilised a thematic synthesis for the inductive exploration of qualitative data. A synthetic product, which goes beyond the primary studies, makes suggestions for EPs using PCP to support consultation in practice. Gaps in the literature and subsequent avenues of further research are also considered.

Chapter 2

This chapter bridges the systematic literature review and empirical research, providing a methodological and ethical critique. It outlines the decision-making processes of the research which are informed by my conceptual framework.

Chapter 3

Using a phenomenological methodology, the empirical study explored the question: *How do EPs understand and facilitate organisational change through group consultation using PATH?* Findings are reported and implications for practice are discussed.

Chapter 4

This chapter provides a reflective account of the research journey. It details personal reflexivity, implications for research, EP practice, and implications for my role as a fully qualified research-practitioner.

Acknowledgements

This is for you Mam; I know you would have been so proud of me.

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Chapter 1: What are participants' experiences and views of person-centred planning sessions within educational contexts? A systematic literature review.

Abstract

Person Centred Planning (PCP) is widely used in the education system by schools and educational psychologists (EPs). Most research concerning PCP focuses on direct and measurable outcomes rather than how the consultation process might work. Aiming to seek a rich understanding of how PCP consultation sessions might be implemented by EPs, this review synthesised literature regarding the views and experiences of those who took part. Following an extensive search of relevant databases, a segregated mixed methods review of six studies was carried out. For the qualitative strand of the review, a thematic synthesis was utilised to inductively explore participant's experiences. Going beyond the primary studies, a synthetic product is presented which makes suggestions for EPs using PCP to support consultation in their practice. Adequate preparation, use of shared visuals and interpersonal consultation skills, as well as adopting person-centred principles might guide successful implementation and facilitate change. As such, PCP might be viewed as a methodology for EP practice: a conceptual framework with associated world views which guide the use of tools and consultation processes. Gaps in the literature and potential avenues of further research are also considered.

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 What is PCP and its underpinning psychology?

The term person-centred planning (PCP) was coined in the mid 1980s to highlight differences between person centred ways of planning and the so called service centred approaches (Newton et al., 2016). The term has roots in humanistic therapy which was developed by Carl Rogers during the 1950s (Rogers, 2012). The person centred approach has been applied within health and social care and education (Merry, 1995) in the main as person-centred planning.

Rogers named his approach to therapy client or person-centred since it focused on their subjective view of the world and committed to promoting the growth and fulfilment of others (Rogers, 1995). From this perspective, people are seen as essentially trustworthy and intrinsically motivated towards constructive fulfilment. His theory takes an optimistic view of human nature. People all share an inherent actualising tendency towards growth, development, optimal functioning, and autonomy. This notion of growth as a universal human motivation is the crux of humanistic person-centred psychology (Joseph, 2008) and core principles include empowerment, equality and collaboration (Sanderson, 2000). Rogers suggests a climate of facilitative psychological attitudes can be created. This includes allowing others to develop a clear self-concept and self-esteem through unconditional positive regard from others, acceptance, and a focus on them as a whole person as opposed to a set of psychological processes and deficits.

As well as the humanistic perspective, PCP might also bear some similarities to positive psychology and solution-focused approaches. This is echoed in their aim to identify strengths, elicit positive emotion, foster well-being, and encourage co-constructed, realistic bottom-up solutions (Bouvier, 2018). Core PCP elements have been identified in Table 1:

Table 1 - Core elements of PCP (Holburn, 2002).

Core elements of Person-Centred Planning
Placing the individual at the centre of planning and decision-making
Creating a shared vision for the future
Identifying strengths and support needs
Building relationships and community connections
Developing action plans (with a set review date)
Establishing accountability and follow-up.

Mansell and Beadle-Brown (2004) highlighted three prominent characteristics of PCP which reflect aspects of person-centred psychology. Firstly, PCP aims to focus on what a person will require to reach their goals. This reflects the humanistic assumption that people are motivated to grow, and they have the capacity to select what is best for them. Secondly, aspirations and capacities are considered instead of deficiencies and needs. Personal perspectives are elicited through actively involving them and avoiding others from imposing their own agenda. Through supporting a person to form a goal, it is thought this increases meaning in their lives, allowing them act upon their intentions (O'Brien et al., 2002). Finally, PCP attempts to activate a support network by inviting those who are most invested in supporting that individual.

1.1.2 PCP in practice

PCP was first endorsed in UK legislation in the Valuing People document (Department of Health, 2001) which advocated full participation and inclusion of individuals said to have learning disabilities. More recently, its prominence has grown through its recommendation for use within the SEND Code of Practice (DfE, 2014) which suggests practitioners focus on participants as individuals, emphasise collaborative working and enable them to be part of the decision-making process in consultation sessions.

Drawing on Rogers's original theory, practitioners have developed a range of PCP tools to support the application of person-centred principles in practice (Sanderson, 2000) at both the individual or group level (Hughes et al., 2019). Examples of such tools include Making Action Plans (MAPS, Forest et al., 1996), Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATH, O'Brien et al., 2002) and Person-Centered Meetings (Newton et al., 2016). Despite their slightly different approaches, all are grounded in these core principles (Holburn, 2002;

Sanderson, 2000): advocating a philosophy of respect, empowerment and collaboration in future planning (O'Brien & O'Brien, 2000). Another key aspect of these PCP tools is enhanced accessibility through their use of visually displayed documentation. Educational Psychologists (EPs) are arguably well placed to facilitate PCP sessions by utilising their consultation skills (Hughes et al., 2019). As part of inclusive practice, some EPs use PCP tools such as PATH and MAP for group planning and problem solving at both the individual and organisational level (Bristow, 2013).

Subsequent use of the term PCP will reflect a process that captures this ethos of inclusion and its core elements (Table 1). Consequently, it does not presume the adoption of any specific tool per sé but refers to any process or session that encapsulates the underpinning principles and elements.

1.2 Rationale and aims of the systematic review.

Most research about PCP considers, as its main objective, the outcomes of person-centred planning (Gray & Woods, 2022; Robertson et al., 2005). Studied in this way, evidence suggests positive but moderate impact on personal outcomes, albeit from a weak evidence base (Claes et al., 2010). Moreover, in the context of transition planning, some argue PCP has failed to shape service provision, given lack of considering broader ecological factors (Small et al., 2013). I acknowledge this critique by positioning PCP sessions within this review as a form of consultation. This permits an interactionist and systemic lens through which consultation may be viewed (Wagner, 2000). This may afford facilitation of interdependence by considering the relationships between people and the systems they belong to as the unit of analysis.

This review will consider the limited literature seeking to explore participants' experiences. Instead of focusing on measurable direct outcomes which align more with the dominant ideology of evidence-based practice (Fox, 2003), I believe it is important to explore aspects of participants' experiences of taking part in person centred planning meetings or sessions. Understanding more about experiences of the process may allow practitioners to learn more about features of PCP consultation sessions which may act as facilitators of change. Moreover, PCP does not lend itself to being studied in a traditional scientific way through measurement and operationalisation (Holburn, 2002). PCP is not just about the methods used but how the values that underpin a humanist approach are adhered to (Griffiths, 2015). How people make meaning from experiences (PCP sessions) must be understood; it cannot

be merely counted (Sayer, 2000) . Moreover, accessing the views of those involved may provide greater insight into how EPs can effectively use person-centred planning approaches in their consultation. Placing value in participants' views and experiences is reflective of an interpretivist or subjectivist epistemology (Grix, 2002) and epitomises person centred thinking. Reviewing qualitative studies is arguably most suited to this position (Atkins et al., 2008; Gough et al., 2017).

The current review aims to synthesise research literature about the views and experiences of those who participate in person centred planning sessions to explore their implementation in practice by educational psychologists. As such it will address this research question (RQ):

What are participants' experiences and views of person-centred planning sessions within educational contexts? (And what are the implications for EP practice?)

1.3 Method

The steps outlined by Boland et al. (2017) in Table 2 structured the review process.

Table 2 - Review process

Stage	Details
1	Planning the review
2	Scoping searches and identify RQ(s)
3	Literature searching
4	Screening titles and abstracts
5	Obtaining full-text papers
6	Select full-text papers using inclusion and exclusion criteria
7	Data extraction
8	Quality assessment
9	Analysis and synthesis
10	Writing up editing and disseminating

1.3.1 Stage 1 and 2 – planning, scoping, and identifying the research question.

Cooke et al.'s (2012) SPIDER tool helped shape early scoping searches and develop the review question (Table 3). This tool is arguably more suited to considering qualitative studies within systematic reviews since it advances thinking beyond the more widely adopted PICO strategy. It is based on similar principles to the PICO strategy but might enhance rigour by defining key elements of non-quantitative research questions. Early searches allowed the development of inclusion criteria (Table 4) and the refinement of key search terms (Table 5). (See [Appendix A](#) for specific search terms relevant to each database).

Table 3 - SPIDER framework for question formation

Sample	Phenomenon of Interest	Design	Evaluation	Research Type
school staff teachers, teaching assistants, children, young people, adolescents, students, pupils, families, parents	person-centred planning meetings or sessions	open ended questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, case studies, observations	attitudes views beliefs experiences opinions feelings impressions insights thoughts judgements	qualitative

Table 4 - Inclusion criteria to guide selection of relevant studies.

Inclusion Criteria	Rationale
Studies must be within UK educational system contexts	Relevance to RQ and EP practice and to maintain relevant socio-cultural and context
Must reference participants' perceptions, experiences, or opinions about the process of person-centred planning approaches to meetings/consultation	Relevance to the RQ
Qualitative, empirical research	Reviews of qualitative research are reflective of interpretative epistemology which values subjective experiences of participants as a data source. It can focus on views of those who are participants of interventions and can provide insight into why they may be successful or unsuccessful and therefore might help inform best practice around implementation (Atkins et al., 2008)
Peer reviewed papers	Quality Control
Papers from 2001	PCP was first enshrined in public policy in England in 2001 (Department of Health, 2001)
English Language	Accessibility

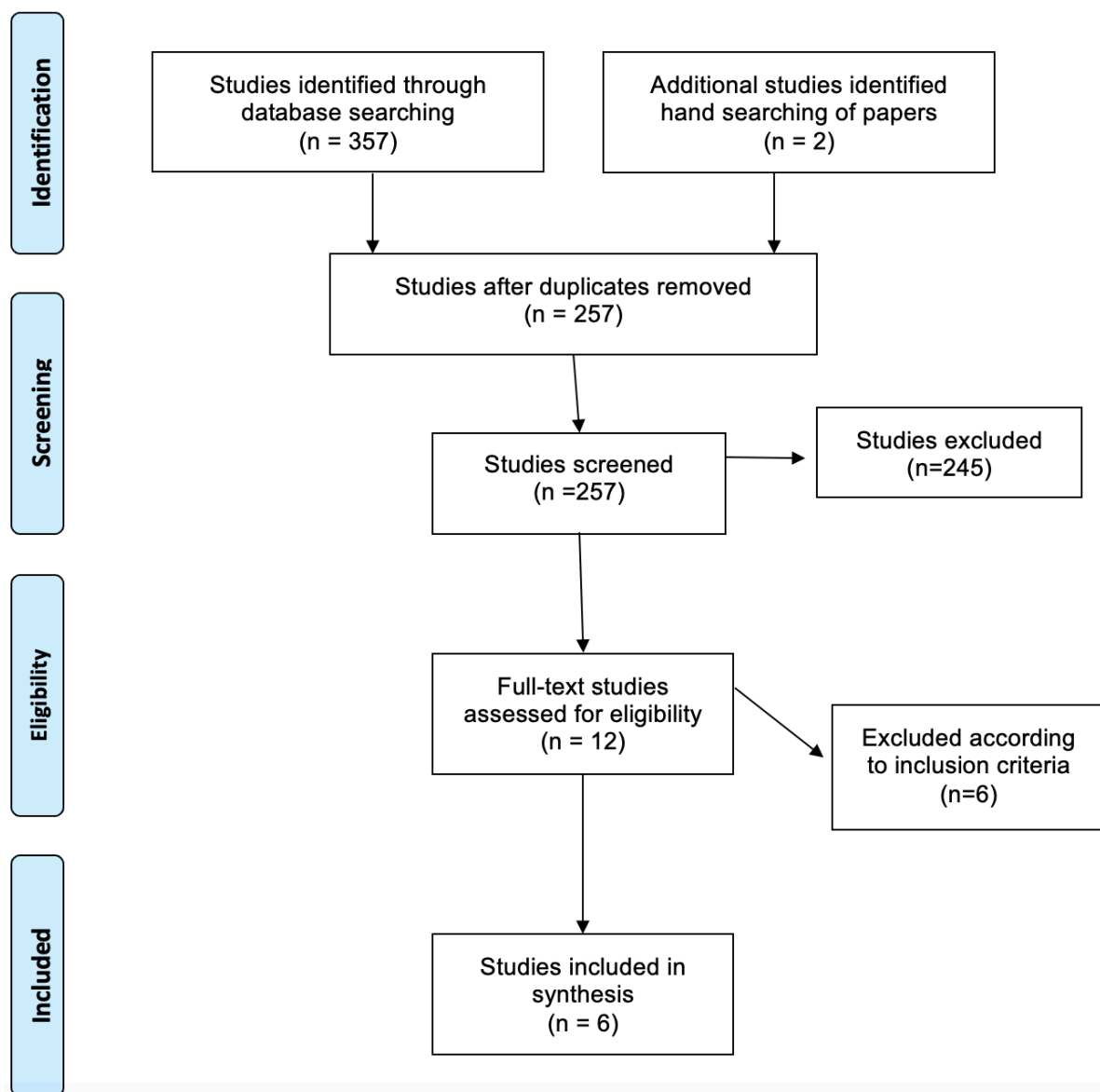
Table 5 - Key search terms for databases

Review Question: What are participants' experiences and views of person-centred planning sessions within educational contexts? (And what are the implications for EP practice?)	
Key search term from question	Search terms for databases
Person centred planning	person-centred planning person-centered planning person-centred review person centered review person-centred approach person-centered approach
Educational contexts	education* school teach* education system
Note: Boolean operator OR was used between terms within sets, and sets were combined with Boolean operator AND. Asterisks were used within databases to capture plurals or alternative spellings. So, * allows teachers and teaching assistants to be found.	

1.3.2 Steps 3 to 6: literature searching, screening titles and abstracts, obtaining and selecting full studies.

Six databases deemed relevant to the area of research were used to search for studies between 2001-2022: British Education Index, Education Abstracts, Psych INFO, ERIC, Web of Science and Scopus. During screening, those not reporting PCP were automatically excluded and specific criteria for inclusion were utilised (Table 4). Handsearching of references in potential key papers as well as citation chaining using Google Scholar was undertaken. This yielded two extra papers for screening. Figure 1 illustrates the searching process which resulted in 6 studies selected for synthesis.

Figure 1 - PRISMA diagram of the search process (Page et al., 2021)



1.3.3 Steps 7-9: data extraction, quality assessment, analysis, and synthesis.

Mapping the studies

Studies were mapped (Table 6) to inform decisions about how they may be analysed and synthesised (Gough et al., 2017) and to give a general overview of how they are similar and different (Oliver et al., 2017). Considering each study in context can be helpful when understanding the transferability of findings later in the review. In line with my review question, each study was considered in terms of their representation of participants' views and experiences of a person-centred planning process.

All studies concerned some form of PCP such as PATH, MAP or PCP review meetings and all explored participants' views. All are thus described as views studies as they all had some form of qualitative data concerning the experiences of the participants. Two studies also explored outcomes of PCP as well as views, with exploring views as their primary aim. As will be detailed later, only the views element of these studies was considered for synthesis. All studies were UK based, five focused on PCP with young people and one study looked at the use of PATH with a group of professionals. Participant numbers were relatively small, ranging from a single child to 43 adults.

Table 6 - Initial mapping of the studies to help guide synthesis choice.

Study	Location	Participants	Aims/Question	Design/ philosophy	PCP context	Data Analysis	Brief overview of findings
Hayes (2004)	England	Y6 child, parent and SENCo	To explore use of a visual annual review and its perceived effectiveness. Views study	Case study – use of short, structured questionnaires and some open ended why questions as well as some pupil views.	MAP – visual annual review	Questionnaire data reported as a narrative summary of the participants' views (adult) and some qualitative views of adults and the young person.	The review was rated as very good as it was far more child centred, fun and can create more powerful and meaningful participation.
Taylor-Brown (2012)	England	Three young people presenting with SEMH challenges.	How do young people experience a person-centred transition review meeting? Views study	Qualitative idiographic approach – semi structured interviews Critical realism	Use of MAP prior to meeting – visual annual review person centred meeting	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis	Person centred approaches are powerful in increasing participation by young people and adults in fun and accessible ways. Reduced power imbalances, new narratives were heard. Anxiety around the unfamiliarity of the process.

Study	Location	Participants	Aims/Question	Design/ philosophy	PCP context	Data Analysis	Brief overview of findings
Corrigan (2014)	England	Six young people and 43 adults including EPs, school staff and other professionals	<p>One: to explore the views of all key stakeholders, capturing their experiences to generate greater understanding of the use of PCP within its context.</p> <p>Two: to explore reported outcomes over time for the young people.</p> <p>A views study which focuses on process with some consideration of outcomes.</p>	<p>Action Research methodology</p> <p>Questionnaires to explore experiences after the meetings – Likert and open ended.</p> <p>Pragmatism</p>	<p>PCP meetings</p> <p>All documentation is made visually accessible often including large posters on the wall to display and record information (graphics and photos often used)</p> <p>EPs as facilitators.</p> <p>'champion' elicited voice prior to meeting.</p>	<p>Descriptive statistics for questionnaire. (experiences) and reported narratively.</p> <p>Thematic analysis for open ended questions.</p>	<p>Child centredness</p> <p>positive and hopeful</p> <p>collaborative</p> <p>understanding of needs</p> <p>importance of facilitator skills</p> <p>Importance of school ethos</p>
Morgan (2016)	England	Six education officers	<p>To explore views of those using PATH as a planning process for change</p> <p>Views study</p>	<p>Qualitative – interpretative case study - semi structured interviews.</p>	PATH	Content analysis	<p>PATH acts as a catalyst for change, gives a sense of immediacy and allows participants to shape their own future</p>

Study	Location	Participants	Aims/Question	Design/ philosophy	PCP context	Data Analysis	Brief overview of findings
White and Rae (2016)	England	Sixteen young people with SEND/parents and carers	To explore the views of young people and parents/carers of Person-centred reviews Views study with some outcomes reported	Mixed methods exploratory study the primary focus of the study was qualitative. Semi structured interviews AND Locus of Control scaling	Person Centred reviews	Thematic analysis of qual interview data Quantitative data via descriptive statistics – outcome focused not views. Scaling questions reported qualitatively.	Qualitative data: An emotional process; role of the facilitator; informative; collaborative; voices heard; daunting process; empowering; solution focused; sometimes too long. Quantitative data: no change in locus of control scores for children.
Wood et al. (2019)	England	Three secondary aged students with SEND, parents and school staff who facilitated.	What were participants' perceived perspectives on the impact of PATH? Views study	Qualitative inductive exploratory design – semi structured interviews Critical realism	Use of PATH	Thematic Analysis Used qualitative data for Thematic Synthesis	Usefulness of the graphic; positive effects of the PATH such as increased confidence; child centredness; barriers to implementation also discussed such as being daunted by the process.

Quality assessment

The papers were analysed using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP, 2018) which subsequently informed judgements about Weight of Evidence (WoE) of each study (Gough, 2007) ([Appendix C](#)). The CASP provides a systematic process to evaluate each study using easy to follow guidelines for novice researchers (Singh, 2013). The CASP facilitated the WoE A judgement relating to generic issues of quality. The WoE tool (Gough, 2007) allowed the diverse range of studies to be judged in terms of their trustworthiness and the extent to which they answer the review question (See Table 7 for judgements made)

I acknowledge the subjective nature of decisions but to enhance rigour and transparency, I developed my own criteria to support judgements across WoE B and C categories which are detailed in [Appendix D](#). Judgements ultimately focused on conceptual strength in relation to the review question with less focus on methodological quality (Sattar et al., 2021). Given there are no empirically tested or accepted methods for excluding qualitative studies from syntheses based on their quality (Thomas & Harden, 2008), all studies were included.

Table 7 - Weight of evidence judgement summary

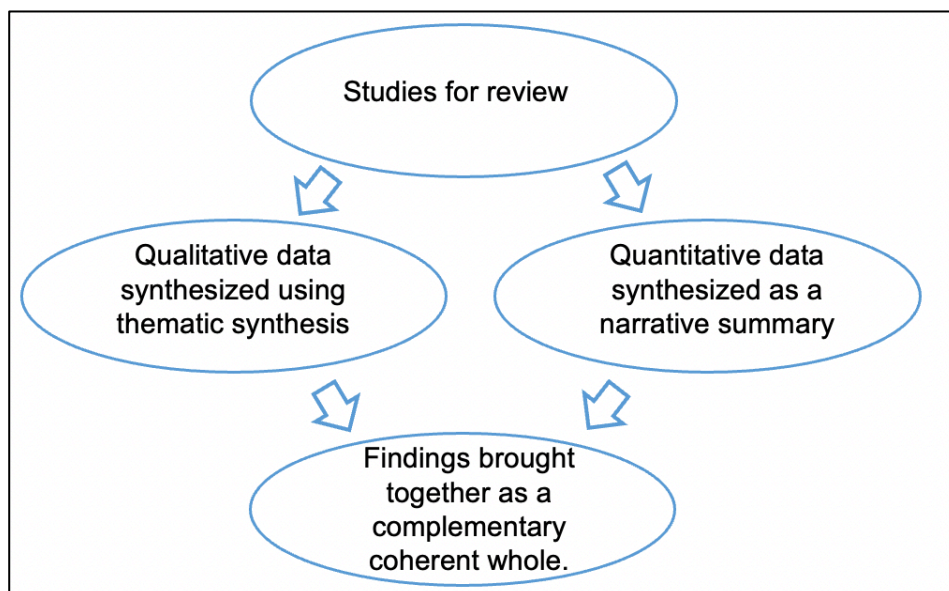
Study	WoE A	WoE B	WoE C	WoE D
(Corrigan, 2014)	high	medium	medium	medium
(Hayes, 2004)	low/medium	medium	high	medium
(Morgan, 2016)	high	high	high	high
(Taylor-Brown, 2012)	high	high	high/medium	high
(White & Rae, 2016)	medium	high/medium	high	high/medium
(Wood et al., 2019)	high/medium	high	high	high

Selecting a synthesis procedure

Since not all studies were purely qualitative, a segregated mixed methods synthesis was chosen (Sandelowski et al., 2006). The review synthesised qualitative data using thematic synthesis as a separate strand. The richness of qualitative data in the studies warranted a separate analysis using a method developed for the synthesis of qualitative data alone (Barnett-Page & Thomas, 2009). Based on the thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006), thematic synthesis is an accessible approach and provided a transparent and systematic audit trail (Flemming et al., 2019). Of key relevance to the RQ, it can also be used to explore participant experiences and perspectives on interventions as well as exploring processes and how they might work (Thomas & Harden, 2008).

Quantitative data was presented as narrative summary parallel to the qualitative strand (Heyvaert, 2017). Qualitative and quantitative strands were synthesised separately then brought together as findings. Figure 2 illustrates this process. The synthesis findings are conceived as a configuration of individual study findings which complement one another and are organised into a coherent whole (Sandelowski et al., 2006).

Figure 2 - Segregated Mixed Methods Review Process



Underpinning research philosophy

Thematic synthesis is understood as an approach grounded in critical realism (Barnett-Page & Thomas, 2009). PCP is assumed to be an objectively identifiable approach that can be experienced differently by participants. A positioning of critical realism views language as a way for us to partially access and describe some aspects of social reality. This stance assumes the knowledge the synthesis creates corresponds to a form of shared reality with this knowledge mediated by our perceptions and beliefs. This is implicit in the proposal the synthesis intends to inform practice (Barnett-Page & Thomas, 2009). By claiming the existence of a reality independent from our knowledge or awareness of it, research may create knowledge that might make a difference to practice (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Synthesising findings - Qualitative strand: thematic synthesis

Thomas and Harden's (2008) process was followed (Table 8).

Table 8 - Thematic synthesis process

Stage 1	Inductive line by line coding of the text in each study using NVivo (no abstraction or analysis; data reduction and summary of meaning). Removal of codes not relevant to RQ.
Stage 2	Develop descriptive themes across studies (stay close to the text of studies and summarise them in their own terms)
Stage 3	Interpret the descriptive themes considering the review question (go beyond the primary studies)

Stage 1 - Coding

Since the RQ did not assume any prior knowledge of participants' views, codes were created inductively from direct participant quotes and authors' interpretations to capture the content and meaning of each phrase or sentence. Once the first study had been coded, where relevant, existing codes were used, or new ones were generated when required. NVivo was utilised to increase systematic rigour and transparency and to help ensure codes and themes were always associated with the extract on which they are based (Gough et al., 2017). An outline of how themes linked to codes with examples of extracts can be found in [Appendix E](#).

Stage 2 – Descriptive themes

This stage involved merging or grouping similar codes into overarching descriptive themes identified across studies. Descriptive themes were then divided into sub themes.

As I used authors' interpretations to create Stage 1 codes, there was already an element of going beyond the data in developing Stage 2 descriptive themes. These descriptive themes answered the first part of the RQ sufficiently. Table 10 illustrates the relative contribution of each study to the Stage 2 themes.

Table 8 - Overview of overarching descriptive themes and relative study contributions

Overarching descriptive theme	Study						Number of studies contributing to the theme
	(Corrigan, 2014)	(Hayes, 2004)	(Morgan, 2016)	(Taylor-Brown, 2012)	(White & Rae, 2016)	(Wood et al., 2019)	
Agency and Autonomy	x	x	x	x	x	x	6
Barriers to successful implementation	x	x		x		x	4
Beneficial emotional responses	x	x	x	x	x	x	6
Equitable and Collaborative Process	x	x	x	x	x	x	6
Facilitator Importance	x	x	x	x	x	x	6
Goal and Future Orientated			x	x		x	3
Holistic View of People	x			x	x	x	4
Visual and Graphic presentation of information	x	x	x	x	x	x	6
Contributions by each study	7	5	6	8	6	8	
WoE D	medium	medium	high	high	high/medium	high	

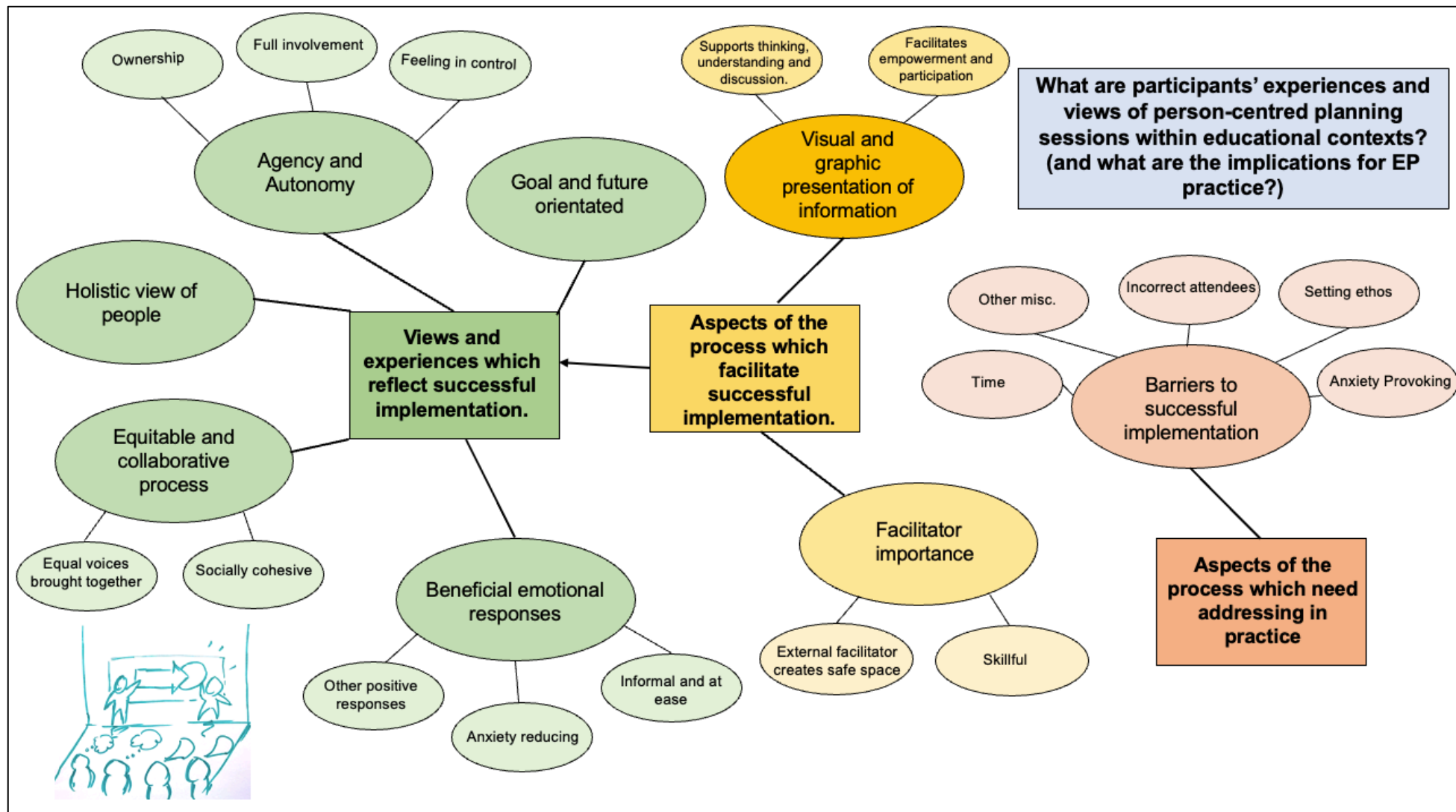
Stage 3 – Analytical themes

This stage added another interpretive layer by exploring the implications Stage 2 themes may have for EPs interested in using PCP in practice. Being an iterative process, I initially used the titles from a PCP tool entitled, What’s working?/Not working? (Sanderson, 2000) to broadly arrange the themes. As noted earlier, I believe understanding more about the experiences of the process may allow practitioners to learn more about features of PCP sessions which may act as facilitators of change and how the process may or may not work for participants. If the session works, a PCP session is deemed to have been successfully implemented. If so, participants’ views will broadly reflect the values underpinning a humanistic approach such as mutual respect, collaboration, and empowerment, as well as core elements of PCP (Holburn, 2002). These views may also be thought of as within session outcomes, as opposed to longer term, direct and measurable outcomes. Participants also said which aspects of the process they valued or found challenging: facilitators and barriers to successful implementation. These Stage 3 analytical themes are arranged according to this rationale and presented in Table 10. In Figure 3, the findings are also arranged as a thematic network (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Such networks are web-like illustrations which summarise the synthesis. Aspects of the process, which are viewed as facilitating successful implementation are presented as directionally influencing the views and experiences which reflect successful implementation.

Table 9 – Overview of thematic synthesis findings

What are participants’ experiences and views of person-centred planning sessions within educational contexts? (And what are the implications for EP practice?)		
Views and experiences which reflect successful implementation.	Aspects of the process which facilitate successful implementation.	Aspects of the process which need addressing in practice
Agency and Autonomy	Visual and Graphic presentation of information	Barriers to successful implementation
Beneficial emotional responses	Facilitator Importance	
Equitable and Collaborative Process		
Goal and Future Orientated		
Holistic View of People		

Figure 3 - Thematic network of review findings.



1.4 Findings

This section will describe the findings represented in the thematic network. To add richness to the interpretation, some Stage 1 codes used will be referred to.

1.4.1 Views and experiences which reflect successful implementation.

This section will capture what has been conceptualised as the within session outcomes of PCP planning sessions which may reflect successful implementation. So, the findings are presented as a complementary and coherent whole (Heyvaert, 2017). This section will also address the findings from the quantitative synthesis strand.

Beneficial emotional responses

All studies report participants experiencing some form of positive emotion during the PCP session. Sessions seemed to create an informal atmosphere which felt relaxed (Corrigan, 2014; Hayes, 2004; White & Rae, 2016) and allowed participants to feel at ease and even reduced their anxiety (Taylor-Brown, 2012). A range of other positive emotional responses was found in the data such as the session being containing and reassuring (White & Rae, 2016), refreshing, energising (Morgan, 2016) and hopeful (Corrigan, 2014).

Equitable and collaborative process

Reflecting person-centred principles, most studies demonstrated views which gave a sense of the sessions being collaborative and everyone playing an equal role. Equal voices were brought together through everyone speaking (Corrigan, 2014; Taylor-Brown, 2012) in equal partnerships (White & Rae, 2016). Sessions also echoed the notion of being socially cohesive by bringing people together to engage and bond (Morgan, 2016) and having pride in the group process (Taylor-Brown, 2012). More broadly this may echo the PCP principle of building relationships (Holburn, 2002).

Holistic view of people

Another emergent theme which reflects person-centred and humanistic psychology is the holistic view of people. Participants felt accepted as individuals (Corrigan, 2014) and

different avenues for discussion were facilitated which explored participants' lives beyond the school context (Taylor-Brown, 2012). There was a shift away from focusing on problems or deficits (White & Rae, 2016) and personal values and preferences were explored (Taylor-Brown, 2012). Moreover, the views, needs and aspirations of the participants were placed at the forefront of the sessions (Wood et al., 2019)

Agency and autonomy

Participants' experiences reflected their central position in decision-making. Across all studies, this theme was represented by feeling in control, being fully involved, and having ownership over the process. Participants had control in decision making (Corrigan, 2014; Wood et al., 2019) and felt empowered to make changes (Morgan, 2016). Being fully involved was shown through feeling listened to (Corrigan, 2014; Hayes, 2004), experiencing a bottom up change process (Morgan, 2016) and being talked with, not to (Taylor-Brown, 2012). A sense of group ownership over the process was also reported (Morgan, 2016).

Goal and future orientated

Three studies reflected sessions being goal and future orientated which are core elements of PCP (Holburn, 2002). Sessions seemed to create a sense of urgency to act and were a catalyst for change (Morgan, 2016). They were future orientated (Taylor-Brown, 2012) and allowed participants to prepare for the future with a greater sense of direction (Wood et al., 2019)

Findings of quantitative strand: narrative summary

Taken together, the quantitative strand of the two mixed method papers broadly reflects the collaborative, equitable and accessible nature of the PCP sessions, congruent with the Stage 3 theme: views and experiences of participants which reflect successful implementation. In Hayes's (2003) study, adult participants rated the review as very good on a five-point Likert scale which reflects findings in the thematic synthesis regarding positive experiences. The meeting was also rated as very good for helping those in the review understand what was happening. This reflects notions of transparency and accessibility. It was also rated as very good for allowing all people to have an input, echoing the idea of collaboration and equal voices. Corrigan (2014) utilised an 11-item questionnaire to explore experiences of the PCP meeting. Participants used a Likert scale to rate the meetings in relation to the core elements of PCP (Holburn, 2002). Summarising the ratings gives an

overall picture of participants viewing PCP meetings positively. The proportion of combined *agree* and *strongly agree* ratings across all items was reported by 89 percent of participants. An absence of any negative trend suggested that no area of PCP was experienced negatively.

1.4.2 Aspects of the process which facilitate successful implementation.

Differently conceptualised from the within session outcomes above, this section describes aspects of the process which might facilitate successful implementation. As potential facilitators of PCP sessions, the following two sections might be of importance to EP practice.

Visual and graphic presentation of information

All studies reported views regarding how the information in the sessions was presented. Firstly, they suggest using graphics and visually presented information in a shared forum can facilitate empowerment and facilitation. All views can be included (White & Rae, 2016), they make the session accessible and promote full participation (Hayes, 2004; White & Rae, 2016; Wood et al., 2019). Visually presented information also seems to reassure participants, remove any sense of secrecy and reduce power imbalances (Corrigan, 2014; Taylor-Brown, 2012). Secondly, graphics use seemed to support thinking, understanding and discussion: they allowed later reflections on change and helped develop ideas (Morgan, 2016; White & Rae, 2016) as well as acting as a prompt and reminder (White & Rae, 2016; Wood et al., 2019) and promoting an interactive and discursive climate (Corrigan, 2014).

Facilitator importance

All studies included views concerning the role of the PCP session facilitator. First, it is thought an external facilitator, creates a safe space. The safe space may increase confidence, allow risks to be taken and bring a fresh vision to a situation (Morgan, 2016). By making it fun and accessible, in-session participation can also be increased (Taylor-Brown, 2012). Second, facilitation is considered skilful. Facilitators need to practice doing (Wood et al., 2019) and their interpersonal skills can impact session success (Morgan, 2016; White & Rae, 2016). Linked to the previous section, one study emphasised the need of the facilitator to be able to graphic the meeting content (Hayes, 2004) and action planning in the session needs to be very strongly guided and chaired (Corrigan, 2014)

1.4.3 Aspects of the process which need addressing in practice.

Barriers to successful implementation

The following potential barriers were identified:

Anxiety provoking

Some PCP sessions were perceived as an emotionally charged process (Morgan, 2016) and anxiety inducing (Taylor-Brown, 2012; White & Rae, 2016). Some participants were nervous about speaking and writing in front of others, lack of preparation exacerbating their feelings (White & Rae, 2016). Some participants also felt because the session was not as they had expected they were unprepared and unable to express their views as well as they could have (Wood et al., 2019). Conversely, one paper reported allowing participants to prepare what they are going to say can reduce the anxiety experienced (Hayes, 2004).

Need for wider person-centred ethos.

One paper concluded the meetings need to sit within a wider person centred ethos within the school so sessions are not an isolated event (Taylor-Brown, 2012). This argument is supported in the wider PCP literature where core values and principles of PCP are viewed as essential to successful implementation and PCP tools should not be viewed as off the shelf tools (Newton et al., 2016).

Correct attendees

With one of the core elements of PCP being building relationships and community connections (Holburn, 2002), unsurprisingly three studies reported a main barrier to successful implementation was not having the correct people there (Corrigan, 2014; Hayes, 2004; Wood et al., 2019).

Too many questions and a lack of focus on difficulties

Other barriers included too many questions and not focusing on the difficulties enough (Corrigan, 2014). Not focusing on difficulties may reflect the wider deficit model where

schools and related systems must evidence difficulties to access services and resources (Bozic & Miller, 2013). From a solution oriented perspective it might also reflect the need to include the 'problem narrative' as opposed to 'full strength' solution focused practices (Harker et al., 2017, p. 171).

Time

A final barrier was time. Some participants felt the meetings were too long (White & Rae, 2016). The process was deemed to be overly time consuming and less efficient than existing practices (Corrigan, 2014). Also much time is needed to prepare and facilitate the sessions effectively (Wood et al., 2019).

1.5 Conclusions and Implications

This final section will first critically reflect on the relative contribution of each study to the review findings by considering their perceived quality and how they answered the review question. Next it will outline a suggested set of principles for PCP in EP practice. Finally, it will consider the limitations of the review and the implications for future research.

1.5.1 Study contributions and quality assessment.

The studies by Taylor-Brown (2012) and Wood et al. (2019) contributed the most to the synthesis and were judged as high quality. Other studies also contributed to all but one or two the themes (Corrigan, 2014; Morgan, 2016; White & Rae, 2016) and were judged as either high or medium quality. Taken together, findings therefore do not rely heavily on one or two papers. The studies make relatively even contributions to the findings which further reflects judgements made about their usefulness in answering the review question. It might be suggested their perceived quality adds to the overall trustworthiness of the synthesis but had any papers been of lower quality they would not have been excluded (Dixon-Woods et al., 2006) given the notion that the usefulness for answering the review question and perceived quality are not necessarily related (Pawson, 2006). This further scaffolds the suggestion the findings of this review are conceptualised as a configuration which links findings together as opposed to an aggregation which confirms a yes or no answer (Gough et al., 2017).

The use of PCP in Morgan's (2016) study differed from the other papers which focused on young people, parents, and families. Morgan's study explored the impact of PATH with a group of education professionals, yet despite this different context similar themes emerged. This might reflect the notion that person centred psychological underpinnings of PCP planning tools might be one factor driving participants' experiences of the sessions.

1.5.2 Person Centred Planning in EP practice – answering the review question.





Mainly, findings above address the review question by exploring participant views and experiences of PCP sessions. These views were organised into descriptive themes which in Stage 3 were further arranged to go beyond the data to explore implications for EP practice.

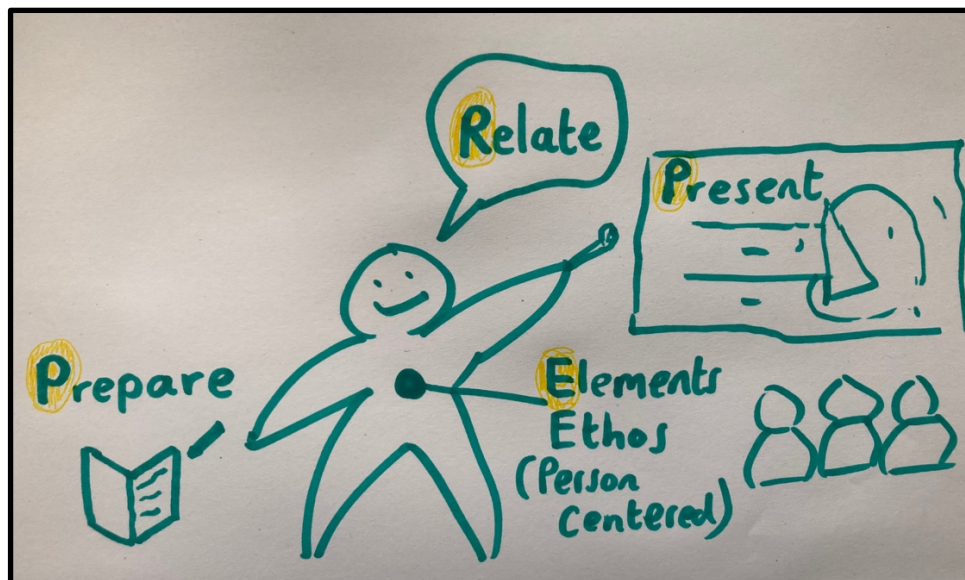
Rather than look at measurable outcomes or what works, this review set out to explore what successful implementation might look like in practice. This might be represented by emergent within session outcomes such as a sense of agency and autonomy and collaborative working. In line with O'Brien (2002), the PCP process could be viewed to improve the chances purposeful change might happen, rather than being the cause of change. Consequently, successful implementation is important to this change process.

Expressing the synthesis as a coherent whole, I suggest if a facilitator uses graphics or visually presents information whilst utilising interpersonal consultation skills then the sessions may be able to create a greater shared understanding and a safe relaxed climate with balanced contributions. This is interwoven with collaborative dialogue centred on participants' views and aspirations for the future, facilitating feelings of autonomy and agency. Successful implementation may also be facilitated by preparing for the sessions in advance by considering time needed and giving participants a greater understanding of what to expect. This might maximise contributions and reduce anxiety. Furthermore, as catalysts of change, facilitators should consider how they adhere to person centred principles and humanistic psychology both within the session and the wider ethos of the setting.

To bring this interpretation together I have created an acronym which serves to act as a set of principles which may guide the successful implementation of PCP sessions (Figure 4.) The acronym will be outlined in detail below, drawing on findings grounded in the papers and will be supported with reference to some wider literature. Whilst not exhaustive of the whole synthesis, the principles aim to capture the most pertinent findings relevant to the role of EPs when facilitating PCP sessions.

Figure 4 - PREP principles for Person Centred Planning Practice

P	Prepare	
R	Relate	
E	Ethos and Elements (Person Centred)	
P	Presentation	



Prepare

Preparing participants for the sessions by explaining what will happen, how they might be expected to contribute, and the expected duration might reduce anxiety and thus increase contribution. Explaining some of the underlying principles, such as strengths focus, might avoid any misconceptions about what could be discussed. Through prior practice, facilitators might prepare by being familiar with the format of the sessions. Preparation can also include considering who the correct attendees might be and if possible, planning to ensure they can attend. Facilitators might also consider the length of the session and how much time is needed for successful implementation.

Relate

As a facilitator, EPs can utilise their interpersonal and relational skills to promote collaborative relationships and dialogue between participants. Effective relationships may be fostered by adopting a neutral stance, recognising the locus of control and utilising rapport skills rooted in Rogerian inspired practices of active listening, warmth, empathy, and genuineness (Beaver, 2011). By relating to others in the room and employing discursive strategies for consultation (Nolan & Moreland, 2014), external skilful facilitators might create a safe space for future planning. Feeling safe and secure are key features of psychological needs theories such as Maslow's (1943) and Human Givens (Griffin & Tyrrell, 2013).

Ethos and Elements (Person-Centred)

Successful implementation of PCP sessions may be supported by the person-centred ethos in the surrounding wider systems and adherence to the core elements of PCP (Holburn, 2002). Rather than taking PCP tools off the shelf, one must consider how the facilitator's values align with humanistic and person-centred psychology. Person centred values should be interwoven and underpin the entire process. Researchers have posited the importance of avoiding tokenism (Fox, 2015). Annan et al. (2006) suggest, regardless of the framework or methods being used by an EP, the effectiveness of their consultation will be influenced by subtle messages they transmit about their values, intentions, attitudes, and beliefs. It is argued facilitators must embrace person centred values such as showing unconditional positive regard and empathy in a non-threatening and genuinely congruent manner (Merry, 1995).

Presentation

As facilitators, EPs might consider using visual presentation (such as graphics or shared writing) of information to aid transparency and clarity; support thinking and understanding as well as facilitate greater empowerment and participation. Working in this way is supported by the wider literature which advocates using visuals to support group productivity (Sibbet, 2010) and empowering individuals and organisations (Bran, 2017). This mirrors a broader assertion of self-determination theory which suggests feelings of competence, autonomy and relatedness in interpersonal settings might increase intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2013)

1.5.3 Limitations of the review

This review was undertaken by a sole researcher who screened all the studies, which has some implications for bias reduction and review robustness (Boland et al., 2017). Working solo also meant extending the search terms beyond the generic term Person-Centred Planning to include other terms such as Personal Futures Planning was not feasible. This was due to a potentially unwieldy number of papers for synthesis and the time constraints of the project. As a result, it is possible some potentially relevant papers were not found. In answering the review question however, the term person-centred planning is most common in EP practice (Bristow, 2013), so the decision was still warranted on those grounds.

1.5.4 Concluding remarks and Implications for further research

In short, this review set out to explore how participants experience PCP sessions within educational contexts. I aimed to bring greater attention to the consultation process involved and how within session outcomes which might act as facilitators of change. The review resulted in a set of guiding principles which may support facilitators successfully implement PCP sessions.

Across the review, despite a range different PCP planning tools being implemented in varying contexts, similar themes emerged. This supports the conceptualisation of PCP as a way of promoting inclusive values as opposed to manualised tools to be taken off the shelf and used tokenistically or as a tick-box procedure. As such PCP might be viewed as a methodology for EP practice: a conceptual framework with associated world views which guide the use of tools and processes. PCP tools were also used in varying localised contexts without a manual, so questions of intervention fidelity are seemingly irrelevant. This echoes the idea PCP is powerful when facilitators have the freedom to practice it as a vernacular art (O'Brien, 2014). This aligns with an argument that interventions might fail unless they are co-designed, sensitive to local differences and adjusted accordingly by facilitators (Davis et al., 2012). When considered away from the debate about measurable direct outcomes and what works from RCTs, practitioners might consider softer within session outcomes. In this sense, PCP might be powerful when we see it as facilitating a changing sense of what is possible and deserving of effort (O'Brien, 2014).

1.5.5 What next?

In the main, the studies considered PCP within the context of planning for children and young people in the education system. Highlighting a scarcity of research, only one paper (Morgan, 2016) explored using PCP in the context of organisational change with groups of education professionals. Also, most studies sought the views and experiences of main stakeholders in the sessions, not the facilitators themselves. Future research might explore how facilitators of PCP such as EPs view successful implementation and act as catalysts of change with organisational change contexts.

Word Count – 5,346

Chapter 2: Bridging Document

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I shall bridge the findings of the systematic literature review (SLR) coherently and critically with the empirical research in Chapter 3. First, I will acknowledge how my personal experiences and values initiated the research journey. I will then build rationale for the research by considering how gaps in the extant literature will be addressed by the specific design and chosen methodology. As such, underpinning research philosophy will be unpicked as well as my role in the creation of knowledge.

2.2 Thematic synthesis to empirical research

2.2.1 Why now?

Against a backdrop of national and regional shortages of Educational Psychologist (EPs) (DfE, 2023), the Chief Inspector of Education concluded the demand and need for EP services to support early intervention and preventive work has significantly increased (McDonnell, 2023). Within EP practice, there is a longstanding belief working at a systems or organisational level is more efficient through being preventative (Farrell et al., 2006; Richards, 2017) and a more cost effective use of time (Bennett, 2000). Working at an organisational level might include research, training or consultation (Boyle & MacKay, 2007). Given this argument, I suggest the need to explore tools which EPs use to support consultation is not only addressing a gap in the literature, but it is also very timely given the current demands on EP services.

2.2.2 Why this research?

To further develop understanding of how EPs might use PCP planning tools to support consultation, I undertook a systematic literature review (Chapter 1). The SLR identified the following gaps in the literature. Firstly, five studies addressed PCP sessions within the context of children and young people in educational settings. In contrast, only one study (Morgan, 2016) addressed using PCP tools for organisational change purposes with groups of professionals. Secondly, only one study sought the views of session facilitators. The empirical component of this thesis therefore sought to address these gaps by exploring EPs'

experiences of facilitating and implementing PCP sessions within the context of organisational change with groups of professionals. As well as addressing a gap, I believe the research is warranted due the current demand on EP services more broadly.

2.2.3 Personal reflexivity and axiological standpoint – Why me?

Within a qualitative paradigm, it is key to reflect on, interrogate and own the values that inform research (Braun, 2022). Within an interpretivist epistemology (Grix, 2002), discussed further below, my values inevitably inform the focus of the study and its subsequent interpretation. When embarking on this thesis, I realised my belief in PCP as an approach grew from a value-based position rather than an evidence based one. This chapter hopes to make my values explicit by unpacking how such values initiated the research journey and interest in the topic area.

Whilst working as a trainee EP, seeing PCP sessions with children, young people and teams of professionals prompted my curiosity. To explore why the sessions resonated with me, I reflected on life experiences. Having worked as a primary school teacher, feelings of reduced empowerment and autonomy (Parker, 2015) were compounded by little or no involvement in collaborative decision-making processes which directly affected the workforce. Both then and now, top-down decision making from higher power structures and external experts felt at odds with my ideological commitments to democracy, egalitarianism and change from the bottom up.

2.2.4 Overall rationale

Seeing PCP sessions in action seemed to encapsulate my values by shifting power towards those whom key decisions would affect most. I became interested in the nuances and complexity of the processes involved in PCP sessions as a consultation process and how EPs might use such understanding to enhance practice.

Research has an important role in learning about the processes of interventions (in this thesis, PCP sessions) as much as about the effects of the intervention itself (Petticrew, 2015). I believe moving away from measurable outcomes of PCP sessions and exploring subjective experiences of the process may elicit a deeper understanding of features which might act as facilitators of change. At the very core of the thesis, including the SLR in Chapter 1, I aimed to generate a rich understanding to inform and build EP practice in this

area. Considering my intellectual project (Wallace & Wray, 2021), the thesis inevitably pursues two: to create knowledge for understanding which might also serve as knowledge for action, the latter being practice implications for EP using PCP tools. The research sits within a wider move away from the what works and evidence based practice discourse which dominates education and research (Boyle & Kelly, 2017) towards building a small but emerging collection of practice-based evidence: what works, for whom and in what context in EP practice (Fox, 2011).

2.3 Philosophical considerations and methodology

This section will outline my considerations of research philosophy and rationale for the chosen methodology. First, I will unpick the assumptions the research question (RQ) makes. By default, this will consider issues of ontology and epistemology. Illustrating philosophical coherence to the RQ and underpinning assumptions about reality and knowledge creation, I will then give warrant for the chosen methodology of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) through epistemological reflexivity.

2.3.1 The research question and creation of knowledge

How do EPs understand and facilitate organisational change through group consultation using PATH?




Ontology refers to assumptions made about the nature of social reality, what exists in the world (Cohen et al., 2018) and the nature of being (Braun, 2022). I believe the RQ is informed by ontological realism. It is pointing to a phenomenon, in this case a shared experience of change associated with group consultation using PATH, that has ontological status and can be investigated in the empirical domain. As Willig (2016) suggests, a shared experience would exist as an emotional, mental and/or experiential structure even if the participant did not give an account of it to the researcher.

Epistemology refers to the stance taken regarding what we can know about a phenomenon of interest and how this might be elicited (Grix, 2002). I take an interpretivist position which assumes people actively make sense of and interpret phenomena based on their culture, experiences, and environment (Hammersley, 2012). Since this thesis assumes PCP is an objectively identifiable approach whilst simultaneously being experienced differently by participants, I suggest it sits within the broad meta-theory of critical realism.

Critical realism posits there is a mind-independent, objective reality to be discovered but subjective experiences create different interpretations (Bhaskar, 1986). Akin to post positivism, it assumes this objective reality can be known, although imperfectly. Our understanding of reality is improved by testing those ideas against observations and data. Aligning with social constructionism, it views meaning and intention as essential for understanding human social life and action. It also acknowledges the fallible, incomplete and context-dependent nature of knowledge (Mukumbang, 2023). Like pragmatism, it views knowledge as arising from the interaction of action and ideas and having value when it might solve problems (Elder-Vass, 2022).

The critical realist stance proposes three ontological levels of reality (Bhaskar, 1975). See Table 11 for my interpretation of these levels of reality in relation to my research context. A *real* social world refers to non-observable entities and processes in the social world such as class, culture and systems which can have real effects on change processes. While events can be observed and experienced, they are being created by independent, often unobservable, but still very real mechanisms (O'Mahoney & Vincent, 2014) which might be material, psychological or social in nature (Mukumbang, 2023). These mechanisms can be viewed as underlying processes, entities or structures which operate in certain contexts to generate outcomes of interest (Astbury & Leeuw, 2010). I therefore conceptualise the EP facilitated group consultation PATH process as a mechanism which brings about outcomes or changes within contexts. I seek to discover what EPs view as the outcomes of facilitating PATH led group consultation within the context of organisational change and how those outcomes might be achieved. By claiming the existence of a reality independent from our knowledge or awareness of it, research may create knowledge that might make a difference to practice (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Table 10 - Ontological levels of reality (Bhaskar, 1975) applied to my research.

	Description	Conceptualisation within this research
Empirical domain 	Phenomena which are known through direct experience and observation	EP experiences of facilitating change using PATH with groups of professionals. Known through direct experiences and semi-structured interview.
Actual domain 	All the events and objects that exist regardless of whether we observe them. Such a view assumes a world that exists independently of our ideas and experiences of it.	Includes all the people, objects and events involved with or affected by the EP facilitated PATH whether these are known to me as the researcher or not. The PATH might have unobserved impacts that still exist despite me being unaware.
Real domain 	This domain includes both the empirical and actual and considers a causal level of reality. Real mechanisms and entities, which may not be observable or material, but we may still be able to infer their existence or observe their impact. Psychological theory (in the real domain) can be used to explain mechanisms which have the potential to generate the perceived changes.	Processes and mechanisms that interact in complex ways to produce (or not) the desired changes or outcomes of the EP facilitated path in each context. e.g., psychological processes explained by theory

2.3.2 Choosing IPA as my research methodology

This section will explain my chosen methods to build and test knowledge claims. IPA is a qualitative methodology used to explore how people make sense of their personal lived experiences (Smith, 2004) and has been used within applied educational psychology research (Hattersley, 2023; Lowther, 2013; Rawlings & Cowell, 2015). In the pursuit of quality control, it has been suggested a chosen methodology should be suitable for achieving the goals of the research (Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2011). Reasons for choosing IPA as a research methodology will be detailed below.

The RQ focuses on the exploration of EPs' lived experiences of group consultation using a PCP process. This points to research which is concerned with phenomenology, the study of first person lived experiences (Braun, 2022). Seeking phenomenological knowledge assumes group consultation in practice will be experienced differently by individuals. In line

with my earlier suggestion, this further suggests my position of critical, as opposed to naïve realism. Naïve realism would claim knowledge is a direct representation of the world (Willig, 2013).

Fitting with my aims to explore EP practice experiences of group consultation using PCP, IPA is committed to understanding how an experiential phenomenon (in this case an event or process) has been understood by particular people (Smith et al., 2009). IPA assumes such experiences have meaning, and such experiences will have been informed and shaped by their prior experiences, life circumstances and existing assumptions. When shared with me, it is suggested the accounts they speak of are influenced by the meaning they have already given to them. As a person in context (Larkin et al., 2006) I will assign meaning to their experiences based on my own experiences, assumptions and circumstances. This echoes a double hermeneutic; I aim to make sense of what the participants are making sense of and how they are making this sense (Smith et al., 2009). IPA is also regarded as being especially useful when concerned with process and complexity (Smith & Osborne, 2008). Starks and Brown Trinidad (2007) suggest IPA seeks to encapsulate meaning and common features, or essences of an event or experience. Arguably, PCP group consultation sessions are processes filled with social and psychological complexity and so suitably studied using a phenomenological approach.

2.3.3 IPA and contextualism

Chosen methodology reflects specific ontological and epistemological assumptions (Grix, 2002). Through scrutiny of the RQ above, I have suggested the research is generally informed by a critical realist position. It has been suggested IPA assumes a particular epistemological position and the researcher should adopt a stance which they believe is most appropriate (Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2011). Broadly, research using IPA argues for an epistemological position on a continuum between critical realism and contextual constructionism (Smith, 1996). Because of its focus on individuals in context, Larkin et al. (2006) describes IPA as a contextualist approach. According to Madill et al. (2000), this approach views knowledge, and those that create it as being contextually situated. Knowledge is assumed to be contextual and dependent on an individual's standpoint and a form of truth can be partially accessed through language. Knowledge generated is provisional, local, and situated. Coherent with a broad meta-theoretical tradition of critical realism, I have adopted a contextualist approach because it explores the experiences of EPs in a particular service and deems each account as valid within that context. I retain a sense

of provisional truth in my empirical analysis of the accounts regarding EP practice experiences whilst still acknowledging the context contingent and ambiguous nature of meaning and language (Braun, 2022).

2.3.4 IPA and knowledge claims

IPA studies usually focus on small homogenous samples from groups who have similar shared experiences (Langdrige, 2007) . As such, there is no generalisability claimed (Oxley, 2016). IPA studies are therefore also idiographic. I aim to seek provisional truth which has utility for practising EPs within a particular context. The study is considered as understanding a small part to illuminate the whole. Smith et al. (2022) refer to this as theoretical generalisability where the reader may judge the evidence in relation to their existing experience and professional knowledge. Within critical realism, theory might be used to make inferences using a kind of informed reasoning known as retroduction. Inferences are made based on what is currently observed and the researcher works backwards to discover a likely explanation that makes sense of those observations (Pilgrim, 2019).

The research seeks to navigate a tension between a commitment to idiography whilst creating opportunities for readers to connect to others' experiences. Since I am making cautious claims about a small group of EPs and their particular shared experience (Langdrige, 2007), readers can consider the knowledge discovered by this thesis within their own practice contexts and experiences. Finally, I believe a commitment to idiography and case by case analysis embraces the variability and idiosyncratic nature of individual EP practice which might otherwise have been slightly lost in approaches such as thematic analysis which seek to generalise across the data set as a whole.

2.3.5 The influence of underpinning theory

Research and knowledge generated through data analysis is always underpinned by theoretical assumptions to be reflected upon and acknowledged (Braun, 2022).

Whilst IPA studies are rooted in data and not framed by established theories, Smith (2017) proposes IPA is extremely appropriate for psychological inquiry. As a piece of applied educational psychological inquiry, the underpinning theoretical assumptions of PCP were discussed in Chapter 1 and will inevitably, in some way provide one lens through which I interpret data. Throughout the data analysis process, a contextualist stance utilises

reflexivity to make my role in shaping knowledge visible to the reader rather than control and eliminate sources of bias. As such I have adopted a reflexive journal to keep a log of reflections, thoughts, decision making and theoretical influences during the analysis.

2.3.6 Addressing the tension of a person-centred approach to group consultation and organisational change.

Person-centredness and its understandable focus on the individual as the unit of analysis might assume a tension when exploring the use of person-centred planning to address consultation at a *group* level. I believe this research sits within the broader organisational development literature which explores the humanistic focus on interpersonal relationships (Bushe & Marshak, 2007). If we view people as relational beings (Gergen, 2009), a humanistic focus on subjective phenomenological experience and self-actualisation (Rogers, 2012) can still arguably consider interaction as a unit of analysis when viewed through a post-modern lens. A focus on the relationships as units of analysis is also coherent with Vygotskian sociocultural learning theory which considers what happens *between* people (Rogoff, 1990). With that, I also support the notion of human agency being constrained or facilitated by wider social structures (Bandura, 2001). This in turn aligns with the critical realist idea of the *real* domain. A critical realist position is not only interested in the emergence of subjective meaning systems, but also how they are combined to inform collective social processes which might bring about change (Vincent & Wapshott, 2014)

2.3.7 Additional warrant for choosing IPA.

In viewing individuals as experts in their own lived experience, IPA is theoretically coherent with PCP. Moreover, IPA explores experience in its own terms rather than trying to place it into predefined categories. This bottom-up approach to data analysis arguably makes it truly participant centred which again aligns with the values of PCP and humanistic psychology. Unlike approaches such as Template Analysis (King, 2012) which impose a-priori codes or themes prior to analysis, I chose IPA because of the commitment to coming from a place of genuine curiosity, so reducing the influence of the findings of the SLR in shaping and guiding the inquiry. I wanted a methodology which would facilitate the emergence of potentially new, unanticipated categories of experience and meaning. Also, I believe having an inductive and organic approach to data analysis is conceptually coherent with the broader idea of bottom-up change which is in part axiologically where this thesis is rooted. Coming from a place of

curiosity and openness gives space to participants' voices which may otherwise have been lost had I sought to arrange data into pre-defined categories.

2.4 Quality, Reflexivity and Ethics

2.4.1 Assessing Quality

I acknowledge that scientific criteria for valid knowledge production might be inappropriate for qualitative research whilst also adhering to the notion it should be conducted in a methodological and rigorous manner to produce useful and meaningful findings (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Rigour in qualitative research may be considered in terms of its quality and trustworthiness (Cohen et al., 2018). Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest trustworthiness is a means by which research can be considered legitimate and worthy of attention. Whilst qualitative approaches do not recognize one set of quality criteria as superior, it is important they are outlined (Symon & Cassell, 2012). To consider quality, I have utilised Yardley's (2000) criteria (See Table 12). I believe these provide flexible guidance to consider the rigour of the study. This also reflects my subjectivist epistemology.

Table 11 - Application of Yardley's (2000) Criteria

Criteria	Characteristics	Actions I have taken to address the criteria
<i>Sensitivity to context</i>	Theoretical; relevant literature; sociocultural setting; empirical data; ethical issues and participants' perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing topic explored through a systematic literature review. ▪ Wider reading to consider broader and additional topics relevant to the research focus including EP practice and systemic work and current socio-political context and EP practice. ▪ Consideration of relevant educational, psychological, and sociological theory ▪ SLR considered participants' contexts and perspectives. ▪ Interview schedule was flexible to facilitate a close relationship to position of participants and IPA demands personal reflexivity. ▪ Rapport developed in interviews – relational and interactional skills support data collection. ▪ Use of many verbatim extracts to support argument being made. ▪ Reflexivity clearly reflected on in Chapter 2. IPA is not value free. Reflexive post interview diary was kept too. ▪ Ethical issues considered regarding positioning and data generation etc. ▪ Findings related to relevant literature in the discussion
<i>Commitment and Rigour</i> <i>(may show similarities to sensitivity to context (Smith et al., 2022))</i>	Methodological competence and skill; in depth engagement with topic area; thorough data collection; depth and breadth of analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close attention paid to the participants – reflexive diary and transcripts show appropriate response and consider a good degree of rapport and participant led interviews. ▪ Supervision to support interview schedule. ▪ Summarising and clarifying during interviews. ▪ Rigour (the thoroughness of the study) addressed appropriate sample with relevant experience (homogenous) ▪ Sample size considered large enough to examine similarities and differences whilst data not being too overwhelming (Turpin et al., 1997) ▪ Analysis is deemed to be sufficiently interpretative and goes beyond description. ▪ Rich immersion in data and careful analysis ▪ Detailed consideration of research philosophy and the impact on methodology choice

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Supervision and consideration of findings with colleagues in the EP team to discuss my interpretation. ▪ Sample validation of findings (Appendix K) ▪ Judicious selection of good and appropriate verbatim quotes to illustrate the themes across the interviews. Drawing on participants accounts even-handedly.
<i>Transparency and Coherence</i>	Power and clarity of argument/description; transparent methods and presentation of data; coherence between theory and method; reflexivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stages of the research process and analysis are clearly outlined. ▪ Substantial reading and consideration of the analysis method ▪ Clear audit trail for interviews, theme generation etc ▪ Tables included for interview schedule, all files for each participant all available on request. ▪ Explanation of how the interview schedule was designed. ▪ Reflexive journaling during data analysis. ▪ Consideration of philosophical position including axiology ▪ Consideration of positionality
<i>Impact and importance</i>	Theoretical and practical utility and contribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Contribution of Ideographic accounts of EP experiences contribute to literature. ▪ Readers can make interpretations of the how interesting, important, and useful it is for their context. ▪ EPs may consider the relevance to their own practice and service context. ▪ Further practice in this way might contribute to organisational and systems development in schools and beyond.

2.4.2 Positionality

A further quality issue to consider is positionality. Since IPA relies on the researcher's own interpretative resource (Braun & Clarke, 2013), it is important to critically reflect on my role in knowledge production, as a form of quality control. For readers to be able to assess how my identity might influence the research process and knowledge discovered, I must account for the identity I have chosen to adopt within this thesis: positionality (Savin-Baden & Major, 2023). Not acknowledging my position might deny readers the opportunity to assess how important such factors might be (Jafar, 2018). Positionality is often discussed with a clear demarcation between insider and outsider perspectives (Huberman & Miles, 2002). Insiders are viewed as being part of the group or community which they are studying while outsiders are not (Braun, 2022). This binary is perhaps too simple. Positionality can move dynamically on a continuum during the research process (Arber, 2006). In contrast, Milligan (2016) suggests the notion of an in-betweener, who is neither entirely an insider or outsider. I suggest my position as a trainee EP in relation to the participants is one of an in-betweener with greater leanings towards an insider. Belonging to a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), I share attributes with the participants such as some professional knowledge and belonging to the same team yet am not a fully qualified EP with years of experience.

A sound grasp of EP professional duties and first-hand experience of PCP in practice has allowed me to prepare more efficiently (Bukamal, 2022) and develop questions based on rich understandings of the issues needing investigation (Coghlan & Brannick, 2007; Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). The IPA researcher is essentially seeking to adopt an insider's perspective (Smith et al., 2009) to stand in their shoes and see it from their view. Being familiar with the interviewees, they might be less guarded or cautious which could result in more genuine data (Chew-Graham et al., 2002). Also utilising existing rapport may elicit rich understandings (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Despite potential benefits of being more of an insider than outsider, I might be susceptible to separating my own experiences from participants' and even make assumptions based on shared tacit beliefs (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). To mitigate not sufficiently explaining a participant's thinking and decision making, during the interview I aim to focus on the world of the participant whilst acknowledging my own theoretical hobby horses and pre-existing hunches (Smith et al., 2009) by coming from a place of genuine curiosity through mindful attention (Davis, 2016).

2.4.3 Ethical Issues – Sensitivity to Context.

It is important to consider the most pertinent nuances of my position as a researcher in this study context. Acknowledging my position as a researcher can result in some ethical issues related to confidentiality and privacy (Fleming, 2018). Despite mitigation through anonymity of participants, even though I will not specifically identify the EP service, if the paper were to be published, my details as an author might allow others to make a connection to where the study was undertaken (Floyd & Arthur, 2012). Despite this risk, I do not anticipate the content of the thesis to threaten or harm the reputation of the service. If anything, the research is appreciative and a celebration of EP practice. If the service can be identified through my authorship, I will ensure the way findings are presented does not reveal participant identity. To address this, I will feed back my findings to participants before any submission. I acknowledge the tension this brings when aiming to provide a rich description of context to facilitate transparency and transferability of findings (Trowler, 2011).

2.5 Summary

This chapter has afforded a link between the SLR findings and the empirical research in Chapter 3. I have considered how the research developed, issues of reflexivity and philosophical coherence. How underpinning theory might influence data interpretation has also been addressed. Ultimately, my research aims to provide deeper insight into using PATH, a PCP planning tool, to support group consultation. It comes from a place of valuing democratic decision making, collaboration and bottom-up change. Such values are interwoven with the hopes of working both efficiently and preventatively at an organisational level.

Word Count 3,320

Chapter 3: EPs' experiences of group consultation to facilitate organisational change using PATH.

Abstract

Against a backdrop of EP shortages and increased demand on services, there is a greater need for preventative and more cost-effective ways of working. This might include working at the level of organisations and systems through group consultation. Person-Centred Planning (PCP) tools can be used to guide consultation at both an individual and organisational level. Few studies have explored experiences of how PCP tools work and the impact they might have when guiding consultation with groups of professionals. This idiographic study explored how EPs understood and facilitated organisational change through group consultation using a PCP tool known as Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATH). Semi-structured interviews were used to gather experiences and views of eight EPs from the same service. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used to interpret experiences in depth. EPs used PATH with professionals from Education, NHS, and Social Services to facilitate organisational change. Findings highlight preparation, consultation skills, the role of the graphics and utilising person-centred principles in supporting the change process. Psychological changes for professionals included a greater sense of group autonomy, efficacy, and motivation towards a shared vision for the future. Consultation skills worked alongside the visual aspect of PATH to create a facilitative climate which supported discussion, co-construction, and participation of group members. Group consultation reflected core person-centred principles of equality, empowerment, and collaboration. Experiences suggest PATH is an adaptable, accessible and time efficient tool which may promote creativity, equitable planning, and innovation. As well as adding to a small body of practice-based evidence, this research also articulates and describes one aspect of what EPs can do and perhaps more importantly, how they do it. Regardless of the tool used, it is *how* the EP uses it which seems important: their consultation skills, wealth of psychological knowledge and personal values can support and drive organisational change.

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 EPs and consultation.

Consultation as an approach to Educational Psychology (EP) practice has a relatively long history (Hoskins et al., 2006) and is a required BPS (2023) competency and HCPC (2023) proficiency. Consultation is broadly conceptualised as involving consultants (EPs) and consultees (teachers, parents or other professionals) who work together to help solve problems with clients (O'Farrell & Kinsella, 2018). Gutkin and Conoley (1990) view consultation as a form of indirect work where EPs can bring about most change by working with key adults around a pupil. According to Wagner (2000), "Consultation is a voluntary, collaborative, non-supervisory approach, established to aid the functioning of a system and its inter-related systems" (p.11). Despite a plethora of perspectives and models guiding consultation (see Henderson (2013) for a helpful overview), many describe similar processes. Through consultation, it is suggested psychology can be at the core of practice (Boyle & Lauchlan, 2009) to promote meaningful change. Research demonstrates consultation may be an effective model on which to base EP practice (Henderson, 2013; Larney, 2003) but since models of consultation vary so much, it has been argued reviewing its impact is challenging (Dickinson, 2000).

As well as a defined task or a specific skill or activity (Leadbetter, 2006), consultation may also be conceptualised as an overarching framework for practice and approach to service delivery (Wagner, 2017). Wagner (2000) see consultation's aim being to bring about difference at the individual, group/class, or whole school/organisational level. When viewed as a contained intervention, consultation meetings may employ different formats and utilise a range of theoretical approaches (Leadbetter, 2006). As well as consulting with groups of teachers regarding concerns about pupils (Hanko & Gerda, 1981; Hayes & Stringer, 2016) group consultation processes might be used to support organisational change (Roffey, 2000)

3.1.2 EPs as change agents within systems and organisations

EPs might act as change agents (Boyle & Kelly, 2017; Roffey, 2015) in the systems they operate within by stimulating, facilitating or coordinating a change effort (Lunenburg, 2010). More than four decades ago, an explicit argument was made for moving away from individual casework to working at a systems level to facilitate organisational change in schools (Burden et al., 1982; Gillham, 1978). Organisations may be broadly conceptualised

as an organised group of people with a particular purpose (Soanes & Hawker, 2006). Working at an organisational level on policy and strategic issues might include research, training or consultation (Boyle & MacKay, 2007). There is an optimistic and implicit belief that organisations can accomplish more than individuals alone and change might bring about some form of improvement (Cantore, 2016). Helping organisations to develop through consultation is arguably a cost effective use of EP time (Bennett, 2000). Such an approach to practice is valued by EPs (Farrell et al., 2006) and argument for working at an organisational level remains current. In a recent report on EP workforce insights (DfE, 2023), advocacy and preference for working at this level is believed to help maximise the impact of the EP role. Alongside national and regional shortages of EPs (DfE, 2023), there is also an increasing demand for EPs to support early intervention and prevention (McDonnell, 2023). It is against this backdrop that research concerning this area of EP practice is considered timely.

3.1.3 Person-Centred Planning tools in consultation

Person centred approaches were developed in Canada and the USA to support inclusion and participation (Merry, 1995). Person centred planning (PCP) aims to put those involved at the centre of planning and decisions that affect them (Newton et al., 2016). PCP tools such as Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATH) (PATH, O'Brien et al., 2002) and 'Making Action Plans' (MAPS, Forest et al., 1996) are rooted in the humanistic perspective which highlights notions of growth, choice and constructive fulfilment (Rogers, 1995).

To support inclusion, EPs have been known to use PCP tools such as MAPs and PATH for group planning at both the individual and organisational or systems level (Bristow, 2013). With a strong feature in the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice (DfE, 2014), many studies concerning PCP tools inevitably focus on their use in supporting individuals and their families (Corrigan, 2014; Hayes, 2004; Taylor-Brown, 2012; White & Rae, 2016; Wood et al., 2019) and tend to focus on the outcomes of PCP sessions (Gray & Woods, 2022; Robertson et al., 2005) rather than how the consultation process works.

To gain further insight into how PCP works as a consultation process, a recent unpublished systematic review sought to gain more understanding of participants' experiences. Studying experiences is important since there are occasions when much more is achieved than can be measured (Turner et al., 2010). Unpicking experiences of PCP group consultation processes might allow EPs to learn more about the implementation features which may act

as change facilitators. Findings from the systematic review suggest adequate preparation, visual or graphic presentation of information and a safe-relaxed atmosphere can facilitate feelings of autonomy, agency, and greater shared understanding. The review also revealed a scarcity of research focusing on experiences of those facilitating the sessions and using PCP tools to support group consultation at an organisational level.

3.1.4 Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATH) as a group consultation tool to facilitate change organisational change.

EPs might employ frameworks to support a group consultation at an organisational level such as Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999) or Soft Systems Methodology (Checkland & Scholes, 1999). As an alternative, Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATH) is a PCP tool which has been adapted by some practitioners to support an organisational change process. PATH is designed to help people build inclusive, democratic communities and organisations by planning towards a dream future (O'Brien et al., 2002). The co-produced plan is recorded visually by a graphic facilitator and process facilitator who help the group set goals and think creatively (Newton et al., 2016)

Figure 5 - The PATH process graphic.

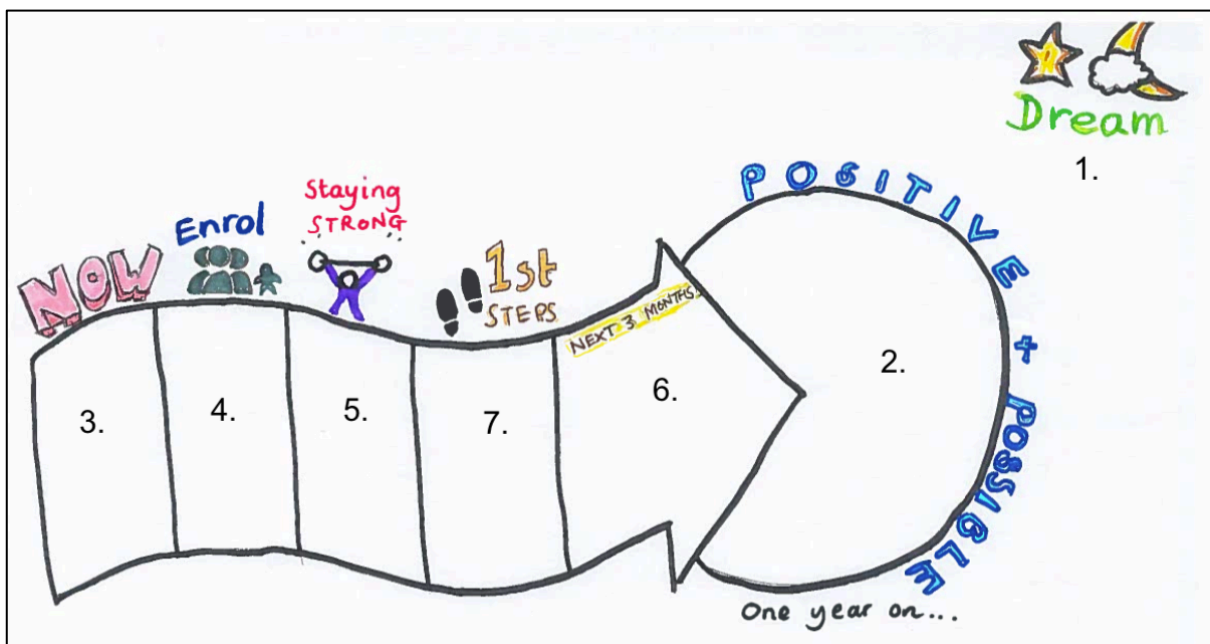


Table 12 - PATH process

PATH Process
1. Touching the dream – the North Star
2. Sensing the goal
3. Grounding in the now
4. Identifying people to enrol
5. Recognising ways to build strength
6. Charting action for the next few months
7. Committing to the first step

The use of PATH at a systems level has been explored in a few studies (Carpenter et al., 2023; Hughes et al., 2019; Morgan, 2016). Morgan (2016) explored the views of professionals working within a local authority about their experience of using PATH to support organisational change. Participant interviews suggested the PATH process facilitated communication and created a sense of ownership of being active agents of change. They also reported having achieved even more than the initial expected outcomes. Organisational change was reported to be hindered by outside influences and external factors such as broader Local Authority pressures.

A case study exploring using PATH to support organisational change with a group of school staff reflected on the process and outcomes (Hughes et al., 2019). The authors highlighted the importance of involving all school staff, using a neutral environment, and preparing attendees with verbal and written information before and during the process. Carpenter et al.'s (2023) case study noted the importance of the EP's skills, knowledge, and relationship with the school in providing a safe space to contemplate key change issues. Findings suggested PATH allowed a participatory, structured framework to plan and support the group planning process.

3.2 Study Aims

This study explores EPs' experiences of facilitating and implementing group consultation within the context of organisational change with groups of professionals. It aims to add more understanding to how the PATH process works in group consultation, what perceived changes are brought about and how those changes might be facilitated. By making participants' professional tacit knowledge explicit (Sternberg & Horvath, 1999) it might assist

EPs in developing their group consultation skills when using PATH as a tool to support organisational change. Warrant for the current study is twofold. By addressing gaps in the literature, it adds to a small but growing body of empirical studies which showcase practice-based evidence of organisational group consultation using PATH. This research is also timely given the current demand for systems level work against a backdrop of EP shortages.

The study addresses the following research question (RQ): *How do EPs understand and facilitate organisational change through group consultation using PATH?*

3.3 Methodology

3.3.1 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

This study adopted a phenomenological approach which assumes that human consciousness and perception of the world is formed by lived experience (Smith et al., 2009). As such, at the centre of the research endeavour is the subjective experience of the individual (Mertens, 2019). Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was utilised to examine, analyse, and make sense of eight EPs' experiences of using PATH as a group consultation tool within organisational change contexts. It is assumed that these experiences are subjectively real to each participant yet are continuously open to interpretation. This informs the position from which the analysis should be viewed. IPA is particularly useful when exploring processes and complexity (Smith & Osborne, 2008) and aims to encapsulate the essences of an experience or event (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). Group consultation is filled with complexity and is therefore suitably studied using a phenomenological approach.

3.3.2 Research Philosophy

A critical realist position was adopted for this study which posits there is a mind-independent, objective reality to be discovered but subjective experiences create different interpretations (Bhaskar, 1986). The critical realist stance proposes three ontological levels of reality (Bhaskar, 1975): the empirical, actual and real. It is assumed that change because of EP facilitated group consultation, although subjective, is a phenomenon that can be observed and experienced as outcomes in the *empirical domain* through semi-structured interviews. In the *actual domain* there are also objects, people and events involved with or affected by the group consultation whether they are known to me or not. The *real domain* adds the

processes and mechanisms that interact in complex ways to produce (or not) the desired changes or outcomes of the EP facilitated PATH consultation in each context. To make sense of the data, psychological theory is used to infer and theorise using a type of informed reasoning known as retroduction (Pilgrim, 2019).

EP facilitated group consultation process is viewed as a mechanism or set of mechanisms which bring about both observed and unobserved outcomes or changes within organisational change contexts. I seek to discover what EPs view as mechanisms and outcomes and how best those outcomes might be achieved when using PATH to support consultation (Robson, 2011)

3.3.3 Sampling and participant recruitment

In IPA studies, samples should be homogenous and purposive (Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2011). Eight participants were drawn from a practitioner group for whom the RQ is both meaningful and relevant (Table 14) by inviting members of one EP service with relevant experience via email. Inclusion criteria included practising EPs who had experience of using PATH as a group consultation tool to facilitate change at an organisational level.

Table 13 - Overview of each Educational Psychologist Participant

Pseudonym	Job Role Title	Years working as an EP	Years working in current service
Sofie	Senior practitioner	12	7
Lindsey	Senior Practitioner	12	12
David	Senior Practitioner	10	2
Ruth	Senior Practitioner	5	3
Jane	Specialist Senior	12	9
Helen	Specialist Senior	12	9
Nicola	Leadership role	19	19
Melanie	Leadership role	25	16

3.3.4 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were chosen to encourage participant centred, free and open discussions. A range of question types (Table 15) was created to be sufficiently specific but

also open enough to facilitate space to give rich and detailed accounts of views and experiences (Smith et al., 2022). To appreciate and value the best of what is, some questions were also influenced by the Discovery Phase of Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999). Appreciative questions aimed to yield a more nuanced view of the experience (Michael, 2005) (see [Appendix F](#) for a full interview schedule). Interviews were conducted face to face and lasted on average one hour.

Table 14 - Example Interview Questions – Informed by (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999) and (Smith et al., 2022)

Question Type	Semi-Structured Interview Question
Descriptive	Can you start by telling me about your experiences using PATH with professionals?
Evaluative	Without being modest, what strengths do you bring to the role of facilitator of PATH?
Contrast	For you, what are the differences between a good PATH and a bad PATH when used with groups of professionals?
Probes	What do you mean by “ <i>point made by participant</i> ”?
Prompts	Can you tell me more about that? Is there something else you’d like to tell me about... <i>a point made by participant</i> ?

3.3.5 Ethics and confidentiality

The research followed guidance from the BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct (2021). Ethical approval was given by Newcastle University’s Ethics Panel in February 2023. Participants were informed that their data and information would remain confidential and only accessible to my supervisor and me. Each was allocated a number and pseudonym to assist with the analysis.

3.4 Analysis

The analysis followed the interpretative procedure (Smith et al., 2022) as outlined in Table 16.

Table 15 - Description of IPA process

Steps to the IPA process	Description of the process
1. Starting with the first case – reading and re-reading	I read each transcript and listened to the audio several times to become familiar with the data set.
2. Exploratory noting.	Starting with what I deemed to be the most complex interview, a range of comments were made: descriptive (what the participant described), linguistic (how language was used) and conceptual comments (further wonderings and interrogation)
3. Creating experiential statements.	Meaning was summarised from short portions of the text. See Appendix G for an example of stage 2 and 3.
4. Looking for connections across experiential statements.	Experiential statements were grouped together to reflect commonalities in meaning. Some statements were discarded if deemed irrelevant to the research focus.
5. Naming Personal Experiential Themes (PETs) and arranging them into a table.	The grouped experiential statements were named to reflect the essence of shared meaning. PETs represent a higher level of abstraction from participants' accounts. At this stage statements were regularly checked against the original transcript, so they were deemed consistent with the participants words. See Appendix H for an example.
6. Repeat steps 1-5 for the rest of the cases	In line with the idiographic nature of IPA I went through the complete process of steps 1–5 for the rest of the interviews treating each case with curiosity and openness.
7. Using Personal Experiential Themes to create Group Experiential themes (GETs) across cases.	Once all cases were individually analysed, patterns of similarity and difference were identified across the PETs to create a set of GETs. The aim was not to present a kind of average or group norm but to highlight the shared and unique features. I aimed to illuminate points of convergence and divergence. At this stage some PETs were reconfigured and relabelled. For each GET a single table showing the clusters of PETs and ETs was produced (see Appendix I for an example)

3.5 Findings

3.5.1 Introduction and summary

Five Group Experiential Themes with associated Personal Experiential Themes and Experiential Statements were discovered through analysis (See Figure 6 and Table 17). Indicative quotes are used to illuminate some Experiential Statements linked to PETs and wider group themes. Perceived changes because of group consultation using PATH are numerous. EPs highlight the importance of their role in preparing for and facilitating PATH group consultation sessions and suggest ways in which the graphics and visual aspect of PATH influence the change process.

Figure 6 - Visual Overview of Findings (GETs in bold and PETs in plain text)

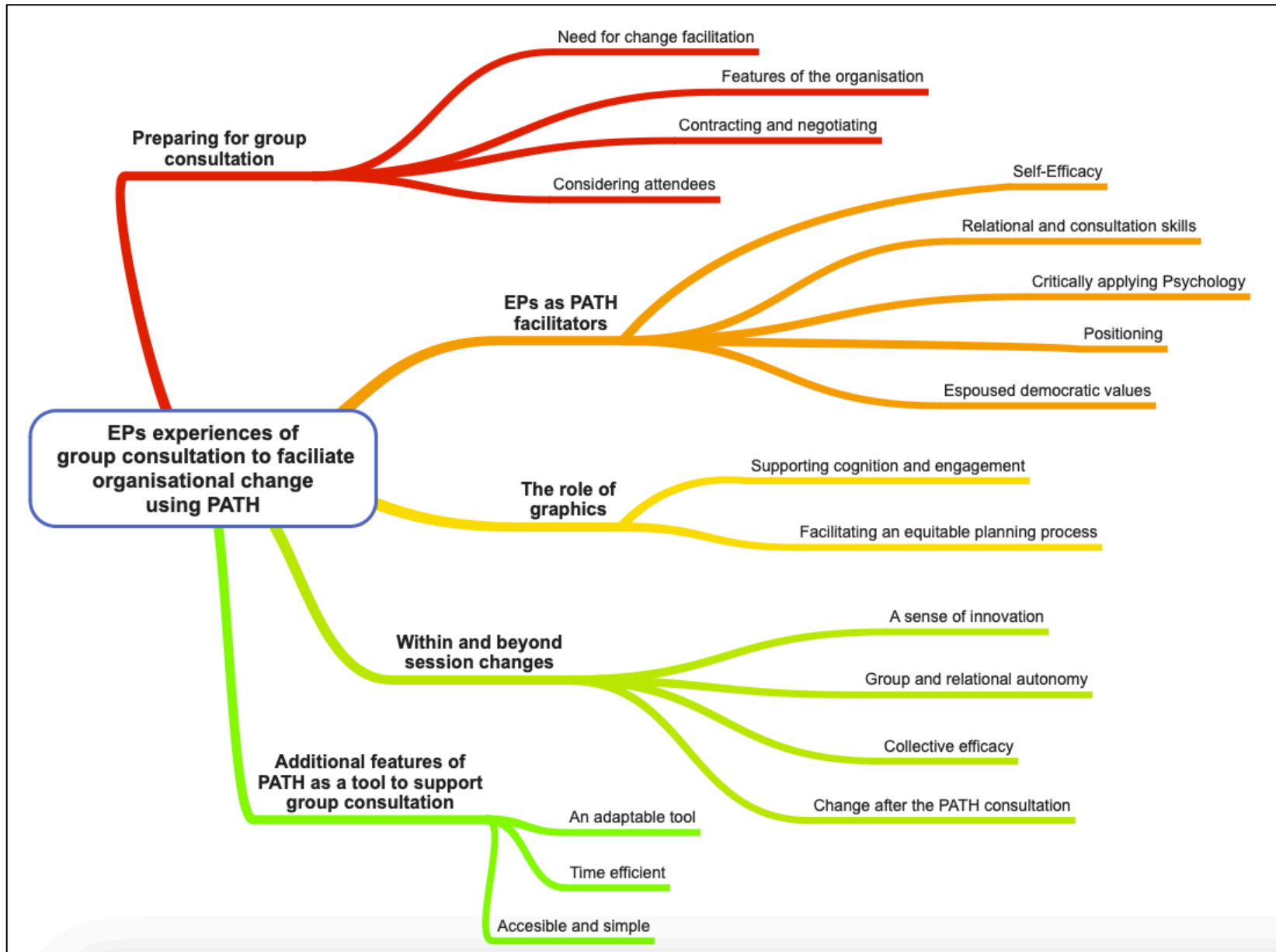


Table 16 - Group Experiential Themes and associated sub themes

Master Group Experiential theme table - across transcripts analysis				
Group Experiential Theme	Associated Personal Experiential Themes	Participants contributing	Experiential Statements	Indicative Quotes
Preparing for PATH group consultation	Need for change facilitation.	All	<i>Deeper thinking around inclusion</i>	<i>...like themes that might come up for a group of people or for a system, and then we think we've got to do some serious...deep thinking about this...we might use PATH and negotiate it with the school. (Sofie 5/174)</i>
			<i>A new development or direction</i>	<i>...I've been involved in a couple of whole school PATHS, which have been when schools are looking to either develop something new or they want to kind of change direction with something. (Lindsey 2/69)</i>
			<i>During a state of flux</i>	<i>... there'd been a lot of change, a lot of new staff joining the team, lots of staff leaving the team as well...it was in a kind of state of flux. (Ruth 1/19)</i>
			<i>Supporting a new development or provision</i>	<i>...something's new or something needs to change, or something feels difficult or stuck and we know change facilitation is needed (Helen 10/347)</i>
			<i>Feeling stuck</i>	<i>...they've tended to be when people are just really stuck, and they don't know what to do and they don't know what next... (Melanie 7/239)</i>
	Features of the organisation.	All except David and Helen	<i>Receptiveness to PATH</i>	<i>...when I make a decision about using a PATH, it tends to be where I think it'll be well received, where I've got a preconception about how it's going to be taken, and whether it's going to be taken and seriously and whether the visuals are going to be...I know, I've heard the word before, but how some people might look at it as a gimmicky thing. (Jane 13/208)</i>
			<i>Change readiness and pre agendas</i>	<i>They felt that they were coming across a little bit of not quite resentment, but barriers being put up...trying to introduce certain things and finding that the staff were looking at all the sorts of reasons why they shouldn't do it (Nicola 2/51)</i>

			<i>Not everyone likes them</i>	<i>...we had people who were up for it and loved it, and every part of their body language, engagement and participation told you that...then you had others...who thought, here I am with my pen again, eye rolling... (Melanie 7/265)</i>
	Contracting and negotiating.	All	<i>Clarifying process and purpose (to acknowledge one foot in a pain)</i>	<i>...we say, well, there's time for that later (problem talk), we can almost decouple that. (David 10/380)</i>
			<i>Clarifying expectations</i>	<i>I think those group rules are important in terms of setting the scene for. How are we going to behave as a group when we're running this PATH? What do we want from it? (Lindsey 5/159)</i>
			<i>Clarifying process and purpose</i>	<i>You don't want to kind of say, well, talk about this, think about this. But just... we'll go through this process...this kind of thing (Helen 18/688)</i>
	Considering attendees.	All	<i>Need for participants from different power layers</i>	<i>...It was still important to have people there, such as somebody from the Board of Governors, which was helpful, and the head teacher. And I think...having people at that level as well as from people who were working as teaching assistants within that setting really made a difference. (Ruth 2/4)</i>
			<i>Need for separate graphicer and facilitator</i>	<i>...I tend to do the graphics when I'm delivering PATH, but I think it's definitely a two-way process between the person who's doing the facilitating and the graphicer so that you can support each other in ensuring that you've gathered the information that people have shared with you. (Lindsey 5/182)</i>
			<i>A PATH practice partnership</i>	<i>If you're going to be a facilitator and have someone to graphic for you, you've got to make sure that you have that click factor is what I call it We were so fluent with each other. We always knew what each other was going to say. We knew what the other one was thinking. But also, an element of trust there. (16/609 Nicola)</i>
<i>Connected/familiar people from different power layers</i>			<i>I think that the people that we had there were just so disconnected. I could never imagine them sitting in a room...They were like the board. I think that's the people who'd come, the management committee or the board or whatever, but I think they only probably</i>	

Group Experiential Theme	Associated Personal Experiential Themes	Participants contributing	Experiential Statements	Indicative Quotes
EPs as PATH facilitators	Self-Efficacy.	All except Sofie and Ruth	<i>Confidence in the process</i>	<i>...because of the process that you go through, it... naturally allows people to share information in a way that you've just got to trust that process... (Lindsey 4/137)</i>
			<i>A sense of confidence</i>	<i>...developing confidence has come with experience to say, you've asked for the PATH and you're going to get one... (David 16/602)</i>
			<i>Confidence in graphicing</i>	<i>...personally, I've never worried about doing graphics. I quite like doing graphics and when I say graphics, I'm not a great one for huge pictures like that, just simple things...so I think that is a skill probably, I know some people do worry (Nicola 12/426)</i>
			<i>Know the process (competence)</i>	<i>...you've just got to know the process well enough and manage the timings so that you can spend long enough to do justice to each of the sections but not get bogged down. And it's hard because if people are absolutely fired up in a certain part of it, the whole thing is no good unless you get to the end. (Melanie 10/379)</i>
	Relational and consultation skills.	All	<i>A sense of leadership</i>	<i>...I think it is just about the skill of a facilitator in being boundaried, isn't it? I think if you've got some strong characters that could potentially dominate, it's about being quite assertive sometimes in terms of making sure that everybody's voice is heard and...being attuned to what might be uneven power dynamics...and making sure that people that might be less visible or less voices might not be heard, that you kind of empower them a little bit more. (Sofie 22/811)</i>
			<i>Creating a safe space</i>	<i>Everybody had an opportunity to add their thoughts. And when you create that safe space and that</i>

				<i>relaxed atmosphere, some people take more time than others, but eventually they'll feel safe enough to open up and offer their own understandings about the situation or hopes or ideas. And that's very rich, isn't it? A very rich information gathering tool for me (Ruth 7/241)</i>
			<i>Empathy</i>	<i>And I think there's shared empathy between professionals...when each professional contributes...their perspective...there's an empathy in terms of understanding other people in their roles, ...different viewpoints can be heard and accommodated and recognised and then within that, co constructing something. (Sofie 9/320)</i>
			<i>Attunement</i>	<i>...the teachers have been provided with a safe space to...express worries... they're essentially the ones going to be running these classrooms...something around them feeling heard that I think is quite empowering...through that very attuned listening... (Helen 9/313)</i>
			<i>Pacing</i>	<i>...I think by just trying to reflect back and say this is what we're hearing, and I think that's, again, one of the skills... (Lindsey 5/18)</i>
			<i>Discussion strategies</i>	<i>... I think that ability to stay with that, to listen and to really think, what is it that we're trying to say? And then reflect back in quite a concise way so after they've told you a million anecdotes or issues...it's about summarizing it (Melanie 10/360)</i>
			<i>A co-constructer</i>	<i>...I was co constructing it together... (Helen 4/134)</i>
			<i>Remaining neutral in knowledge construction</i>	<i>We want to fill silence, we want to keep the flow going, but whenever we can...just making incredibly sure that I am not stepping in, I am not adding my own values and thought...that can feel clunky. I'll...address it up front and...say, we're not here to listen to myself and whoever's working with me. And you're certainly not going to see any of that written down on the PATH. So, if it does feel...continually</i>

				<i>bouncing it back to you, that's because I want to make sure it's your voice not mine. (David 15/568)</i>
			<i>An active role in in construction of knowledge</i>	<i>...so, you have to somehow encapsulate thinking into a phrase or a sentence or whatever it might be. And obviously you check back. I'm thinking this is what you mean, am I right in thinking that? So, you have some power there in how you say it and how you put your thinking onto what they've said. And I think that can help their thinking as well. (Nicola 8/284)</i>
			<i>Friendly demeanour enhances participation</i>	<i>I would say I'm personable...I come across as quite friendly...when I first meet people, people tend like me initially, so I would say that can be helpful in facilitating and making people feel at ease maybe and being able to contribute. So maybe not coming across as an expert or someone who people can't relate to. (Jane 22/369)</i>
			<i>Humanistic principles</i>	<i>...it's those skills of the psychologist that comes in that facilitation...that listening, that humanistic, that valuing people, the relationships, it's all of that. The humanistic thing...individuals having their own take on things and respecting that (Melanie 16/608)</i>
	Positioning.	All except Nicola and Melanie	<i>A neutral outsider might support facilitation</i>	<i>You're not their manager... you can ask questions...that might feel more difficult if it was something within your team that you were more familiar with. So almost like those wondering questions, curious questions, which then can...support the participants to think, which I think when you're an outside person to that organization is easier to do than if you're running it within your own team or organisation. (Lindsey 10/371)</i>
			<i>A perceived expert outsider as a potential hindering factor</i>	<i>I didn't feel like that was a successful PATH at all because I felt like her view of me was as a local authority representative rather than their school EP, who was working alongside them and trying to actually come up with solutions. (Jane 6/8)</i>
			<i>Doing with, not to</i>	<i>..as an EP...you can really think...what can this school or this particular group of people, what do I</i>

				<i>notice that I really respect and admire and that can then filter through into the discussions to be built upon. (Ruth 10/353)</i>
	Critically applying psychology.	All	Drawing on other psychological approaches	<i>...also, a bit more about the worries and the concerns. And is there a sense that I think one of the issues with Person Centred stuff is sometimes does it move on to all the positives without kind of really getting people to share the real deep-down worries and concerns and validating them and putting them there enough? (Sofie 19/713)</i>
			<i>Going beyond simply using a tool</i>	<i>...I think that reflective thinking that EPs do, having the knowledge behind...a solution focused ways of working narratives, all those elements, our knowledge of that, you know, knowing the importance of how we work, not just what we do, but how we do things... (Nicola 19/724)</i>
	Espoused democratic values.	All except Melanie	<i>Promoting all voices</i>	<i>...address that and say, look, I know your team leader...has invited us here as, but it's about making sure that everyone's voice is heard. (David 23/889)</i>
			<i>Principles not fidelity</i>	<i>...PATH is a tool but it's one of many graphic solution-focused...tools...you...don't have to have absolute fidelity to...but the importance of using the principles of it... (Nicola 18/685)</i>
Group Experiential Theme	Associated Personal Experiential Themes	Participants Contributing	Experiential Statements	Indicative Quotes
Role of the graphics	Supporting cognition and engagement.	All	<i>Facilitating attention</i>	<i>Whereas I suppose if you've got a team of people and you're all looking at a path, it's a little bit more kind of bit more dynamic, a bit more exciting, holds people's attention, it draws people and it gives it a bit of status, doesn't it? (Sofie 19/691)</i>
			<i>Supporting memory</i>	<i>I think it is a really nice way of capturing key points and not only at the time of the PATH taking place, but also to look back to and think what are we all working towards and what did we say at that point?</i>

				<i>for the people who we worked with on that mega organizational level... (Lindsey 6/211)</i>
			<i>Facilitates coherent thinking</i>	<i>it's less muddling as well, I think once it's a bit of a brain dump, isn't it? So, everything that's been going around in cycles in their mind is out there on paper, and then it can be reorganised in a helpful way, I guess. (Sofie 10/340)</i>
			<i>Facilitating shared attention and memory</i>	<i>...I think does make a difference. The graphics element of it can be quite eye catching and it sort of leaves a bit more...it taps into that side of you. Yeah, just look at it in that way. Sort of almost like a bit of a shorthand for lots of words...And lots of ideas...It makes it a succinct account of all the things that gets talked about. (Ruth 7/25)</i>
			<i>Novel and exciting</i>	<i>...the thing that I think makes it work is the graphic. When people come into the room, it feels like something different. And even if you were using the stages of any of those meetings, but you tried to sit round a table with your notepad and book, I think people think this is just another meeting. (Melanie 1/34)</i>
			<i>Brings humour</i>	<i>...it was metaphor...I drew a snake...there's a bit of joking...to test my art skills (David 21/810)</i>
	Facilitates an equitable collective planning process.	All	<i>Facilitates collective thinking</i>	<i>...the visual...develops thinking. (Nicola 9/308)</i>
			<i>Facilitates co-construction through representing ideas</i>	<i>...PATH, being visual, supports that co construction...because I think words or images get recorded and almost within that they're valued...if somebody says something or if somebody creates, I suppose we end up creating an image in our head of what that means. And together we've said, oh, well, that's interesting. That makes me think of this. (Helen 10/380)</i>
			<i>Makes people feel heard</i>	<i>I think by recording in that visual way, it allows participants to see that they are being heard, that the information is being because if you're sitting scribbling down on a pad of paper, nobody really knows what you're writing down (Lindsey 6/223)</i>

			<i>Enhances transparency of plans beyond the meeting</i>	<i>they had that PATH printed off and put in a Perspex, massive frame. And they kept it...visible...because everybody had been part of that. (Melanie 6/209)</i>
			<i>Facilitates co-construction by creating a dedicated safe space.</i>	<i>The spotlight is on the visual...it's empowering in the sense that people's ideas, whoever they are, go straight up on there, so that's validating what they're saying. In that moment. (Ruth 4/144)</i>
Group Experiential Theme	Associated Personal Experiential Themes	Participants contributing	Experiential Statements	Indicative Quotes
Within and beyond session changes	A sense of innovation.	All except Ruth, and Nicola	<i>Planning and thinking that goes beyond the norm (through dreaming)</i>	<i>And you've got to go out there, I think, to that big dream point, because that pushes people further out than they would do if we just sat around a meeting going, how do we make our team better? We'd get very stuck in the here and now. (David 4/149)</i>
	Group and relational autonomy through alignment of values, ideas, and goals.	All	<i>Recognition of values drives motivation</i>	<i>That your values are really recognised and important. It gives a sense of what is driving you at work (Sofie 19/696)</i>
			<i>Aligned thinking through a dialogue</i>	<i>You might see that change...one person can recognize where another person is coming from and the reason why they're coming from that different standpoints and almost try and come up with some sort of commonality...so like team building and cohesion I suppose. (Lindsey 14/507)</i>
			<i>Staff cohesion through balancing top down and bottom-up change</i>	<i>it's the senior leadership team who are doing the planning and the resources...but then it's the people who are delivering that new idea...by involving them in the PATH, they're able to be part of that journey from the start...feel that their voices are heard and that they're listened to and that they've got some ownership and agency (Lindsey 3/76)</i>
			<i>Greater cohesion around group aims through collaborative 'dreaming'</i>	<i>...senior leadership have a vision, but that can be very different from the hopes and dreams of somebody who's working within that setting on a day-to-day basis...so having an opportunity to create a collective vision... I think it creates then a shared</i>

				<i>understanding of where are we going rather than this is what we think we should be doing coming from the top down. (Ruth 3/85)</i>
			<i>Voiced professional values might facilitate planned change</i>	<i>...the values...is one of the most interesting times...they are often unexplored areas that PATH...brings into the fore...there's an assumption that we're all on the same page...but it's not always the case...until...people have said those things out loud (Helen 17/619)</i>
			<i>A greater sense of belonging through aligned values</i>	<i>...that sense of belonging coming back, substantive sense of belonging, we all belong to the club that want to achieve this for our children. (Nicola 5/184)</i>
			<i>Reconnects to professional values and motivations through dreaming</i>	<i>What I like about this is that it really connects them back with, what did I get up for? But why did I do this job in the first place? What am I really trying to do? What would absolutely fire me up? (Melanie 2/66)</i>
	Collective efficacy	All	<i>Energised around the planned change</i>	<i>You've taken a sense of reenergizing around something... (Sofie 8/28)</i>
			<i>Enthusied and excited</i>	<i>...excitable and I think that's where it's like that novel aspect...enthused by how it's worked and giving you that feedback of it being positive. (Jane 16/264)</i>
			<i>Qualities of team members are identified</i>	<i>I think it can be powerful in supporting participants to recognise their skill in making that change. (Lindsey 14/502)</i>
			<i>Gaining knowledge about team members' skills and experience</i>	<i>... you're almost grabbing the expertise from people's experiences, thoughts, knowledge, and you're putting it right up there on the visual. (Ruth 6/219)</i>
			<i>Confident with tangible next steps</i>	<i>...working with them from that dream to break it down into manageable tangible elements or steps towards that dream...and then if we can leave that group with those next steps... (David 7/265)</i>
			<i>Motivated into action beyond the meeting through doable steps</i>	<i>the fact that it got such a strong structure that brings it back to something that is possible right down to what's your first step? What are you going to do tomorrow? (Melanie 3/85)</i>

			<i>Overwhelming changes become tangible actions</i>	<i>...I think is important because I'd say it brings it down to that more practical doable level and it gives that that sense of hope because we can get that done. This is not something that's just too hard and we'll never get there but we could get that done. (Nicola 7/258)</i>	
			<i>Greater shared understanding of each other's roles within the team facilitates cohesion</i>	<i>...that shared understanding...really helps recognise what demands and needs are there within the broader team...if people don't feel that they're being heard or that the focus isn't on them. (David 13/488)</i>	
			<i>Better understanding of team member roles (for a new team)</i>	<i>having this team PATH to bring together the new team to better understand people's processes.</i>	
			<i>A stronger organisational team</i>	<i>...the more we can strengthen organizations themselves...So we can go in, and we can facilitate some of that. It's almost like team building, isn't it? You're helping them be stronger together (Jane 490/29)</i>	
	Beyond the PATH session	All		<i>Motivated into action beyond the meeting</i>	<i>...there's just a shift in the mood...people wanting to revisit it...and talking about it in further meetings... (Sofie 8/270)</i>
				<i>Changes happen: 'It works'</i>	<i>If it works, do more of it. If it doesn't, do something else...all the evidence we have is that it works. Demand is maintained (David 27/1032)</i>
				<i>Hit and run PATH – unsure of longer-term outcomes</i>	<i>...we've literally just gone facilitated...we've not then gone back..., we've evaluated the session...but in terms of two years later, did it do what you needed it to do? We don't know. (Melanie 7/239)</i>
				<i>Regular reviews support longer term changes</i>	<i>...that external person...checking in, I don't feel like it's from a power/authority place...it's more...a holder of emotion...it supports...motivation...to move forward (Helen 12/463)</i>
				<i>Changed perceptions of the EP role</i>	<i>I've seen it as an important opportunity to almost be an ambassador into social care and other sort of local authority roles to go, this is something that I, as an EP, can do. (David 28/1084)</i>

Group Experiential Theme	Associated Personal Experiential Themes	Participants Contributing	Experiential Statements	Indicative Quotes
Additional features of PATH which support its use in group consultation	An adaptable tool	Sofie, Lindsey and David	<i>A wider reach/universal</i>	<i>I think it could be something that could take to the Youth Justice Service in terms of when they start with the service and when they leave the service or their teams. I think it's just so transferable because it is so accessible. (Sofie 17/641)</i>
			<i>Adaptable to any profession – universal</i>	<i>I don't know what the day job looks like, but can we use this as a process that's almost sort of independent of profession to support other the teams? (David 2/64)</i>
			<i>Adaptable tool</i>	<i>...I think that's the beauty of that tool, really, that you can adapt it...so we didn't stick rigidly to the but we did use the principles behind it and morphed elements from it...(Lindsey 1/55)</i>
	Time efficient	Sofie, Ruth and Melanie	<i>Time efficient and proactive approach</i>	<i>...That timely structured framework that you follow facilitates those ideas to come forward in that space, in that time frame. Whereas you could probably spend hours of individual consultations with people problem solving, whereas it's just done there and then...(Ruth 19/717)</i>
			<i>Impact in short space of time</i>	<i>...I think this is something quite unique in terms of teams that we can facilitate or organizations where we can have quite a big impact with not relatively big amount of time. So, I think I really like it because I feel like it empowers everybody. (Sofie 17/621)</i>
	Accessible and simple	Sofie and Melanie	<i>Accessible psychology</i>	<i>...when working with a range of people in an organisation, they might...be overwhelmed...with...complex theory and... it might impact...engagement and...exacerbate power dynamics... (Sofie 16/587)</i>
			<i>Simple to use</i>	<i>I think it's a straightforward framework to use, so if you think about other frameworks in psychology, they can feel a bit overwhelming and complex sometimes. (Sofie 15/55)</i>

			An accessible tool	<i>...don't quote me on any of this, but it just feels so accessible, I guess, when you hear somebody talk about it like that. (Melanie 1/11)</i>
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3.5.2 GET - Preparing for PATH group consultation.

Across interviews, all reported a need to consider the preparation required before using PATH as a group consultation tool at an organisational level. This is arranged into four PETs below.

PET - Need for change facilitation.

EPs had experienced a range of different circumstances where change facilitation was needed, and PATH was deemed a suitable tool to support the group consultation process. A range of contexts was reported such as developing a new provision, supporting staff during a state of flux and when there is a feeling of being stuck.

...there'd been a lot of change, a lot of new staff joining...and...leaving the team... as well...it was in a kind of state of flux...so it was a good point to use something like that just as a way of...regrouping...and thinking about where did we collectively want to go next? (Ruth 1/19)

PET – Features of the organisation

Before using PATH, EPs considered how receptive organisations might be to using it. There was ambivalence about how receptive organisations were to a PATH approach. Some schools and teams were open to working in creative ways.

...they're the kind of school who would just run with something (Jane 4/57)

In contrast, and perhaps due to the large amount of experience using and initiating this form of group consultation across an authority, Melanie had mixed views.

...we had people who were up for it and loved it, and every part of their body language, engagement and participation told you that...then you had others...who thought, here I am with my pen again, eye rolling... (7/265)

Some also noted how being mindful of how ready groups are for change and pre-agendas might affect the consultation session.

PET – Contracting and negotiating.

All EPs experienced the need to ensure everyone involved is clear about the process including its purpose and what might be expected. It was important to explore and remediate any pre-agendas to ensure PATH consultation was worthwhile. Negotiating enough time and clarifying expectations about attendees being present and committed to the full process without interruptions was deemed important. To prepare, EPs had prior meetings, sent emails detailing the PATH process or simply worked this through as part of the session. David and Melanie both noted their experience of informing participants there is space to discuss problems and vent frustrations. This was due to issues with starting with a dream and best-case scenario.

...we spend much more time at the start being very clear about the process...there's almost an expectation that, well, when will we get to talk about the problem? ...we go, okay...there's the now. And that's where we can...that's quite useful because...it makes people focus on the dream. (David 10/364)

PET – Considering attendees.

EPs experienced the need to consider who attends the group consultation. Everyone deemed it important to have attendees from different layers of the organisation in terms of power and responsibilities.

...it's often the people with the least power...who are in the problems...who are doing the nappy change...the practical things daily that school are saying they're struggling with...they often have the most practical ideas, the ones that will make a difference, where the leaders maybe have the more systems level ideas...you need a balance of the two (Jane 23/384)

Only one EP, perhaps due to experiences with using PATH as a consultation tool with larger organisations across whole authorities offered the suggestion group consultation might not work as well in these because of the disconnection and lack of familiarity between group members.

EPs also reported the importance of facilitating the PATH consultation with a separate graphiciser and facilitator. This was to ensure participants' ideas were expressed and represented as best as they could be. Nicola, who had been practicing in this way for many years also noted the importance of developing a practice partnership with someone else to support the ease and skill of facilitation.

3.5.3 GET – EPs as PATH facilitators.

Across transcripts, EPs highlighted different considerations regarding their role in facilitating group consultation using PATH at an organisational level.

PET – Self efficacy

Most conveyed a degree of confidence in what the process may achieve, their understanding of the PATH process and competence in graphicising. Having facilitated lots of PATH consultations, Lindsey has confidence in the process:

I feel like you can actually get...detail from a PATH... it very naturally allows people to share information in a way that you've just got to trust that process... (4/137)

David, who had lots of experience of using PATH in different contexts also nonchalantly stated:

...I think developing confidence has come with experience to say, you've asked for the PATH and you're going to get one. (16/602)

PET - Relational and consultation skills

All EPs reported the importance of their relational and consultation skills in supporting the facilitation of a group PATH with professionals. Strategies to promote discussion such as open questioning, active listening, being curious and summarising were cited. Experiences also indicated the importance of being able to lead the session, adhere to ground rules, manage potential conflict as well as empower all attendees.

I think if you've got some strong characters that could potentially dominate, it's about being quite assertive sometimes in terms of making sure that everybody's voice is heard (Sofie 22/811)

A safe space where participants can freely express views was also deemed important. Some reported the need to contain heightened emotions such as anxiety and uncertainty. This was achieved through empathy for others in relation to their group position, attuned listening, and utilising humanistic principles of valuing others and reflective listening.

*...the teachers have been provided with a safe space to...express worries... they're essentially the ones going to be running these classrooms...something around them feeling heard that I think is quite empowering...through that very attuned listening...
(Helen 9/313)*

Some took different stances in their role regarding constructing knowledge and creating meaning during consultation. David saw his role as accurately reflecting and capturing the thoughts of those in the room and avoiding imposing his own values and thoughts. In contrast, Nicola experienced using her own words rather than participants' when reflecting back. She believed this helped develop shared thinking.

PET - Positioning

Due to a particular experience of PATH facilitation in an early years setting, Jane saw her perceived position (that of expert outsider) as hindering joint working.

I didn't feel like that was a successful PATH...because I felt like her view of me was as a LA representative not their school EP, who was working alongside them and trying to...come up with solutions. (6/88)

Others reported the importance of being a neutral outsider. Not being directly involved in the organisation, or coming from a place of power meant they could wonder curiously and question the status quo.

PET - Critically applying psychology.

To guide consultation, all experienced applying psychology beyond the espoused psychology underpinning PATH to guide the consultation.

It's not what I'm doing...it's how I do it...having knowledge...in terms of ...psychological theory...e.g., stages of change, self-determination, solution focused, narrative...gives you that extra depth (Nicola 19/724)

Thinking critically about the PATH process, drawing on solution-oriented psychology, in considering the needs of the group, Jane made some changes.

...I felt like...PATH was...too forward thinking and...idealistic...I amended it slightly to give them more opportunity to talk about the...issues... (3/37)

PET – Espoused democratic values

All reported a strong commitment to democratic values of supporting people to make their own choices and promoting all voices to be heard. Experiences reflect fidelity to the PATH process was perhaps not as important as ensuring equitable contributions and holding everyone's view as equal regardless of their power status in the organisation.

...it needed to be really emphasised that nobody's voice should be more powerful than anybody else's...Lindsey (9/336)

...PATH is a tool but it's one of many graphic solution-focused...tools...you...don't have to have absolute fidelity to...but the importance of using the principles of it. (Nicola 18/685)

3.5.4 GET - Role of graphics.

PET – Supporting cognition and engagement.

Visual recording of ideas in words and graphics on a large display was perceived to support cognition and engagement. The graphics supported attention, memory, and thinking. Some also thought engagement was enhanced due to the novel aspect of visual meetings.

...professionals often find themselves in...meetings...with a laptop and typed print, but handwritten colours on a wall, sitting in a semicircle...intrigues people if they haven't done one...it facilitates better thinking. (Nicola 20/756)

One EP experienced the graphic as a way of bringing humour to the meeting:

...it was metaphor...I drew a snake...there's a bit of joking...to test my art skills (David 21/810)

PET - Facilitates an equitable collective planning process.

All perceived the role of the graphics in supporting collective thinking and co-construction. Not only is the graphic thought to make group members feel heard by visually representing their ideas, but it also provides a safe space for ideas to build on one another.

The spotlight is on the visual...It's empowering...people's ideas, go straight up...so that's validating what they're saying. In that moment. (Ruth 4/150)

...a space, a genuine co construction. (Helen 10/357)

3.5.5 GET - Within and beyond session changes.

This group theme captures the perceived changes because of the PATH group consultation session as well as those thereafter.

PET – A sense of innovation

Most EPs had experienced PATH group consultation which, in part due to the dreaming element, resulted in ideas, thinking and planning which went above and beyond what they perceived the group might have produced had the tool not been used.

...I remind myself of why I value them so much...the information...you get, and the feelings of the participants is always way more than you even imagine. (Lindsey 11/414)

*...the actions...are new, over, and above...what would have happened anyway.
(Jane 24/404)*

PET – Group and relational autonomy

This theme encapsulates the conception of a collective autonomy which is galvanised by discussion and relating to others. Discussion afforded individuals to voice their personal and professional values, ideas, and opinions. Through dreaming, organisational values are held in tension with some co-constructed and represented into an all-compassing collectively owned visual plan. This may bring a sense of group cohesion and motivation which balances equitable contributions from differential power positions held by group members. Dialogue about values driving group decision making was viewed as key:

*...the values...is one of the most interesting times...they are often unexplored areas that PATH...brings into the fore...there's an assumption that we're all on the same page...but it's not always the case...until...people have said those things out loud
(Helen 17/619)*

someone...can recognise where another...is coming from and the reason why...and almost try and come up with some...commonality around that (Lindsey 14/507)

PET – Collective efficacy

This theme reflects a change in the groups' sense of capacity and ability to reach their planned goals. This is underpinned by the creation of tangible and achievable steps, the identification and shared understanding of group members' skills and qualities relevant to putting those steps into action. There is also a greater sense of energy and enthusiasm.

...it can be powerful in supporting participants to recognise their skill in making that change... (Lindsey 14/502)

...it brings it down to that more practical doable level...it gives that sense of hope... we can get that done (Nicola 7/258)

PET – Beyond the PATH session

As well as highlighting other way EPs can work, using PATH motivated the participants into action after the session. Some organisations displayed their PATHs in communal areas for all to see and planned changes tended to happen.

If it works, do more of it. If it doesn't, do something else...all the evidence we have is that it works. Demand is maintained.
(David 27/1032)

When the EP was involved in regular reviews with the team, longer term changes were observed. Helen saw this not as a form of monitoring but coming from a supportive position:

...that external person...checking in, I don't feel like it's from a power/authority place...it's more...a holder of emotion...it supports...motivation...to move forward
(12/463)

3.5.6 GET – Additional features of PATH which support its use in group consultation.

Perhaps due to experiences of using PATH as a group consultation tool in contexts beyond regular EP work across school systems, some viewed it as a tool which could be adapted to suit different scenarios and professionals. Also, perhaps reflecting personal practice preferences, as well as resources and time constraints, some experienced PATH as being time efficient, simple to use and accessible.

...when working with a range of people in an organisation, they might...be overwhelmed...with...complex theory and... it might impact...engagement and...exacerbate power dynamics...
(Sofie 16/587)

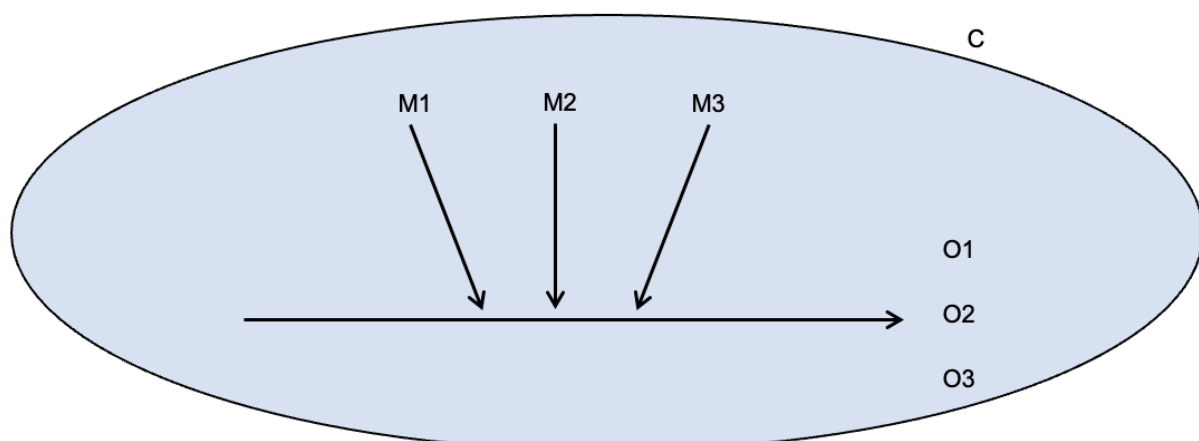
3.6 Discussion

My intention in this research was to explore how EPs conceptualise and facilitate organisational change using PATH as a tool to support group consultation. Experiences suggest change is perceived as participant collective autonomy and efficacy. The former refers to a sense of collective control over plans made, with the latter relating to a shared belief in the group's capability to carry out the plan. Such psychological changes may support innovative plans beyond the consultation session. Changes might be enabled through preparation for group consultation and utilising a range of consultation skills which create a facilitative climate. Consultation skills combined with aspects of the PATH process such as the graphics and underpinning principles are interpreted as key mechanisms which act as catalysts for change both within and beyond the consultation. Table 17 and Figure 7 outlines these findings as a Realist Evaluation (Robson, 2011).

Table 17 - Realist Evaluation of findings

Context (C)	Mechanisms (M)	Within session outcomes (O)
Group consultation at an organisational level using PATH	(1) EP consultation skills (2) Principles of PCP (3) Graphics	(1) Collective autonomy (2) Collective efficacy (3) Enhanced motivation

Figure 7 - Realist evaluation diagram.



Experiences suggest preparation for group consultation using PATH includes considering contexts where change facilitation is needed. This is supported by other studies where PATH was deemed suitable to develop an education support group (Carpenter et al., 2023),

managing centralised change (Morgan, 2016), implementing a school wide approach to SEND (Hughes et al., 2019) and assisting teams when feeling stuck (Newton et al., 2016). Participants also experienced the concept of being *ready* for a change initiative. This echoes wider ideas about organisational readiness for change (Weiner, 2009).

When thinking about how to prepare for consultation, EPs also experienced a point raised by Hanko (1999) which considers hidden or pre-agendas within the group. Participants also experienced considering how receptive some organisations would be to using PATH. This mirrors the suggestion PCP tools may be better suited to schools with an existing inclusive culture (Corrigan, 2014)

Contracting and negotiating is deemed an important step in some EP practice frameworks (such as, Frederickson & Monsen, 2017) and as an entry point in Farouk's (2004) group process consultation. In the organisational consultation literature, Meyers (2002) cites the importance of managing expectations, establishing the purpose and plan for the consultation. As in my study, Hughes et al. (2019) note the importance of being clear on timings, expectations, ground rules and what a PATH entails. Nugent et al. (2014) suggested establishing ground rules was deemed important during group consultation. Some also found it was important to explain the steps so that consultees knew there would be space for problem talk.

Starting with dreaming and being idealistic was sometimes met with resistance. From a solution focused perspective, De Shazer (1985) suggests the offloading of difficulties can be useful so long as something constructive follows it. Similarly, other positive approaches to organisational change such as Appreciative Enquiry (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999) have been criticised by some EPs for being too visionary, far removed from reality and unable to acknowledge difficulties and problems (Eddleston & Atkinson, 2018).

BPS practice guidelines (2017) state that EPs should attend to any potential power imbalances that may arise in their work. Considering who attends, EPs suggested having representatives from different positions of power within the organisation. This is reminiscent of a systemic and interactionist perspective which aims to consider and unify the perspectives of all involved (Wagner, 2000).

Interlinked is the idea of bottom-up change management which aims to involve all those affected by any planned changes. One means of reducing resistance to change and increasing commitment to change implementation is arguably through increased

participation and involvement in decision making (Furnham, 2012). This is akin to soft systems methodology where organisational change initiatives should consider all people responsible for making the system work well as well as the person with ultimate control over the system (Checkland & Scholes, 1999). Similarly, Stoker (2000) argues that EPs should analyse power structures at both the formal and informal level within organisations. Beer and Nohria (2000) suggest successful change is rooted in empowering front-line employees at the fringes of the organisation. This echoes EPs' experiences of advocating the inclusion of front-line staff such as lunchtime supervisors and teaching assistants in their PATH sessions. Hughes et al. (2019) have suggested that by not involving all school staff members in the PATH consultation, signing up to the vision and implementing related actions is more challenging. When all members of an organisation are included, PATH might be a tool which can initiate change from the bottom up (Morgan, 2016).

As suggested by Hughes et al. (2019), participants reported the need to have two EPs to facilitate PATH group consultation. This facilitates greater listening, acknowledgement, and utilisation of all voices present whilst representing contributions visually. This reflects Nolan and Moreland's (2014) study of the process of consultation which suggests deep listening is helped by having a pair of EPs.

EPs believed facilitating PATH as a group consultation tool required a certain degree of confidence in the process and in their delivery skill. In the context of solution focused practice, having trust in the process may aid the facilitator (O'Connell, 2005). Inadequate facilitation of the PATH process is a key barrier to its effective use (Reid & Green, 2002). Similarly, Wood et al. (2019) suggested PATH facilitators needed to practice delivery due to skill required for effective facilitation. Another study noted the significance of facilitator skill and experience to aid a smooth flowing consultation process (White & Rae, 2016). Being able to graphic the meeting content is also deemed important (Hayes, 2004).

Wagner (2017) argues consultation requires high levels of skill. My analysis suggests EPs, with their relational and consultation skills, might be important for enabling change with groups of professionals. A sense of leadership was deemed necessary to maintain agreed group expectations. Similarly, strong guidance and chairing of PCP sessions was viewed as important in another study (Corrigan, 2014). Hughes et al. (2019) noted how one voice during PATH was more dominant. They suggested this might have biased views and ideas shaping planning. EPs in my study suggest that facilitating the session is linked to creating a safe space where all voices are included in idea generation and planning. Some also reported the need to contain emotions such as anxiety. This echoes the writing of Rifkind

(1995) who discusses skills needed to contain emotions during group consultation. In process consultation, Schein (1999) similarly expresses the need to consider the emotional and interpersonal factors which can influence group functioning. My study suggests this might be enabled through being attuned, aware of power dynamics and having empathy. A study exploring the process of psychological consultation reflected a similar set of skills or discursive strategies. These strategies included deep listening, empathy, promoting collaboration and summarising (Nolan & Moreland, 2014). In the same study, interpersonal warmth and empathy seemed to facilitate more emotional and cognitive change. When considering the person-centred approach more broadly, whether in counselling or education, it is arguably the creation of a facilitative climate which might afford constructive change for the participant (Coghlan, 1993). Some participants in my study reported the adherence to some of the conditions Rogers (1995) suggested promote a facilitative climate such as empathy and genuineness. In Morgan's (2016) study, PATH facilitator skills were associated with participants' sense of safety and ability to take risks.

EPs had different experiences regarding how their perceived positioning might influence the consultation process. Being a neutral outsider was deemed as beneficial and supported a sense of genuine curiosity. Caplan et al. (1994) echo this by suggesting external consultants might afford a non-hierarchical and collegial relationship with consultees. Also Beaver (2011) suggests that a neutral position allows EPs to take a meta view of the system.

Organisational change literature suggests external change agents might have a more objective view of the organisation and are ignorant of and removed from the problems (Furnham, 2012). When facilitating PATH, participants in Morgan's (2016) study reported the importance of an outside facilitator. Coming from a place of not knowing (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992) might allow questioning which facilitates understanding. Similarly, Schein and Schein (2021) advocate what they call humble inquiry which entails asking questions you do not know the answer to. This may facilitate relationship building grounded in curiosity and collaborative learning.

Although the PATH process was generally adhered to, EPs critically applied psychology to respond to the needs of the consultees. Rather than slavishly follow the process, some recognised a need to make more space for problem talk. They went beyond the tool to draw on a range of psychology to support the group consultation. This reflects Wagner's (2017) conceptualisation of consultation which draws a range of approaches such as solution focused and narrative psychology.

EPs reported a commitment to promoting all voices and involving all in decision making which may echo personal democratic values. Regardless of the framework or tool being used, effective consultation is deemed to be influenced by subtle messages EPs transmit about their beliefs, values and intentions (Annan et al., 2006). The creators of PATH believe it to be a democratic process (O'Brien et al., 2002) but if the facilitators are not committed to that principle in their practice, the tool might be used tokenistically as a tick box procedure. Person-Centred ways of working need facilitators who embrace the underpinning values (Merry, 1995).

There were some discrepancies concerning how EPs viewed their role in the construction of knowledge. Most perceived their role as neutral. To some degree this is reminiscent of adopting a non-expert stance, as advocated by Hanks (1999) and Wagner (2017). Consultees were viewed as driving the knowledge production process. This may reflect a concept in narrative psychology whereby White (2007) describes the therapeutic relationship as decentred but influential. The therapist does not attribute meaning to the client's problems, impose their understanding or privilege their own knowledge.

Experiences suggested graphics were important in supporting cognitive processes and an equitable planning process. Other studies report similar findings. Graphics appeared to prompt reflection and develop thinking (Morgan, 2016; White & Rae, 2016), act as an aide-mémoire (White & Rae, 2016; Wood et al., 2019) and provide an interesting cue (Hayes, 2004). This reflects a broader thinking that graphics alongside words might support engagement in active learning (Mayer, 2003). This may be explained by the reduced effort needed to process and recognise images in comparison to words (Paivio, 1990). Reed (2013) suggests communication in both graphics and text may suit the way our minds work. He argues language rests on a foundation of visual thinking and asserts metaphor is deeply associated with visuals. Indeed, PATH advocates metaphor as intrinsic to effective graphics (Newton et al., 2016).

EPs suggested graphics also facilitated an equitable planning process by representing co-construction of ideas in a dedicated safe space. Wegerif (2007) suggests a shared visual space may promote collaborative working and dialogic interaction. This point is echoed by Corrigan's (2014) study where graphics are said to support an interactive and discursive climate. Visually presented information also seems to reassure participants and remove any sense of secrecy and reduce power imbalances (Corrigan, 2014; Taylor-Brown, 2012). A safe space might be contributing to feelings of psychological safety which are represented in human needs theories such as that of Maslow (1943). Furthermore, other PCP studies

suggest that graphics support the inclusion of all views (White & Rae, 2016), they make the session accessible and promote full participation (Hayes, 2004; White & Rae, 2016; Wood et al., 2019). The safe space and collaborative working might promote a sense of relatedness, autonomy and competence which in turn drives motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2013)

As a result of rich group discussion, EPs experienced plans going beyond what they would have expected from regular consultation or what they assumed might have just happened anyway. A recent study exploring PATH and organisational change reported its perceived ability to harness creativity amongst the participants (Carpenter et al., 2023).

Through discursive consultation which explores values, ideas and goals, EPs also perceived a sense of group and relational autonomy. This interpretation rejects an individualistic notion of autonomy because it considers the social context of individuals in making decisions (Gómez-Virseda et al., 2019). A dialogic space (Wegerif, 2007) affords an exploration of multiple ideas and opinions which can augment existing perspectives with new ones and facilitate new possibilities. The group consultation process may be viewed as a form of high quality relational practice (Lambrechts et al., 2009) where discussion might forgo some individual autonomy to promote new possibilities and joint ownership. Morgan's (2016) study suggested PATH gave a sense of ownership to the organisation where group members felt in control of the future.

EPs reported how exploring professional and personal values and connecting them to the plan might enhance group motivation. Considering beliefs and values underpinning the transformation is a key part of soft systems methodology (Checkland & Scholes, 1999). Wider literature suggests that finding meaning and purpose at work may promote motivation and help people transcend their own immediate goals to consider their contribution to the greater good (Dik et al., 2013). To promote personal wellness and self-determination in organisations, Prilleltensky (2000) proposes group members should be assisted to pursue their chosen life goals in consideration to other's needs. Relating this to humanistic psychology, it might reflect Maslow's notion of self-transcendence (1971) which posits people are motivated by values which go beyond the self to have a wider sense of purpose and connection to others. Linking with EP relational skills, Rogers (1977) suggests that creating a facilitative climate, whether with a group or individual, might promote choices, directions and actions that are personally constructive and pursue social harmony with others.

Group consultation using PATH seemed to create a sense of collective efficacy. When upcoming change might have been perceived as daunting, EPs experienced a shift in group members' thinking at the end of the sessions. This might reflect Hylander's (2012) suggestion that consultation might bring about a change or turning point in the consultees' relationship with the issues. This may relate to how PATH gives dedicated space to creating tangible and practical next steps towards initially quite unattainable, far-reaching goals. Also, the identification and strengthening of shared beliefs about team members' skills and competencies might facilitate collective efficacy (Bandura, 2000).

EPs perceived a sense of organisational group cohesion through a greater shared understanding of their individual roles, values, and knowledge. By sharing personal values, organisational members might discuss tacit knowledge. Tacit knowledge (in contrast to explicit knowledge) is rooted in values and experiences, highly personal and not easily communicated (Nonaka, 1995). Tacit knowledge, like a form of collective wisdom, may be important in problem solving, driving innovation and adapting to new situations. Fullan (2007) suggests discussion elicits tacit knowledge within groups which is key in creating organisational knowledge that supports the change process.

Finally, like other studies using PATH with groups of professionals (Carpenter et al., 2023; Morgan, 2016), EPs in this study experienced a sense of participants' enthusiasm and energy towards the created plan. Beyond the PATH sessions, as other studies report, planned changes happen (Hughes et al., 2019; Morgan, 2016) and regular reviews might support longer term change as plans might lose their momentum (Morgan, 2016). This echoes Chidley and Stringer (2020) who advocate ongoing work with an EP beyond an intervention to mitigate the effects of the transfer problem where training alone does not guarantee effective implementation in practice.

3.7 Strengths and limitations

I acknowledge this research presents an interpretation of the experiences specific to a small group of EPs in a particular service. Conclusions produced are presented tentatively as a catalyst for further research and debate. Findings were discussed in relation to previous research which was generally supportive. IPA offers a window into their contextualised experiences rather than a set of generalisable results. Practitioners might consider how the findings transfer to similar contexts and groups. Readers are encouraged to consider how the evidence relates to their existing experiential and professional knowledge (Smith et al.,

2022). Being an interpretative endeavour, member checking was not deemed an appropriate validation strategy (Larkin & Thompson, 2011). Instead, through a process of sample validation (with eligible participants who did not take part) my analysis was deemed both coherent and plausible (See [Appendix K](#)).

3.8 Implications

It is my hope that EPs, service leaders and commissioners of services will consider the findings when thinking about the pivotal role of EPs in group consultation and how they might support organisational change. With their close ties to schools, local authorities and other groups of professionals, EPs are well placed to determine motivation and readiness for change (Wang et al., 2023)

This research has added to a small body of practice-based evidence that PATH might be an effective and flexible tool to support organisational change by promoting dialogue, participation, co-construction, group efficacy, autonomy, and motivation. PATH is a conversational guide with additional features such as simplicity, accessible psychology, and engaging graphics. Critically however, perhaps the most important agents of change are the EPs who bring a repertoire of psychological consultation skills and deep understanding of the psychology underpinning consultation, organisational change, and existential ideas such as finding meaning and purpose at work. EP contribution is marked by their multidimensional approach (Farrell et al., 2006) and by drawing on a range of different approaches within consultation (Wagner, 2017). Group consultation at an organisational level is a painting of efficacy and autonomy brought to fruition with splashes of different psychological knowledge and relational skills as opposed to strict adherence to one method or tool. By not slavishly listening to fulfil a tool's requirements, EPs can listen to the *people* in the room. This might facilitate interactions which evoke actionable knowledge.

When embarking on an organisational change intervention using PATH, EPs might consider making time to adequately prepare, deliver and follow up any plans made. This may contribute to the overall effectiveness of the PATH and therefore highlights the important role for EPs in spearheading and developing this practice area. Pre-consultation meetings or discussions with key stakeholders including frontline staff might be needed to establish power dynamics, hopes, expectations, change readiness and receptivity to the PATH process.

The need for two EPs to facilitate a PATH to adequately attend to the groups' needs has implications for a service's capacity against a backdrop of increasing SLA and statutory demands. Graphicing and confident facilitation might play an important role in engagement and equitable planning; therefore, EPs might need to develop skill in graphicing and practice the PATH process. Also, given effective consultation is arguably highly skilful (Wagner, 2017), EPs might dedicate time to developing and reflecting on their consultation skills both more broadly and within the context of initiating organisational change. Tacit knowledge of how best to work in these contexts might be made more explicit if EPs commit to ongoing collaborative generation of practice-based theory (Fox, 2011).

One challenge in consultation work and EP practice more broadly is evaluating its impact (Lowther, 2013). Identifying direct links between the EP as a change agent and changes observed due to consultation is challenging. Despite this, evaluation is critical to ethical and accountable practice (Frederickson, 2002). This study only explored the experiences of EPs, not the group consultees. As such future research might evaluate the impact of organisational change group consultation interventions by further exploring participants' experiences of the consultation process and what they perceived to change for them. This could be followed up by engaging in cycles of assessing, planning, doing, and reviewing to begin to understand how the consultation acted as a catalyst for change. As well as the assessment of tangible outcomes, it might be fruitful to explore more nebulous aspects of the plan such as the extent to which group and personal values are aligned with their achievements.

This research sits within the wider discussion about the EP role. Rather than enter into the long-standing debate between the focus on consultative systemic work vs individual case work (Boyle & Lauchlan, 2009), I propose the findings articulate and describe one aspect of what EPs can actually do and how they might do it. This research contributes to the ongoing conceptualisation of the specific contribution of the profession. As EPs face ongoing demands in a neoliberal education system and ever changing socio-political landscape, the on-going articulation of *what we can do* might be a key step to act against the deterioration of our professional identity (Szulevicz, 2018).

3.9 Conclusion

I have explored the question: *How do EPs understand and facilitate organisational change through group consultation using PATH?* EPs perceive change as both psychological and observable outcomes following the session. Psychological changes include a greater sense of group autonomy, efficacy, and motivation towards a shared vision for the future. As agents of change, EPs draw on a range of consultation skills to create a facilitative climate which supports discussion, co-construction, and participation of group members. Group consultation reflects core person centred principles of equality, empowerment, and collaboration. PATH is an adaptable, accessible and time efficient tool which may promote creativity, equitable planning, and innovation. Tangible actions are created which are in part driven by personal and group values.

Word count – 7,539

'PATH is a tool. Remember: a hammer can be used to sculpt a work of art, or to wreak havoc. A hammer is simply a tool. The hand and imagination of the artist is the key. The facilitator of PATH is the artist we are concerned about' (pg. iii O'Brien, 2002)

...I think that's the beauty of that tool, really, that you can adapt it...so we didn't stick rigidly to it but we did use the principles behind it and morphed elements from it... (Lindsey 1/55)

...I think that reflective thinking that EPs do, having the knowledge behind...a solution focused ways of working narratives, all those elements, our knowledge of that, you know, knowing the importance of how we work, not just what we do, but how we do things... (Nicola 19/724)

Chapter 4: Reflective Commentary

4.1 Introduction

This final chapter will reflect on the research as a whole and what the implications are for me as a practitioner, researcher, and a lifelong learner more generally. First, I will consider the importance of reflection and reflexivity. I will then reflexively look forwards as well as backwards. I will also consider the potential impact of my work considering knowledge claims and what I have learnt from the process.

4.2 Reflection and Reflexivity

As outlined in BPS professional guidelines, (BPS, 2017), reflection is a fundamental component of psychological research and EP practice competency. Reflection has afforded my ongoing development of criticality regarding the impact of my actions and how to weigh up alternatives. It has also enabled me to shine a light on my beliefs and values regarding research and practice (Bruno & Dell'Aversana, 2017). Reflexivity has facilitated my critical consideration of how my values, assumptions, beliefs, and philosophical research stance might influence the decisions I make in research and practice. It has also allowed me to consider what good practice might mean to me and for me considering my background and experiences. Reflection and reflexivity afford consideration of how practice is united with tacit underpinning psychological theory and is therefore always a complex combination of both (Moore, 2005). To summarise my understanding, reflexivity allows me to explore the relationship between myself and research or practice. Throughout the chapter, I will discuss how I have influenced the research, how it might have influenced me personally and professionally and finally how it might potentially impact others' knowledge.

4.2.1 Retrospective and prospective reflexivity

This section will acknowledge how I shaped and have been shaped by the research (Attia & Edge, 2017). First it seeks to explore how the interest for the research was developed through retrospection whilst simultaneously and transparently illustrating my part in this.

Growing up, I was influenced by family members such as my grandfather who instilled the importance of criticality. An ex-miner with socialist leanings, he taught me to question things and the importance of collective action. In my late teens I formed a punk-rock band with lifelong friends. The band became my life, both as a means to make a living and a set of values to live by (Azerrad, 2012). We operated at a grass roots level, rejected mainstream culture and the financial shackles of the neo-liberal music industry. We toured across Europe through networking with a whole host of new friends. I believe it worked because of our collective efforts, decision making, distributed leadership and enthusiasm. We were self-sufficient. We drove our own van, booked our own gigs. We wanted it that way.

Looking back to being a teacher in my mid-twenties, some of those values, although not obvious to me at the time seemed to influence my teaching style. I began to learn that a classroom where children seemed to learn best was one where there was a warm psychological climate, positive relationships (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009) and lots of discussion. I also found that behaviour was better, and children were happier when they were actively involved in decision making processes. Children were also more engaged in learning when I talked less, and they were invited to actively comment on and make sense of the learning content. I strove to create a culture where we were learning together, and I was not the font of all knowledge. Through this doctoral research and wider reading, I have come to believe that my practice was reflecting wider ideas from a range of academics and theorists.

Firstly, I can draw links with the critical pedagogy of Paolo Freire. I aimed to position myself as a non-expert and more a facilitator of learning and critical thinking. This echoes a shift away from Freire's (1968) banking concept where teachers deposit knowledge into pupils as opposed to drawing on their own knowledge or creating a sense of curiosity. To me, this parallels the positioning of the EP in consultation; a non-expert who draws on the expertise and knowledge of others to create change (Wagner, 2000).

My lessons always had a large portion of time dedicated to discussion where children could support one another to develop ideas. This broadly reflects Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural learning theory which emphasises the collaborative and discursive nature of learning. The classroom was more of a dialogic one where my authority was shared and the voices and opinions of the children were valued (Nesari, 2015). Dialogue facilitated the augmentation of existing perspectives with new ones which allowed the children to see things differently, further or better (Wegerif, 2013). Shared authority and dialogue might promote feelings of psychological safety, autonomy, relatedness and competence (Deci & Ryan, 2013). In my

research, EPs experienced group consultation in this way. PATH was used as a dialogic space where individuals contributed equally and constructed a collectively owned plan.

As a teacher I also experienced frustration with the reduced level of autonomy I had. Decisions that directly affected me and the children I taught were often made without me. I felt disempowered and disillusioned. Most INSET days were monological and delivered by external experts. Whole school change was initiated by expert consultants who only entered into dialogue with senior management. This echoes similar clashes of ideas in the post-modern organisational change literature where everybody can improve whole systems not just experts (Weisbord et al., 2000)

Having looked back at my personal and professional journey, it is clearer why group consultation and democratic processes which promote dialogue like PATH seem to have resonated with me and attracted my attention.

4.2.2 Personal learning because of the research process

Throughout this research project, I have started to distil my understanding of research philosophy. Although there are still areas of murky water, my intense engagement with the literature has given me a clearer picture of ontological and epistemological issues. In Chapters 1, 2 and 3 I positioned the research from a critical realist perspective. This had implications for methodology and any subsequent knowledge claims. I have come to understand that a critical realist stance unifies aspects of positivist and subjectivist approaches by acknowledging the existence of both an external and socially constructed reality.

In the context of group consultation, according to critical realism, the events (changes that occur) do so as a result of the interaction between mechanisms which have causal powers (Bhaskar, 1975). These mechanisms could be conceptual, psychological, or social in nature and not always observable. In my thesis, I propose that the psychological mechanism of autonomy and efficacy might be one mechanism which explains the observed changes that groups put into action because of the consultation. Conversely, non-observable concepts or social structures such as austerity or school inspection systems might halt a change initiative in its tracks.

Supervision helped me make sense of the tension I perceived in taking this stance. At first, I was struggling to see how socially constructed knowledge could be coherent with an external mind independent social reality. However, after much thought, I understand that critical realism can account for construction. The group consultation might facilitate the social construction of knowledge which *might* increase group efficacy. From a contextualist perspective, this knowledge is local, situated and provisional (Madill et al., 2000). The efficacy is deemed to be *real* as it has a causal power. Social reality is a mutual negotiation of meaning amongst group members but is still influenced by a mind independent reality which can be interpreted differently by individuals.

All things considered, since psychology is multifaceted, I am beginning to take a perspective of epistemological pluralism where there are multiple ways to can create psychological knowledge (McGhee, 2001). The next section will explore this idea of knowledge creation in the context of dissemination.

4.2.3 Knowledge claims, sample validation and dissemination

I acknowledge this is my interpretation and *one* way of explaining the world. The primary aim of the research was to create practice knowledge since it was developed through exploring reflections of practitioners' experiences (Wallace & Wray, 2021). BPS practice guidelines (2017) suggest one aim of research is to describe or explain psychological processes. By linking my findings to concepts such as collective efficacy (Bandura, 2006) , I believe my research seeks to do so in an interpretative and contextually situated way. Although tentative in nature, my findings contain an implicit claim of authority because it makes little sense to engage in a complex research endeavour and then deny it has any validity at all (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

My knowledge claims are based on IPA with a clear and transparent audit trail and open discussion regarding reflexivity. I believe the vulnerability to rejection of my knowledge claims is low because they are tentative in nature (Wallace & Wray, 2021) and not seeking generalisability in a traditional sense within a positivist paradigm. Instead, the knowledge created might be theoretically generalised (Smith et al., 2022) through readers' judgement of evidence in relation their current experience and professional knowledge.

Accordingly, to briefly assess the validity of my findings, I presented them to a group of colleagues which included EPs and TEPs. A form of sample validation (Larkin & Thompson,

2011), the aim was to not only get a sense of how coherent and plausible the findings were, but to also see the extent to which their interpretation of my findings linked with my own. To remain pure to IPA process, I only read their interpretations after I had written my findings and discussion. Outlined in [Appendix K](#), participants generally viewed my findings and analysis coherent and plausible. I also asked them what they thought the implications for practice may be and to make any links with between my analysis and wider psychological theory. There were overlaps in thinking such as solution-oriented psychology, dialogic theory, organisational psychology, narrative, and relational practice. The group of colleagues also interpreted that regardless of the tool, it is the EP and their consultation skills and wider relational factors which can support the success of group consultation. Like me, some also had the idea that by working in this way, EPs can demonstrate their specific contribution.

In summary, my research made sense to them. Being the primary audience of my research, I believe the sample validation was helpful as it might have implications for how the created knowledge is used and put into action. It has instilled a sense of confidence in my knowledge claims. I therefore aim to publish this research in an EP practice journal such as *Educational Psychology in Practice*.

The process of validation with colleagues has also allowed me to draw comparisons with how I like to work in practice. It highlights similarities with my advocacy of the process I use during assessment work. Following assessment, I like to take my report back to the key stakeholders and collaboratively interpret it as a working document. I always state it is my interpretation but check with others to see if it fits with their understanding. If joint authorship and ownership of the knowledge are not allowed (Schein, 1999; Shotter, 2004), I believe actions moving forward are stifled.

4.3 Concluding remarks.

Through an in-depth exploration of the literature and theoretical underpinnings of person-centred planning and group consultation, this research has also added to my ongoing and developing preference for collaborative and relational ways of working. I now have a better understanding of the theoretical basis of such practice and *why* they align with my broader values of democracy, social justice, and inclusion.

At the end of this intellectually challenging process, I am satisfied with the outcomes. I believe the knowledge created, although interpretative and tentative, has the potential to

influence the thinking and practice of others. As an ethical practitioner and morally conscious human being, this research has helped me anchor and refine *why* I will strive to keep participation, collaboration, discussion, and joint authorship at the core of my practice.

In the wise musical words of Ella Fitzgerald, Chick Webb and his orchestra (1939), “*Tain’t what you do, it’s the way that cha do it!*”

Word Count - 1,968

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Appendices

Appendix A - Data base search terms and studies found in December 2022

	Database	Syntax	Papers imported to Covidence prior to removing duplicates (for screening)
Searches	British Education Index EBSCO:	'person-centred planning' OR 'person-centered planning' OR 'person-centred review' OR 'person centered review' OR 'person-centred approach' OR 'person-centered approach' AND education* OR school* OR teach* OR education system title/abstract	69
	Education Abstracts (EBSCO)	'person-centred planning' OR 'person-centered planning' OR 'person-centred review' OR 'person centered review' OR 'person-centred approach' OR 'person-centered approach' AND education* OR school* OR teach* OR education system title/abstract	74
	Psych INFO (Ovid)	person-centred planning OR person-centered planning OR person-centred review OR person centered review OR person-centred approach OR person-centered approach AND education* OR school* OR teach* OR education system title	18
	ERIC (EBSCO)	'person-centred planning' OR 'person-centered planning' OR 'person-centred review' OR 'person centered review' OR 'person-centred approach' OR 'person-centered approach' AND education* OR school* OR teach* OR education system title/abstract	63
	Web of Science	'person-centred planning' OR 'person-centered planning' OR 'person-centred review' OR 'person centered review' OR 'person-centred approach' OR 'person-centered approach' AND education* OR school* OR teach* OR education system title	132
	Scopus	'person-centred planning' OR 'person-centered planning' OR 'person-centred review' OR 'person centered review' OR 'person-centred approach' OR 'person-centered approach' AND education* OR school* OR teach* OR education system	0
	Hand searching and citation chaining		Found 2 more potential paper for screening Morgan (2016) Hayes (2004)
	Filtering system –data bases used titles only or both titles and abstract as a form of filtering papers for the person-centred planning terms. E.g., educational focused platforms both title and abstract were used as this yielded more relevant papers for more detailed screening.		

Appendix B - Decision making during screening.

Reasons for excluding 6 papers according to inclusion criteria via Covidence software tool (December 2022)
Not direct data from participants
primary aims of the study not to gain views and experiences - outcome focused. I selected studies that privileged participant views, privileging in this sense means that views are presented directly as data that are valuable and interesting in themselves as opposed to solely as a route to generating variables to be tested in a causal or predictive model.
data collected about parents' views of the outcomes - not the experiences and views about the process
Wrong setting – non-UK
data only about staff views (not the participants themselves)

Appendix C - CASP and Weight of Evidence Judgements/Criteria

CASP questions		Study					
		(Corrigan, 2014)	(Hayes, 2004)	(Morgan, 2016)	(Taylor-Brown, 2012)	(White & Rae, 2016)	(Wood et al., 2019)
Part 1 – Are the results valid?	1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research? HINT: Consider • what was the goal of the research • why it was thought important • its relevance	Yes the research aims of this study were twofold: first, to explore all stakeholder views and experiences of PCP during its context of use; and second, to explore reported outcomes over time for young people post-transition	Not clearly stated	Yes, to investigate the effectiveness of PATH as an approach to organisational change	Yes – important to understand experiences of young people in PCP meetings for practice.	Yes – clear aims and research questions stated.	Yes – evaluate impact of PATH on CYP via views.
	2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate? HINT: Consider • If the research seeks to interpret or illuminate the actions and/or subjective experiences of research participants • Is qualitative research the right methodology for addressing the research goal	Action research used. This is coherent with the notion of PCP and empowerment.	Yes – although used some questionnaires to elicit views (Likert Scales)	Yes – aimed at eliciting views of participants	Yes – IPA and idiographic approach views participants as experts in their own lives. (as does Person Centred Psychology) Good coherence.	Yes – used exploratory approach with semi structured interviews to explore parents and young person’s experiences of PCR meetings	Yes – to gain subjective perspectives - inductive exploratory design
	3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research? HINT: Consider • if the researcher has justified the research design (e.g., have they discussed how they decided which method to use)	Action research used. This is coherent with the notion of PCP and empowerment	To some extent – only small number of participants so could perhaps have used in depth interviews?	Used interpretative case study model with semi- structured interviews to capture complexity and unique	Yes – small case study. Did not make knowledge claims to wider population. Justified why used IPA and interviews.	Yes – qualitative nature of interviews allowed participants to use their own words.	Yes - a qualitative methodology is deemed appropriate as, in accordance with the inductive exploratory approach, it gives primacy to the data.

				situations/related experiences. Grounded theory approach to data analysis withing a case study format			
	4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research? HINT: Consider If the researcher has explained how the participants were selected If they explained why the participants, they selected were the most appropriate to provide access to the type of knowledge sought by the study • If there are any discussions around recruitment (e.g. why some people chose not to take part)	Yes – opportunistic	Yes	Opportunity sample Argued to be representative of organisational aspects of LA (where it's taking place) – broadly representative of other parts of UK	Yes	Yes	Yes - Purposive sampling.
	5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue? HINT: Consider • If the setting for the data collection was justified • If it is clear how data were collected (e.g. focus group, semi-structured interview etc.) • If the researcher has justified the methods chosen • If the researcher has made the methods explicit (e.g. for interview method, is there an indication of how interviews are conducted, or did they use a topic guide) • If methods were modified during the study. If so, has the researcher explained how and why • If the form of data is clear (e.g. tape recordings, video material,	Yes – mixed methods to capture impact and views	Structured questionnaires with some open ended questions. No justification for the methods	Mentioned research questions were influenced by existing literature (deductive approach) – combined with inductive approach to data collection too. Open ended data analysis.	Yes – semi structured interview – also ethically considered child participation.	Yes, but not much detail.	Yes – semi structured interview – piloted first

	notes etc.) • If the researcher has discussed saturation of data						
	6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered? HINT: Consider If the researcher critically examined their own role, potential bias and influence during (a) formulation of the research questions (b) data collection, including sample recruitment and choice of location How the researcher responded to events during the study and whether they considered the implications of any changes in the research design	Not explicitly	Not explicitly	Not explicitly	Yes - To ensure quality and scientific rigour various strategies recommended by research literature (e.g., Yardley, 2000) were employed including research supervision, such as use of a reflexive research diary, and external audit of the interpretations made during the analysis.	Yes – to separate personal views from the process they didn't attend the meetings (but this has implications for fidelity of the meetings)	Not explicitly
Section 2: What are the results?	7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration? HINT: Consider If there are sufficient details of how the research was explained to participants for the reader to assess whether ethical standards were maintained If the researcher has discussed issues raised by the study (e.g., issues around informed consent or confidentiality or how they have handled the effects of the study on the participants during and after the study) • If approval has been sought from the ethics committee	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes - Informed consent was given by the boys and their parents. Participants' names along with any other identifying information have been altered. Further consideration was given to potential consequences of research findings and the assertion of interpretative authority over the data (Fox & Prilleltensky, 1997)	Yes	Yes – child friendly traffic lights to aid with decisions.
	8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous? HINT: Consider whether • If the	Yes	No direct quotes or specific strategy for the views.	interviews were recorded and transcribed	YES - IPA – audio was transcribed verbatim and	Yes – thematic analysis – repeated reading etc but no	Yes - Data immersion – inter rater checks –

	findings are explicit If there is adequate discussion of the evidence both for and against the researcher's arguments • If the researcher has discussed the credibility of their findings (e.g. triangulation, respondent validation, more than one analyst) If the findings are discussed in relation to the original research question	Thematic analysis and descriptive statistics -	Numerical data reported narratively.	<p>verbatim (reliability)</p> <p>evidence was cross checked</p> <p>validity – arguably by depth/richness</p> <p>validity check – raw data used alongside interpretative accounts</p> <p>interview data – provide inductive understanding</p>	<p>themes etc derived. Themes were dropped if didn't relate to Q.</p> <p>External audit of interpretations.</p>	inter rater checks due to one researcher.	transparency in method of analysis
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	<p>9. Is there a clear statement of findings? HINT: Consider whether • If the findings are explicit If there is adequate discussion of the evidence both for and against the researcher's arguments • If the researcher has discussed the credibility of their findings (e.g., triangulation, respondent validation, more than one analyst) If the findings are discussed in relation to the original research question</p>	<p>Yes – detailed and Cleary stated</p>	<p>Yes, to some extent although the aims are not clearly linked back.</p>	<p>Yes, quotes and interpretations well documented</p>	<p>Yes – clear findings – themes discussed and higher order interpretations using psychology.</p>	<p>Yes – themes are detailed with quotes and examples of extracts</p>	<p>Yes – themes are detailed with quotes and examples of extracts</p>
<p>Section C: Will the results help locally? 10. How valuable is the research? HINT: Consider • If the researcher discusses the contribution the study makes to existing knowledge or understanding (e.g., do they consider the findings in relation to current practice or policy, or relevant research- based literature If they identify new areas where research is necessary 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>	<p>Helpful in terms of long term outcomes and how research in this area considers this aspect of PCP and why views are important as part of the research process.</p>	<p>Helpful study in terms of the focus on the visual aspect and some valuable comments from participants but a very small study with one meeting and questionnaires might have limited a rich exploration.</p>	<p>Helpful due to its differing context and interpretations regarding the process and EP practice implications</p>	<p>Valuable in terms of particular pupils view PCP in the context of SEND policy and how EPs/facilitators need certain skill level to deliver. Suggests they facilitate meaningful participation. New themes like power helpful concepts for EPs to consider in practice.</p>	<p>Valuable due to voice of parents and young people included. Findings related to practice and SEND policy.</p>	<p>Lots of value for practical implications for EPs using PATH with you people. Interpretations around psychological theory such as self-efficacy are useful lenses to consider PCP in practice.</p>	

Weight of Evidence A - Soundness of studies (internal methodological coherence) This is a generic and non-review-specific judgement about the coherence and integrity of the evidence in its own terms. That may be the generally accepted criteria for evaluating the quality of this type of evidence by those who generally use and produce it.	High	Low/Medium	High	High Critical realism	Medium	High/Medium Critical Realism
B Appropriateness of the research design and analysis This is a review-specific judgement about the appropriateness of that form of evidence for answering the review question, that is the fitness for purpose of that form of evidence. For example, the relevance of certain research designs such as experimental studies for answering questions about process.	Medium	Medium	High	High	High/medium	High
C Relevance of the study to review question This is a review-specific judgement about the relevance of the focus of the evidence for the review question. For example, a research study may not have the type of sample, the type of evidence gathering or analysis that is central to the review question or it may not have been undertaken in an appropriate context from which results can be generalized to answer the review question. There may also be issues of propriety of how the research was undertaken such as the ethics of the research that could impact on its inclusion and interpretation in a review (Pawson et al., 2003).	Medium – qual data from questionnaires- not rich interview data	high	High	High/Medium No big focus on implementation	High	High
D Overall weight, considering A, B and C (and CASP questions)	Medium	Medium	High	High	High/Medium	High

Appendix D - Criteria for Weight of Evidence (WoE) judgements (Gough, 2007).

Judgement	Rationale
WoE A: Soundness of Study	
High	Detailed and explicit methods and findings section describing data collection and analysis. The interpretation is clearly warranted from the findings and data clearly supports the findings
Medium	Methods and results/findings are satisfactorily described (e.g. procedures might be named but not in detail) Some warrant provided for the findings
Low	Medium criteria not met.
WoE B: The appropriateness of the study for answering the review question	
High	Participants' views about the PCP process are explored in depth through qualitative means
Medium	Participants' views about the PCP process are explored to some extent
Low	Participants' views about the PCP process at a shallow level e.g. closed questions only
WoE C: The relevance of the study for answering the review question	
High	View gathering was the primary aim of the study. PCP processes clearly implemented. Study undertaken in contexts in which EPs may work. Implications for implementation and practice are considered
Medium	Gathering views was part of the aims of the study not the main aim. PCP process used. Some consideration of implications for implementation and practice.
Low	Criteria for medium not satisfied
WoE D: Overall Weight of Evidence	
High	High in all categories or High in two and medium in the third.
Medium	Medium in all categories or a range of low-high across all three
Low	Low in all categories or one medium and two low

Appendix E - Examples of Direct Code extracts

Initially, underpinning 131 codes were generated, then were broadly split into positive or negative views.

Theme	Theme Description	Sub themes and underpinning codes in NVivo	Code Data example from NVivo
Agency and Autonomy	Codes which reflect experiences and views which relate to agency and autonomy either collective or individual.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> AGENCY and AUTONOMY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling in control <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> control in decision making <input type="checkbox"/> empowered to make changes <input type="checkbox"/> feeling in control of future <input type="checkbox"/> jargon free language reduces power imbalances <input type="checkbox"/> Full involvement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> being fully involved in the meeting <input type="checkbox"/> bottom up change <input type="checkbox"/> done with not to <input type="checkbox"/> eliciting voices <input type="checkbox"/> feeling listened to <input type="checkbox"/> feeling listened to and happy <input type="checkbox"/> talked with not talked to <input type="checkbox"/> Ownership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Collective ownership <input type="checkbox"/> group ownership of the outcomes <input type="checkbox"/> ownership over the process <input type="checkbox"/> sense of community and group ownership 	<p>Being fully involved in the meeting:</p> <div style="background-color: #e0e0e0; padding: 5px; margin: 5px 0;"> <p style="text-align: center;">Files\Corrigan2014 1 reference coded, 0.16% coverage</p> </div> <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;"><i>Reference 1: 0.16% coverage</i></p> <p>All stakeholder groups expressed support for the view that PCP enabled the child or young person to be fully involved in his or her transition planning.</p>

<p>Barriers to successful implementation</p>	<p>Codes which reflect factors which may act as barriers to successfully implementing PCP sessions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> BARRIERS TO SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Anxiety Provoking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> anxiety made worse by lack of preparation <input type="radio"/> anxious before the reviews <input type="radio"/> daunted anxious prior to meeting <input type="radio"/> emotional process - daunting <input type="radio"/> emotionally charged <input type="radio"/> need for professionals to be aware of anxiety and disempowerment - prep <input type="radio"/> nervous about speaking and writing in front of others <input type="radio"/> nervous due to lack of preparation <input type="radio"/> preparation reduces anxiety <input type="radio"/> Meeting not sitting within a wider PCP ethos <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> behaviourist policy (vs PCP) <input type="radio"/> CYP scripts echo behaviour policy vs humanism <input type="radio"/> implications - need to sit within person centred whole school ethos <input type="radio"/> importance of adhering to PCP philosophy not nec the tool itself <input type="radio"/> Not having correct people there <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> barrier - less efficient and effective than existing practices <input type="radio"/> barrier - not focusing on difficulties enough <input type="radio"/> barrier - preparation - not knowing what to expect <input type="radio"/> barrier - too many questions <input type="radio"/> not entirely accessible for young people <input type="radio"/> Time <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> barrier to successful implementation - time <input type="radio"/> meeting too long 	<p>Nervous about speaking and writing in front of others</p> <div style="background-color: #e0e0e0; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> <p>Files\White and Rae 2016 1 reference coded, 0.07% coverage</p> </div> <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;"><i>Reference 1: 0.07% coverage</i></p> <p>nd felt nervous about speaking and writing in front of others: “</p>
<p>Theme</p>	<p>Theme Description</p>	<p>Sub themes and underpinning codes in NVivo</p>	<p>Code Data example from NVivo</p>

Beneficial emotional responses	Codes which reflect beneficial emotional responses during the PCP session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> BENEFICIAL EMOTIONAL RESPONSES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> A range of positive responses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> better than other types of meeting <input type="radio"/> containing and reassuring <input type="radio"/> escape from mundane reality of the every day <input type="radio"/> exciting process <input type="radio"/> fun <input type="radio"/> generates enthusiasm and creativity <input type="radio"/> hopefulness, clarity and creative thinking seen <input type="radio"/> increased confidence <input type="radio"/> lovely atmosphere and positive nature <input type="radio"/> opportunity to discuss negatives - unburden then move on <input type="radio"/> Postive experience <input type="radio"/> powerful process <input type="radio"/> reassuring due to transparent wealth of info <input type="radio"/> refreshing and energising <input type="radio"/> space to vent and acknowledge challenges then move on <input type="radio"/> Anxiety reducing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> anxieties alleviated by the PCP meeting <input type="radio"/> anxiety relieved by solution oriented questions <input type="radio"/> informal and at ease <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> informal and relaxed <input type="radio"/> informal but structured <input type="radio"/> sense of ease during the reviews 	Generates enthusiasm and creativity <div style="background-color: #cccccc; padding: 2px; margin: 5px 0;"> Files\Morgan2016 1 reference coded, 0.06% coverage </div> <div style="background-color: #e0e0e0; padding: 2px; margin: 5px 0;"> Reference 1: 0.06% coverage generate some enthusiasm and some creativity. </div>
Theme	Theme Description	Sub themes and underpinning codes in NVivo	Code Data example from NVivo

<p>Equitable and Collaborative Process</p>	<p>Codes which reflected the notion of people working together in equal partnerships – mention of relational aspects, multiple contributions, and perspectives.</p> <p>NB some overlap with autonomy/agency and collaboration. The two can work in tandem for individuals and for groups.</p>	<p><input type="radio"/> EQUITABLE COLLABORATIVE PROCESS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Equal voices brought together <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> collaborative and joint working <input type="radio"/> equal partnerships in the meeting <input type="radio"/> everyone got to speak <input type="radio"/> everyone's contribution valued in action plan <input type="radio"/> expectation of reciprocity enhances balanced contributions <input type="radio"/> multiple perspectives brought together <input type="radio"/> Socially cohesive <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> brought people together to engage and bond <input type="radio"/> collaborative open and honest meeting <input type="radio"/> focusing on what works promotes collaboration <input type="radio"/> Pride in group process <input type="radio"/> reassuring due to collaborative nature <input type="radio"/> social trust - more reticence due to past experiences <input type="radio"/> sociological 'wd40' - opportunities to share and cooperate (school and families) <input type="radio"/> useful when teams or relationships are divided 	<p>Equal partnerships in the meeting</p> <div style="background-color: #cccccc; padding: 2px; text-align: center;"> <p>Files\White and Rae 2016 1 reference coded, 0.05% coverage</p> </div> <div style="background-color: #cccccc; padding: 2px; text-align: right; margin-top: 5px;"> <p>Reference 1: 0.05% coverage</p> </div> <p>young people were made to feel like equal partners</p>
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<p>Facilitator Importance</p>	<p>Codes which outline the role of the facilitator and what participants noticed or valued about them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> FACILITATOR IMPORTANCE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="radio"/> External facilitator creates safe space <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> external facilitator valued to create safe space and confidence <input type="radio"/> facilitator - making it safe allows risks to be taken <input type="radio"/> facilitator creates safe space - reduced anxiety and vulnerability <input type="radio"/> facilitator increased participation in accessible ways <input type="radio"/> importance of external facilitator (fresh vision not emo involved) <input checked="" type="radio"/> Skillful <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> barrier - practice needed for effective facilitation <input type="radio"/> facilitator interpersonal skills - objective friendly warm skilled open calm confi... <input type="radio"/> facilitator skill can have impact on success of session <input type="radio"/> facilitator skills to keep it structured and controlled <input type="radio"/> importance of reviewing (or lose momentum) <input type="radio"/> need for a graphic facilitator or EP <input type="radio"/> negative - action planning needed to be better <input type="radio"/> skilled facilitator key to success 	<p>Practice needed for facilitation</p> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> <p style="text-align: right; margin: 0;">Files\Woodetal2019 2 references coded, 0.30% coverage</p> <p style="text-align: right; margin: 0;"><i>Reference 1: 0.15% coverage</i></p> <p style="margin: 0;">"It's a lot of preparation so if you do it only once in a while . . . you forget about it and tend not to use it" (school staff member).</p> <p style="text-align: right; margin: 0;"><i>Reference 2: 0.14% coverage</i></p> <p style="margin: 0;">This staff member also believed that it required practice, presumably because of the skill involved in facilitation.</p> </div>
<p>Theme</p>	<p>Theme Description</p>	<p>Sub themes and underpinning codes in NVivo</p>	<p>Code Data example from NVivo</p>
<p>Goal and Future Orientated</p>	<p>Codes which indicated the process gave a chance to make plans and goals for the future and how PCP might facilitate this.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> GOAL AND FUTURE ORIENTATED <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> a catalyst for change (the session) <input type="radio"/> creates a sense of urgency into action <input type="radio"/> creates commitment to action <input type="radio"/> feelings of hope and better times ahead <input type="radio"/> Feelings of postive aspirations <input type="radio"/> free to explore the future <input type="radio"/> future focus draws people together to work on next steps <input type="radio"/> future orientated <input type="radio"/> hopefulness, clarity and creating thinking seen <input type="radio"/> PATH acting as a catalyst for change <input type="radio"/> preffered future allows not to focus on past mistakes <input type="radio"/> preparing for the future <input type="radio"/> sense of direction <input type="radio"/> space to see a preffered future <input type="radio"/> useful to use when feeling 'stuck' 	<p>Future orientated</p> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> <p style="text-align: right; margin: 0;">Files\taylor brown data 2 references coded, 3.27% coverage</p> <p style="text-align: right; margin: 0;"><i>Reference 1: 1.71% coverage</i></p> <p style="margin: 0;">I see and like what I do at home and next steps and all that'.</p> <p style="text-align: right; margin: 0;"><i>Reference 2: 1.57% coverage</i></p> <p style="margin: 0;">all that and what we want to do when we finish school'.</p> </div>

Theme	Theme Description	Sub themes and underpinning codes in NVivo	Code Data example from NVivo
Holistic View of People	Codes which echo the notion that participants were focused on as individuals and the sessions allowed an exploration of the whole person.	<input type="radio"/> HOLISTIC VIEW OF PEOPLE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> attention to individuals <input type="radio"/> different avenues for discussion <input type="radio"/> getting the full picture <input type="radio"/> new stories about the whole person <input type="radio"/> not just problem or deficit focused <input type="radio"/> participants feeling they're been seen as a whole person <input type="radio"/> personal values and preferences are explored <input type="radio"/> understanding needs <input type="radio"/> views, needs and aspirations at the forefront 	<p>Getting the full picture</p> <div data-bbox="1384 448 1890 560" style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px;"> <p style="margin: 0;">Files\Corrigan theme data 1 reference coded, 7.96% coverage</p> <p style="margin: 0;">Reference 1: 7.96% coverage</p> <p style="margin: 0;">Capturing the full picture</p> </div>

<p>Visual and Graphic presentation of information</p>	<p>Codes which described how participants and researchers perceived the impact of the use of visuals and graphics in the sessions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> VISUAL AND GRAPHIC PRESENTATION OF INFO <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Facilitate empowerment and participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> graphics - writing - allows all views to be included and not missed <input type="radio"/> graphics are accessible <input type="radio"/> graphics empower participants <input type="radio"/> graphics promote full participation decision making <input type="radio"/> graphics reflect participant views <input type="radio"/> graphics remove barriers to participation <input type="radio"/> visual presentation reassures participants <input type="radio"/> visual presentation removes sense of secrecy <input type="radio"/> visuals reduced power imbalances (not just professionals talking) <input type="checkbox"/> Support thinking, understanding and discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> graphic allowed reflections on change later <input type="radio"/> graphic as prompt and reminder <input type="radio"/> graphic helps develop ideas - immediate and tangible <input type="radio"/> graphic supported change - they revisited it <input type="radio"/> usefulness of graphic <input type="radio"/> visual presentation better than just listening <input type="radio"/> visuals - promote interactive and discursive climate <input type="radio"/> visuals help with understanding 	<p>Promoted an interactive and discursive climate</p> <div style="background-color: #cccccc; padding: 2px; text-align: center;"> Files\\Corrigan2014 1 reference coded, 0.10% coverage </div> <div style="text-align: right; font-size: small; margin-top: 5px;">Reference 1: 0.10% coverage</div> <p>The use of flip chart paper was thought to promote a more interactive and discursive climate a</p>
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Appendix F - Interview Schedule and Rationale for Each Questions

Question Type	Semi-Structured Interview Question
Descriptive	How long have you been an EP for?
Descriptive	How did you learn about PATH? Have you used it much?
Descriptive	Can you start by telling me about your experiences using PATH with education professionals? <i>Follow up – how do you do it? is there a reason for that? Which aspects do you think are particularly important and why? Do you modify the ‘original?’</i>
Interrogative	Why do/would you choose to use PATH as in intervention with groups of education professionals at an organisational level? <i>Follow up: How does this type of work come about? What purpose does it serve? What do you perceive to be the goal? What do you think may influence your choice of this practice method?</i>
Evaluative	What do you like best about using PATH with groups of education professionals? <i>Follow up: which aspects of the process are important to you?</i>
Evaluative	How do you know if the PATH has been a success? <i>Follow up: what contributes to that success? What memories do you have of them going really well? How did you know? What are the intended outcomes? Have you noticed if some parts of PATH seem easier or harder for people? If so what are these and do you have some ideas why this might be so?</i>
Evaluative	Without being modest, what strengths do you bring to the role of facilitator of PATH? <i>Follow up: Where did these come from? What enables them and are there factors that make this hard? When has facilitation felt successful for you?</i>
Contrast	For you, what are the differences between a good PATH and a bad PATH when used with groups of professionals?
Evaluative	What would you say to an EP wishing to use PATH with a group of professionals at an organisational level? <i>Follow up: When has PATH felt particularly effective? (in the moment)</i>
Evaluative	How do you see working in this way fitting into your practice, the service and into the wider practice of EPs more generally? <i>Follow up: what opportunities do you think this kind of EP practice brings about?</i>
Probes	Is there something else you'd like to tell me about?
Probes	What do you mean by “x”?
Prompts	Can you tell me more about that? Is there something else you'd like to tell me about?

Question Type	Semi-Structured Interview Question	Rationale
Descriptive	How long have you been an EP for?	To get a portrait of the participant in terms of EP practice experience.
Descriptive	How did you learn about PATH? Have you used it much?	To get an idea of how much they have used PATH.
Descriptive	Can you start by telling me about your experiences using PATH with education professionals? <i>Follow up – how do you do it? is there a reason for that? Which aspects do you think are particularly important and why? Do you modify the ‘original?’</i>	To initiate an introductory discussion which might lead to further questions about implementation and choices around process.
Interrogative	Why do/would you choose to use PATH as in intervention with groups of education professionals at an organisational level? <i>Follow up: How does this type of work come about? What purpose does it serve? What do you perceive to be the goal? What do you think may influence your choice of this practice method?</i>	To understand the thinking behind the use of the tool, the reasons it might be used and their perception of what it might achieve/impact and when it might be useful.
Evaluative	What do you like best about using PATH with groups of education professionals? Follow up: which aspects of the process are important to you?	To allow freedom to explore reasons for using it, aspects of the process and potential experiences of success.
Evaluative	How do you know if the PATH has been a success? <i>Follow up: what contributes to that success? What memories do you have of them going really well? How did you know? What are the intended outcomes? Have you noticed if some parts of PATH seem easier or harder for people? If so what are these and do you have some ideas why this might be so? When has PATH felt particularly effective? (in the moment)</i>	To unpick perceptions of perceived impact and implications for implementation.
Evaluative	Without being modest, what strengths do you bring to the role of facilitator of PATH? <i>Follow up: Where did these come from? What enables them and are there factors that make this hard? When has facilitation felt successful for you?</i>	To explore the EP role within the PATH process..
Contrast	For you, what are the differences between a good PATH and a bad PATH when used with groups of professionals?	Optional question to build on exploring successful implementation.

Evaluative	What would you say to an EP wishing to use PATH with a group of professionals at an organisational level?	To openly unpick perceptions of effective practice.
Evaluative	How do you see working in this way fitting into your practice, the service and into the wider practice of EPs more generally? <i>Follow up: what opportunities do you think this kind of EP practice brings about?</i>	To get a sense of how working at this level fits in the context of their practice and that of the service and the implications for developing this area
Probe	Is there something else you'd like to tell me about?	An opportunity to share other perspectives that might not have been covered.
Probes	What do you mean by "x"?	To clarify any uncertainty
Prompts	Can you tell me more about that?	To expand on any points

Appendix G - Example extract of Initial noting and experiential statements.

Experiential Statements	Original Transcript	Exploratory Comments
<p>PATH as a tool to meet needs at the group level.</p> <p>PATH is a flexible tool.</p> <p>Consider psychological needs of the staff.</p> <p>PATH can be too idealistic and positive.</p>	<p>thinking about the positives. So, I amended it slightly to give them more opportunity to talk about the cases because I knew they needed to feel like they told somebody about these individuals.</p> <p>And the other reason I thought about using the PATH at that time was because we had an AEP on placement, who was our assistant psychologist, who had a natural talent in graphicing. And she had her own iPad where she could just pull up these lovely graphics and images and she was just a natural at it. So, I thought I'll approach AEP. And I asked AEP if she would like the graphic, and she said yes, she would, because she loved doing that kind of stuff. And she came up with a PATH, but she personalized it.</p> <p>So, she wrote XX School across the top, and she used the school colours, and even those little things made a difference, I would say. And so we then had the PATH virtually, and I took them through the process and allowed them to talk about each of the eight children that they were very concerned about.</p>	<p>Descriptive Conceptual Linguistic</p> <p>8 Individual children with high needs in a nursery moving to reception – staff were worried.</p> <p>Scenarios it could be used to deal with a whole setting/group of children with high needs.</p> <p>EP using suggestions/negotiating with SENCO. A flexible tool – can be done virtually still. Moving away from individual assessments.</p> <p>Staff Needing to feel the pain – their situation being acknowledged? considering staff needs and what they are up against. The EP inferring the situation and psychological needs of the staff team? how did they know this? Was it because they were worried? Right? – making sense – wondering about it.</p> <p>PATH the 'thing' and their experience of it is that it is too idealistic (what it is like for them)</p> <p>PATH too forward thinking and idealistic/thinking of positives. EP adapting the tool to suit the needs of the staff – a flexible tool that can be altered from the 'original' – bringing in.</p>

Appendix H - Example extract of PETs and experiential statements with corresponding transcript.

Interview 3 – Personal Experiential Themes

Personal Experiential Theme (PET) <i>Experiential statements</i>	Example Extracts (page/line)
Self-efficacy	
<i>A sense of confidence</i>	So I think developing confidence has come with experience to say, you've asked for the PATH and you're going to get one. Yeah, you're going to get one. So I think it's doing that and then, yeah, those are probably the main points, really, sort of developing that process around the dream. (3/16/602)
Relational and Consultation Skills	
<i>A sense of leadership</i>	Some of those yeah those supervisory those consultation skills because. We should know when we are when we do need to take that step back from a conversation and go, this is what you need to provide (3/30/1114)
<i>Remaining neutral in knowledge construction</i>	<p>We want to fill silence, we want to keep the flow going, but whenever we can. Just making incredibly sure that I am not stepping in, I am not adding my own values and thought. And that can feel clunky.</p> <p>And I'll tend to address it up front and sort of say, we're not here to listen to myself and whoever's working with me. And you're certainly not going to see any of that written down on the path. So if it does feel sort of continually bouncing it back to you, that's because I want to make sure it's your voice and not mine. (3/15/568)</p>
Positioning	
<i>A neutral outsider as facilitating factor (not the expert)</i>	<p>Yeah. And again, I think as external if you're brought in as an external agency to do this development thing.</p> <p>Again, you could come away with, here's our model. And does it fit? Yes or no? Probably no, because I don't know who you are, especially if I'm, if I'm cross profession, if I'm working with, say, a group of social workers, group of managers, I don't know, I don't know what it's like to be a child protection social worker.</p> <p>So then trying to add my language and my interpretations to a subject area in a profession I don't do, you're just continually shifting yourself away from. And I think what the PATH does is that it's about as close as you can get to holding up that mirror whilst being, I guess, having that benefit of being an external person (3/23/867)</p>
<i>Doing with, not to.</i>	Are we here to problem solve? Are we here to be told off? Are we here to reorganize? Actually, it's nothing to do with anything, that we have no power in sort of administrative or procedural type things. (3/11/403)

Appendix I – Example GET table

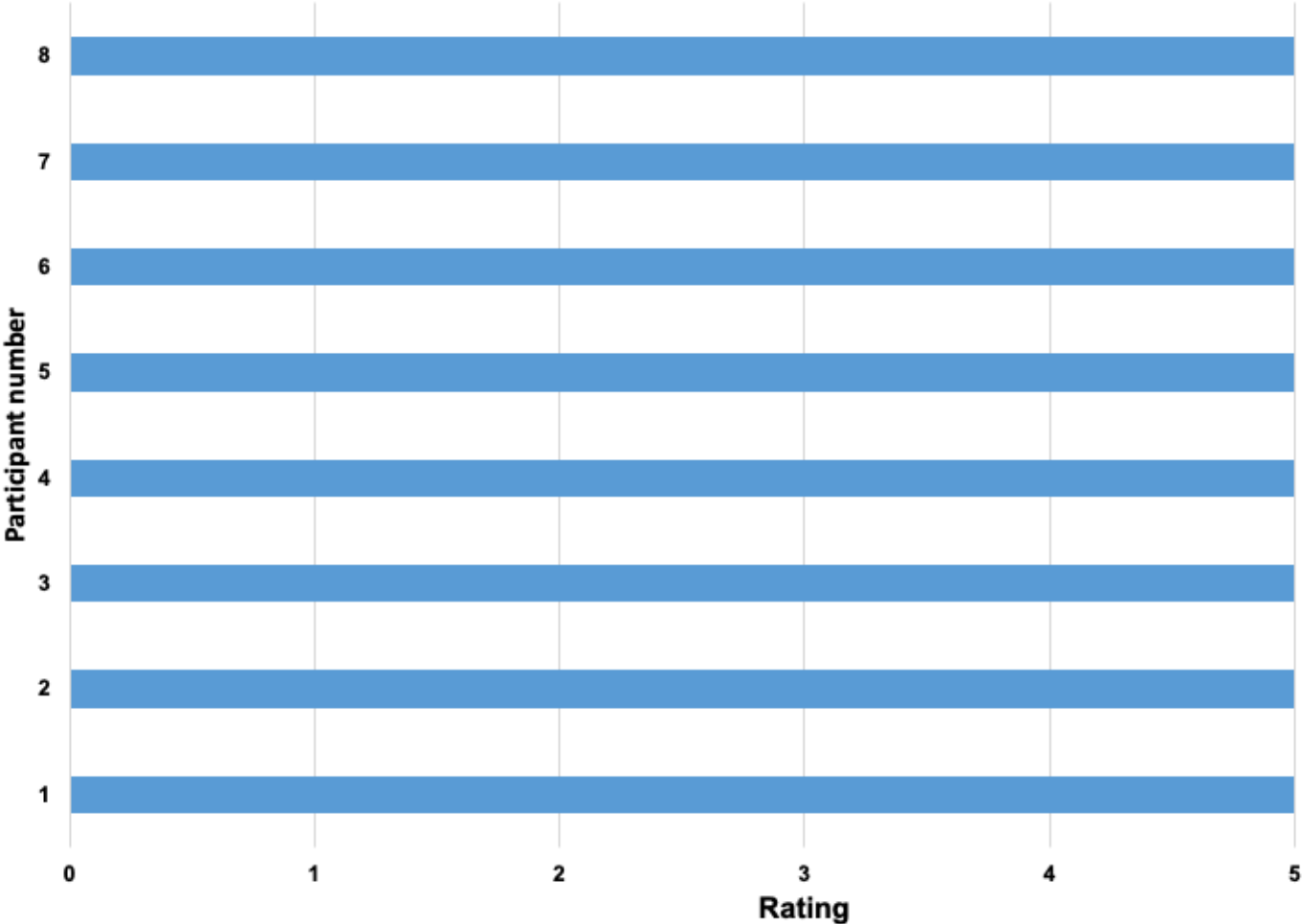
Case	Group Experiential Theme: EPs as PATH facilitators.				
	Personal Experiential Themes <i>Experiential statements</i>				
1. Sofie		Relational and Consultation Skills	Positioning	Actively Applying psychology through criticality	
		<i>Containing emotions</i>	<i>A neutral outsider might support facilitation</i>	<i>Drawing in other psychological approaches</i>	
		<i>Creating a safe space</i>			
		<i>Attunement</i>			
		<i>A sense of leadership and assertiveness</i>			
2. Lindsey	Self-Efficacy	Relational and Consultation Skills	Positioning	Actively applying psychology beyond the process	<i>Espoused Democratic Values</i>
	<i>Confidence in the process</i>	<i>Creating a safe space</i>	<i>A neutral outsider as facilitating factor</i>	<i>Drawing in other psychological approaches/ideas</i>	<i>Promoting all voices</i>
		<i>Building rapport</i>	<i>Doing with, not to.</i>		
		<i>Attunement</i>			
		<i>Pacing</i>			
	<i>Discursive Strategies</i>				

		<i>A co- constructor</i>			
3. David	Self-Efficacy	Relational and Consultation Skills	Positioning	Actively applying psychology beyond the process	Espoused Democratic Values
	<i>A sense of confidence</i>	<i>A sense of leadership</i>	<i>A neutral outsider as facilitating factor (not the expert)</i>	<i>Drawing in other psychological approaches</i>	<i>Promoting all voices</i>
		<i>Remaining neutral in knowledge construction</i>	<i>Doing with, not to.</i>		
4. Ruth	Self-Efficacy	Relational and Consultation Skills	Positioning	Actively applying psychology beyond the process	Espoused Democratic Values
		<i>Creating an emotional safe space for equal contribution</i>	<i>A neutral outsider as facilitating factor (not the expert) can ask curious questions</i>		<i>Facilitating participation</i>
		<i>Attunement</i>	<i>Doing with, not to.</i>		
5. Jane	Self-Efficacy	Relational and Consultation Skills	Positioning	Actively applying psychology beyond the process	Espoused Democratic Values
	<i>Friendly demeanour enhances participation.</i>	<i>A sense of leadership</i>	<i>An outsider as a potential hindering factor</i>	<i>Drawing in other psychological approaches</i>	
		<i>Creating a safe space</i>	<i>An insider as a potential facilitating factor</i>	<i>Adapt considering psychological needs</i>	<i>EP as facilitator to embodies values underpinning PATH.</i>
6. Helen	Self-Efficacy	Relational and Consultation Skills	Positioning	Actively applying psychology beyond the process	Espoused Democratic Values
	<i>A sense of confidence</i>	<i>A sense of leadership</i>	<i>A neutral outsider as facilitating factor</i>	<i>Drawing in other psychological approaches</i>	<i>Valuing equitable planned change</i>
	<i>Confidence in the process</i>	<i>Creating an emotional safe space</i>	<i>Doing with, not to.</i>	<i>The influence of constructionism</i>	<i>Promoting all voices</i>
		<i>Attunement</i>			
		<i>Discursive strategies</i>			
		<i>A co- constructor</i>			

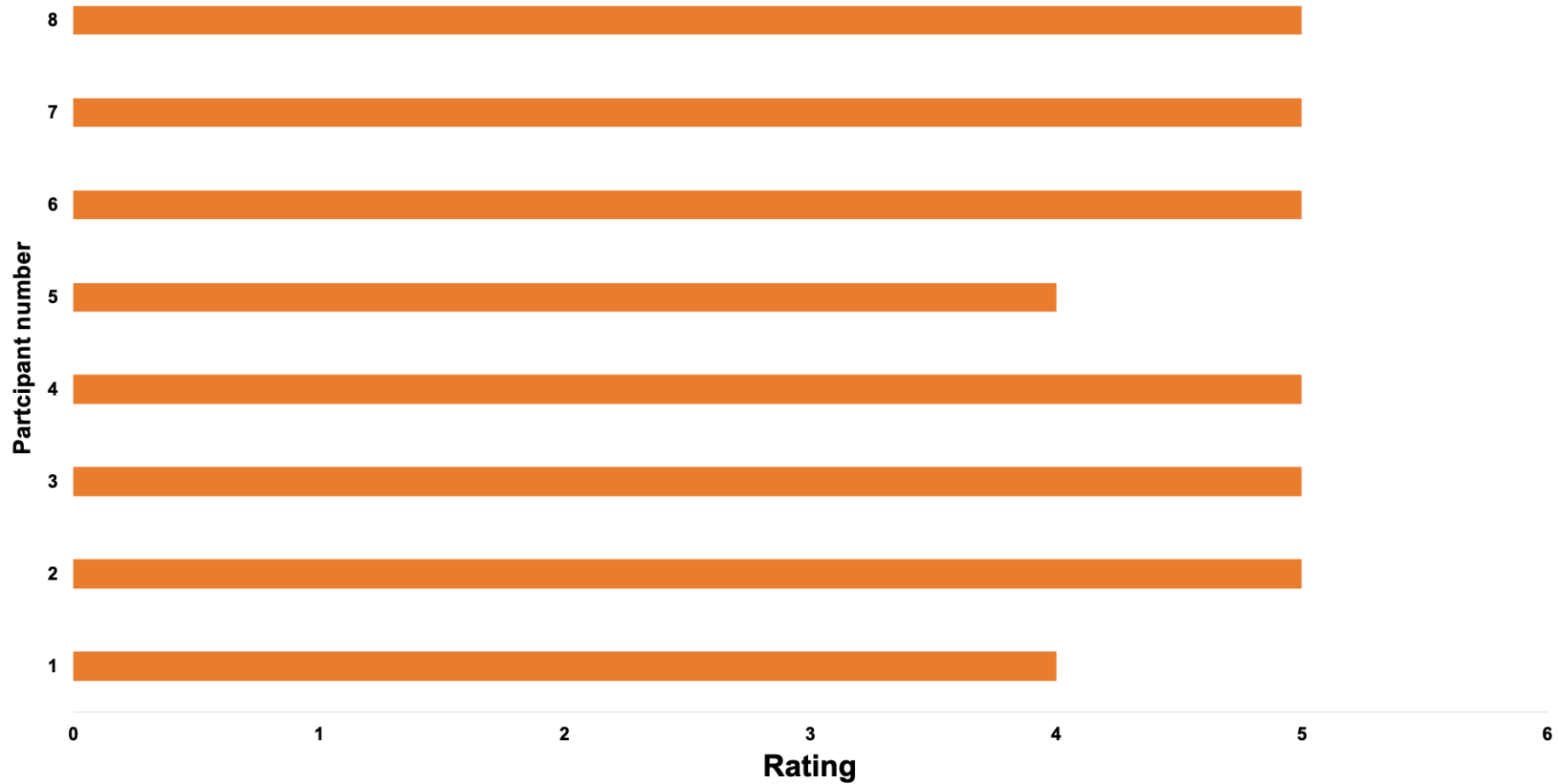
7. Nicola	Self-Efficacy	Relational and Consultation Skills	Positioning	Actively applying psychology beyond the process	Espoused Democratic Values
	<i>Confidence in graphicing</i>	<i>A sense of leadership</i>		<i>Drawing on other psychological approaches</i>	<i>Principles not fidelity</i>
				<i>Going beyond simply using a tool</i>	<i>EP as facilitator who embodies values underpinning PATH.</i>
8. Melanie	Self-Efficacy	Relational and Consultation Skills			
	<i>Confidence in the process</i>	<i>A sense of leadership</i>			
	<i>Know the process (competence)_</i>	<i>Creating an emotional safe space</i>			
		<i>Discursive strategies</i>			
		<i>Humanistic principles</i>			

Appendix K - Sample validation findings

To what extent do the findings make sense to you? 5 being 'completely make sense' and 1 'not at all'



Where 5 is 'extremely coherent and plausible' and 1 is 'not at all', how do you view my findings in light of your own professional experiences and knowledge?



Participant responses via Microsoft Forms.

Participant	What resonated with you?	Do you see any links between my findings and wider psychological theory and literature? If so what?	What do you think are the implications for EP practice?
1	The importance of being aware of power dynamics. The impact of a collective dream from an existential perspective	Dialogic space, social constructionism, solution orientated psychology.	Support and evidence based when making/suggesting the use of PATH with other agencies. Helpful to think why we use a particular approach over others. It would be interesting to consider participants experiences of PATH.
2	It helped me reflect on the role of the EP as a facilitator but grounded in critical psychology e.g SO, narrative when using PATH. The power of the graphic which helps everyone including the EP.	This reminded me of person-centred planning, solution focussed, strengths based, positive psychology, narrative, organisational change and implementation science.	It is powerful, adaptable and draws the unique EP knowledge and skills (other professionals would not be able to facilitate it in this way) ie a unique contribution.
3	I wonder if it would be helpful to also consider PATH as a tool to promote inclusion. I think the visual format may challenge the more traditional ways of 'reporting'. It may be more helpful for neurodiverse communities and parents with literacy difficulties.	Lots of thinking about motivational interviewing such as the use of open questions etc.	Is the tool helpful in isolation? Or is the impact of the tool based on the embedded 'consultation-based factors'? Is it helpful to separate these? Do we firstly need foundational relational factors before attempting to do a PATH?
4	Particularly the ideas about the contributions of the graphic. I often think about why this process is different to/better than normal consultation and I think the bits about the graphic supporting memory, feeling like a collective record etc really make sense.	It is interesting to think about the links between these person-centred approaches and consultation.	Thinking about the advantages of using graphics for representation of views ideas etc. Supports thinking about things that happen before and after the consultation process. The importance of context and how this might contribute to the outcomes.

5	The perceived impact of PATHS (from EPs) and the multiple factors that are included in the PATH process.	I think that the thoughts around the underpinning psychology of effective consultation and whether that is the driving force rather than the PATH.	These findings confirm how useful a tool the PATH is and I think it will further promote the use of person centred planning tools alongside the use of visuals. Hopefully this will highlight to the wider profession the benefit of using person-centred graphic planning tools in EP practice. The findings highlight the importance this approach holds for EPs and how much they value it.
6	I think that the discussion around power and needing a range of staff in order to enforce change was really important. Previously I've heard discussions around needing SLT in order to enact change, but I liked that you included the importance of both SLT and those 'in the trenches'.	Linked to person centred planning, cognitive theory (how we process and remember information), solution focused work (ability to validate 'the foot on the pain' as well as identifying strengths, using participants own ideas for solving problems, and looking for hopes/what it would look like), narrative theory (thickening positive stories), principles of organisational change,	It's interesting to think about how group consultation can work to facilitate change supported by a PATH, specifically I was interested in what you were saying about the preparation for group consultation and how that can facilitate discussion and lead towards positive change. It's reminding me about the benefit of using tools such as PATH (and consultation in general) and the varied work that we can do (along with our USP).
7	The visual representation, with themes and associated branches. The extensive coverage from preparation to outcomes.	Solution orientated organisational change, narrative, relational, attunement,	Hopefully show the evidence base for using the PATH to support its use further, importance of the EP facilitating it because of the understanding of its underlying principles
8	Encapsulating all the thinking and skills involved in facilitating a PATH. Its a simple tool but your research has brought to light the strong underpinning and layers of 'other' EP skills that can contribute to using PATH	Interesting to consider the interactions from a psychodynamic perspective.	Continued (and boosted) confidence in applying PATH in practice as an EP. A strong sense of validity from the voice of a group of EPs on how this can be applied. That PATH provides a process in which a wider variety of EP skills, particularly in consultation, can be applied. It is perceived that effective application of PATH is embedded and relies on core skills and considerations. It is a way we can demonstrate our unique contribution. A next step would be to get participants of PATHs view on supporting change